

COLLEGE STUDENTS' APPAREL IMPULSE BUYING BEHAVIORS IN
RELATION TO VISUAL MERCHANDISING

by

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(Under the Direction of Dr. Brigitte Burgess)

ABSTRACT

Due to increasing competition and the similarity of merchandise, retailers utilize visual merchandising to differentiate their offerings from others' as well as to improve the desirability of products. The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between college students' apparel impulse buying behaviors and visual merchandising. The result of the present study proves that there is a pivotal relationship between college students' impulse buying behaviors and two type of visual merchandising practices: in-store form/mannequin display and promotional signage. This study provides information as to why visual merchandising should be considered an important component of a strategic marketing plan in support of sales increase and positive store/company image. This study also provides insights to retailers about types of visual merchandising that can influence consumers' impulse buying behaviors.

INDEX WORDS: Impulse buying behavior, Visual merchandising

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Today's fierce competition and the similarity of merchandise force each segment of the fashion industry to utilize visual merchandising to improve the desirability of products. Apparel retailers, especially, place more importance on visual merchandising to differentiate their offerings from others'. Researchers found that impulse buyers usually do not set out with the specific purpose of visiting a certain store and purchasing a certain item; the behavior occurs after experiencing an urge to buy (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998), and such behaviors are influenced by internal states and environmental/external factors. Research findings suggest that impulse buying accounts for substantial sales across a broad range of product categories (Bellenger, Robertson & Hirschman, 1978; Cobb & Hoyer, 1986; Han, Morgan, Kotsiopoulos, & Kang-Park, 1991; Kollat & Willet, 1967; Rook & Fisher, 1995; Weinberg & Gottwald, 1982). Since impulse buying is a pervasive aspect of consumers' behaviors and a focal point for strategic marketing plans (Rook, 1987), it is worthwhile for retailers to understand factors within the retail setting that trigger consumers' impulsive reactions. Retailers can help customers to find the right products through focused merchandising, intelligent store design and layout, and other visual merchandising practices, such as product displays, packaging, and signage (Abrams, 1996; Baker, Grewal & Levy, 1992).

Purpose/Objectives

Young consumer group have gained significant importance from marketers as they have growing purchasing power; their money attitude also has been changing with relatively easy access to credit cards (Schor, 1998). Therefore, the consumer behavior of an important sector of the young consumer group, college students, is worth to be researched. Retailers try to find variables that influence shoppers' impulse buying urges and decisions and attempt to control these influencing variables through strategic marketing and merchandising activity. Based on the literature review, it is reasonable to expect that visual merchandising, a common external factor that encourages consumers' urge to buy, can affect consumers' impulse buying decisions. Based on the previous research findings, the purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between college students' apparel impulse buying behaviors and common external factors that trigger impulse buying. External factors that the research will exam are attributes likely to be encountered in many retailing contexts, such as visual merchandising. The research, therefore, will focus on effects of four types of visual merchandising on impulse buying behavior. The types of visual merchandising used as predictors in this study are window display, in-store form/mannequin display, floor merchandising and promotional signage.

Rationale/significance of the study

With increasing competition, retailers strive to ensure that their stores are appealing to their target markets. As retailers are finding it increasingly difficult to create a differential advantage on the basis of merchandise alone, the store itself plays an important role for market differentiation. The correlation between consumers' beliefs

about the physical attractiveness of a store and patronage intentions (Darden, Erdem, & Darden, 1983) suggests that the visual aspect of the store may be significant in relation to the consumers' choice of a store and buying behavior. Since many retailers use visual presentation of the store/company's offering in order to encourage customers' buying behaviors, this fact was expected to be found in the consumer and marketing literature. However, the literature does not include a coherent approach or provide significant coverage for this subject. If first impressions and appearance are important indicators of store image, then store window displays must play an important role in a consumer's decision whether or not to enter the store. However, classifications of store image components in the literature are almost entirely related to the in-store merchandise placement. Display communications, which frequently happen to influence consumers' buying behavior, are not considered (Ferne, 1996; Ferne & Ferne, 1997).

Buttle (1988) referred to visual merchandising as a neglected area in fashion marketing research. This neglect does not signify that this area is unworthy of academic research, but may indicate that since visual merchandising concerns perceptions of creativity, an area which is difficult to test, researchers may have difficulty in analyzing it meaningfully. Therefore, this study will provide information as to why visual merchandising should be considered an important component of a strategic marketing plan in support of sales increase and positive store/company image. This study will also provide insights to retailers about types of visual merchandising that can influence consumers' impulse buying behaviors. The way in which merchandise will eventually be displayed and promoted at the store level is an important consideration in the buying function as well as in the strategic marketing/merchandising plan.

Conceptual Definitions

Conceptual definitions in this section were adopted from the literature or created by the researcher specifically for this study.

- **External cues:** In-store and façade level display correlated with situational environment that influences a customer's buying decision.
- **Floor merchandising:** The arrangement of merchandise according to plan-o-gram/zone-o-gram, in which merchandise is made available for sale to customers.
- **Form/mannequin display:** The presentation of merchandise using forms or mannequins in order to provoke customers' interest and create the desire to buy.
- **In-store display:** A creative way of presenting merchandise with the purpose of providing consumers with information about new products, fashion trends, or coordination tips in order to encourage customers' urge to buy. For the purpose of this study, the following types of in-store display were investigated: form/mannequin display, floor merchandising, and promotional signage.
- **Internal cues:** Emotional feelings and desires that influence customers' buying decisions.
- **Impulse buying:** "Impulse buying is a sudden and immediate purchase with no pre-shopping intentions either to buy the specific product category or to fulfill a specific buying task (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998, p170)".
- **Signage:** Wording used either alone or in conjunction with in-store display to convey product or promotional information to customers with the purpose of informing and creating demand for the merchandise.

- **Visual merchandising:** A way of presenting merchandise effectively to improve the desirability of a product and to influence a customer's buying behavior.
- **Window display:** Any kind of visual presentation of merchandise in the façade level in order to attract attention and ultimately to enter the store.

Conceptual Framework

Impulse buying has been defined as a spontaneous, immediate purchase (Rook & Fisher, 1995) without pre-shopping intentions either to buy a specific product category or to fulfill a specific buying task (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). The impulse buying behavior occurs after experiencing an urge to buy and tends to be spontaneous without a lot of reflection (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). Since impulse buyers are not actively looking for a certain product and don't have prior plans or intention to make a purchase (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998; Weun, Jones, & Beatty, 1998), internal states and environmental/external factors can serve as cues to trigger their impulse behavior.

Model

Churchill and Peter (1998) generated a model of the consumer buying process (Figure 1) including five steps: need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation. The buying process begins with a recognized need. This need recognition may come from an internal feeling or it may come from external stimuli generating motivation to purchase. When consumers are motivated by identifying needs, they start looking for information. Based on the information, consumers evaluate ways to fulfill the need. After evaluating options, consumers may make a purchase. Finally, consumers formally or informally evaluate the

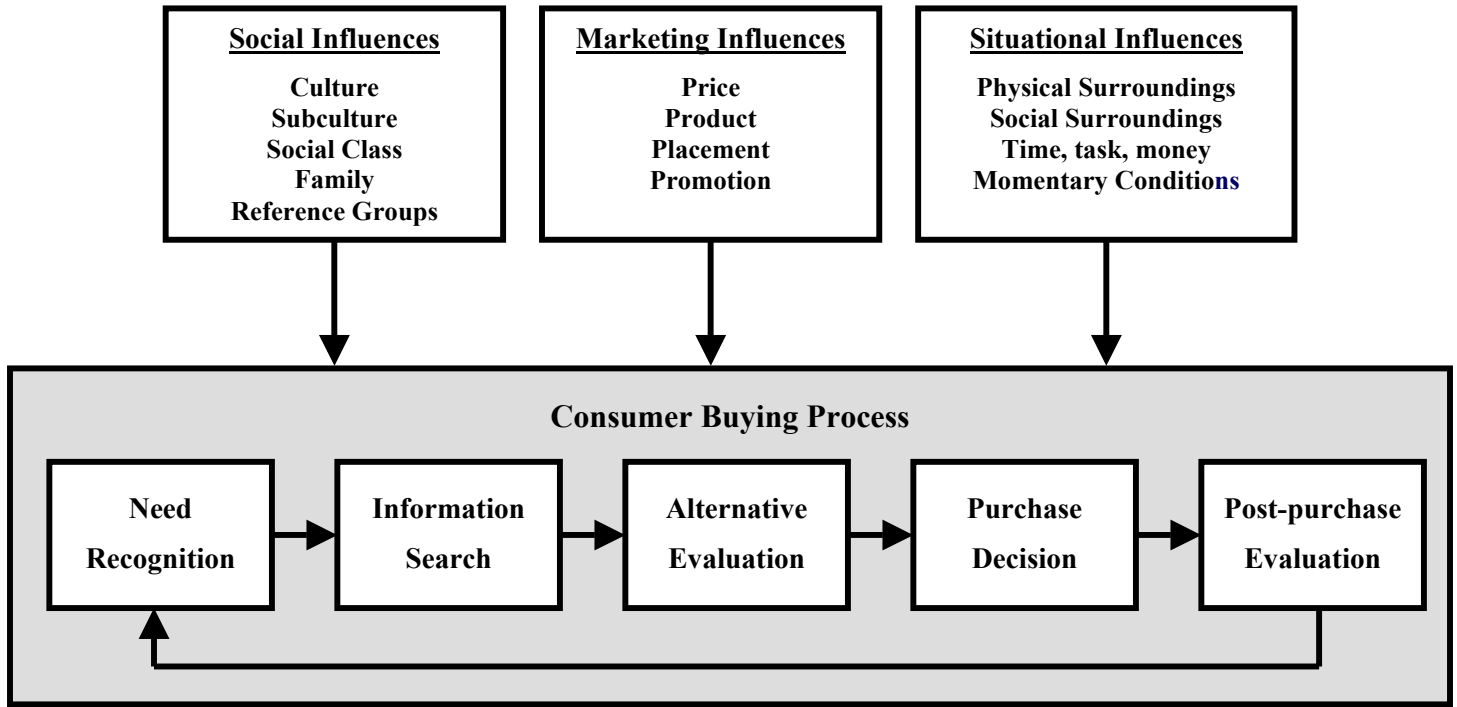


Figure 1: A model of consumer buying process

Source: Churchill & Peter (1998). P142

outcome of the purchase after buying a product. This step involves consequences and satisfaction for the purchase; a consumer who has positive experience may develop loyalty to the store where she/he purchased. The process is repeated as consumers feel needs for products.

This consumer buying process is influenced by social, marketing, and situational Factors (Churchill & Peter, 1998). Social influences reflect geographic and sociologic factors. Those can be culture, subculture, social class, and family that influence person's behavior by providing direct and indirect messages and feedback. Consumers are also influenced by their reference groups, the groups that influence the consumers' thoughts, feelings, and actions. Marketing influences on the consumer buying process include the affect of the marketing mix, known as product, price, placement, and promotion, which influence the consumer buying process at various stages.

Consumers, in general, are influenced by characteristics of the situation, circumstances surrounding their shopping trip. Major situational influences include the physical surroundings, social surroundings, time, task, monetary conditions, and momentary moods (Belk, 1975; Park, Iyer, & Smith, 1989). The physical surroundings that influence buying behavior are observable features that include location of the store, merchandise display, store interior/exterior design, and noise level of the store. The social surroundings of a situation are other people, their characteristics and roles, and the way they interact. The moods and condition as well as the time, task, and monetary condition of a consumer at the time of purchase influence their buying decision (Churchill and Peter, 1998). Although useful in explaining planned purchase situations,

Churchill's and Peter's (1998) model does not lend itself to explaining the process of impulse buying.

Stern (1962) classified buying behavior as planned or unplanned. According to this classification, planned buying behavior involves a time-consuming information search followed by rational decision-making (Piron, 1991; Stern, 1962) similar to the process described in Churchill's and Peter's (1998) model. Unplanned buying refers to all purchases made without such advanced planning including impulse buying, which is distinguished by the relatively speedy decision-making encouraged by stimuli. Impulse purchases are not the result of a specific search to satisfy a particular requirement since the satisfaction may come from the act of shopping itself. Purchases are incidental to this speedy process although they may provide some kind of enjoyment. In the respect of Stern's (1962) classification, therefore, several of Churchill's and Peter's (1998) pre-purchase steps are entirely skipped in the impulse buying process. Considering the nature of impulse buying, which occurs in a short period of time without prior plans, Churchill's and Peter's (1998) model has been modified for the purpose of this study to describe the impulse buying process by omitting several steps, such as need recognition, information search, and alternative evaluation, and reclassifying influencing factors (Figure 2).

Unlike the planned buying process outlined in Churchill's and Peter's (1998) model (Figure 1, p6), the impulse buying process starts with product awareness. Impulse buyers begin browsing without having an intention to purchase a certain item or visiting a certain store. As consumers browse, they are exposed to the stimuli, which triggers customers' urge to buy on impulse. When impulse buyers feel the desire to buy, they make a purchase decision without searching for information or evaluating alternatives. At

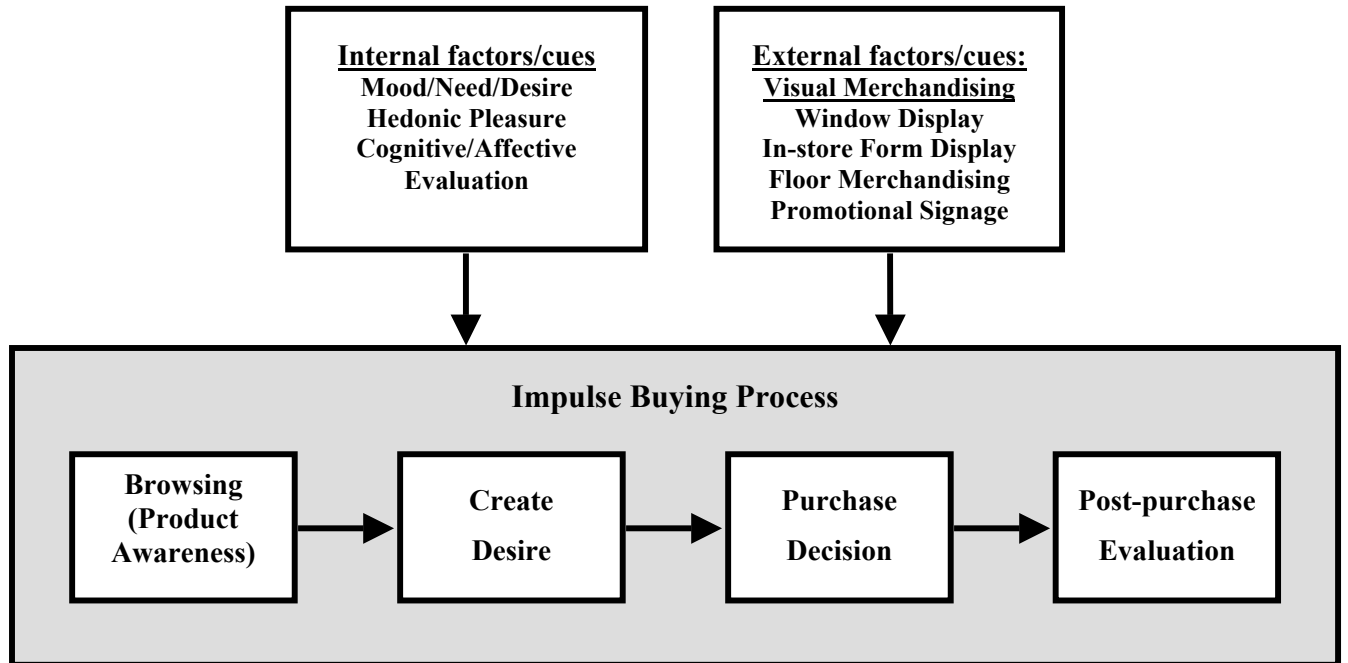


Figure 2: A model of impulse buying process

Source: Adapted from Churchill & Peter (1998)

this stage of the impulse buying process, consumers feel an irresistible urge to buy regardless of their prior intention. Then, consumers may experience positive or negative consequences by the post-purchase evaluation after the purchase on impulse. In fact some consumers have reported dissatisfaction with a product, but maintain satisfaction that the purchase was made (Maclinnis & Price, 1987; Sherry, 1990).

In this process, consumers are influenced by internal states and external factors that trigger their impulse purchase behavior. Since impulse buyers do not set out with a specific goal to buy a certain product or visit a certain store, while browsing and being exposed to the stimuli, impulse buyers feel the desire for the products by being aware of the products, and this desire can be created by internal statement/mood or/and external stimuli. The awareness of the products, which can satisfy the desire, can be achieved by attractive visual presentation of merchandise that provides information regarding new products, fashion trends, or coordination tips.

Summary

Due to increasing competition and the similarity of merchandise, retailers utilize visual merchandising to differentiate their offerings from others' as well as to improve the desirability of products. Since impulse buying is a pervasive aspect of consumers' behaviors and a focal point for strategic marketing plan (Rook, 1987), finding variables that influence shoppers' impulse buying urges and decisions and attempting to control these influencing variables through strategic marketing and merchandising activity is critical for retailers in order to survive in fierce competition. This study will provide information as to why visual merchandising should be considered an important

component of a strategic marketing plan in support of sales increase and positive store/company image. This study also will provide insights to retailers about types of visual merchandising that can influence consumers' impulse buying behaviors.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter provide in-depth review of literature related to impulse buying: definitions and characteristics of impulse buying and normative evaluations of impulse buying behavior as well as factors and cues influencing impulse buying behavior. In addition, this chapter defines visual merchandising and explains its purpose along with relevant literature to link impulse buying behavior with visual merchandising as an influencing factor.

Impulsive Buying

“Impulse buying has been considered a pervasive and distinctive phenomenon in the American lifestyle and has been receiving increasing attention from consumer researchers and theorists (Youn & Faber, 2000, p.179)”. Despite the negative aspects of the impulse buying behavior from past research, defining impulsive behavior as an irrational behavior (Ainslie, 1975; Levy, 1976; Rook & Fisher, 1995; Solnick, Kannenberg, Eckerman, & Waller, 1980), resulting from a lack of behavioral control (Levy, 1976; Solnick et al., 1980), impulse purchases account for substantial sales across a broad range of product categories (Bellenger et al., 1978; Cobb & Hoyer, 1986; Han, Morgan, Kotsiopoulos, & Kang-Park, 1991; Kollat & Willet, 1967; Rook & Fisher, 1995; Weinberg & Gottwald, 1982). A study found that impulse purchases represented between

27% and 62% of all department store purchases (Bellenger et al., 1978). Rook and Hoch (1985) assert that most people have experienced an impulse purchase. Other research findings support this assertion revealing almost 90% of respondents have made grocery purchases on impulse occasionally (Welles, 1986), and between 30% and 50% of all purchases can be classified by the buyers themselves as impulse purchases (Bellenger et al., 1978; Cobb & Hoyer, 1986; Han et al., 1991; Kollat & Willett, 1967).

Early studies on impulse buying were more concerned with the definitional issues distinguishing impulse buying from non-impulse buying and attempted to classify the types of impulse buying into one of several sub-categories (Bellenger et al., 1978; Kollat & Willet, 1967; Stern, 1962), rather than to understand impulse buying as a trait of consumer buying behavior. Therefore, this approach generated a theory that ignores the behavioral motivations of impulse buying for a large variety of products and, instead, focuses on a small number of relatively inexpensive products. However, this type of approach did not provide sufficient explanations as to why so many consumers appear to act on their buying impulse so frequently. Therefore, researchers began to re-focus attention on impulse buying behavior and to investigate the behavioral motivations of impulse buying (Cobb & Hoyer, 1986; Hausman, 2000; Piron, 1991; Rook, 1987; Rook & Gardner, 1993; Rook & Fisher, 1995; Weun, Jones, & Betty, 1998).

The pervasiveness of impulse buying, even for relatively expensive products, led researchers to look at impulse buying as an inherent individual trait, rather than a response to inexpensive product offerings (Cobb & Hoyer, 1986; Rook, 1987). Recently, researchers appear to agree that impulse buying involves a hedonic or affective component (Piron, 1991; Puri, 1996; Rook & Fisher, 1995; Wenn et al, 1998). Today's

research suggests that impulse buying behavior is much more complex than previously conceptualized; that this behavior stems from the desire to satisfy multiple needs that underlie many types of buying behavior (Hausman, 2000).

Characteristics of impulse buying behavior

Rook (1987) identified impulse buying behavior with descriptors such as a spontaneous, intense, exciting, urge to buy with the purchaser often ignoring the consequences. While more recent research in this area discusses impulse buying as a trait rather than as a classification of a purchase decision, researchers agree that consumers vary in their impulse-buying tendency (Puri, 1996; Rook & Fisher, 1995). Without having prior information of a new product or intention to purchase a certain item, a consumer is exposed to stimuli, suggesting that a need can be satisfied through the purchase. Youn and Faber (2000) identify several different types of internal states and environmental/sensory stimuli that serve as cues for triggering impulse buying. Internal cues include respondents' positive and negative feeling states. Environmental/sensory cues encompass atmospheric cues in retail settings, marketer-controlled cues, and marketing mix stimuli (Youn & Faber, 2000).

Normative evaluations for impulse buying behavior

Past research shows that planned buying behavior results in accurate decisions, but impulsive behavior results in decision errors, (Halpern, 1989; Johnson-Laird, 1988) increasing possibilities of negative consequences (Cobb & Hoyer, 1986; Rook, 1987; Weinberg & Gottwald, 1982). These negative evaluations of impulse buying behavior possibly stem from psychological studies of impulsiveness that characterize impulsive

behavior as a sign of immaturity resulting in a lack of behavioral control (Levy, 1976; Solnick et al., 1980) or as an irrational, risky, and wasteful behavior (Ainslie, 1975; Levy, 1976; Solnick et al., 1980).

However, some research on impulse buying behavior indicates that impulse buyers do not consider their impulsive purchases as wrong and report even favorable evaluations of their behaviors. Specifically, in Rook's and Fisher's (1995) study of "Trait and normative aspects of impulsive buying behavior", a relatively small number of respondents (only 20%) reported feeling bad about their impulse buying, but a large number of respondents (41%) reported that they actually felt good about their impulse purchases. One explanation for this phenomenon is that consumers buy products for a variety of non-economic reasons, such as fun, fantasy, and social or emotional pleasure. Some consumers even see shopping as retail therapy, as a way of getting over the stresses of a working day or simply a fun day out (Hausman, 2000) supporting the hedonic modification for impulse buying.

Factors/Cues influencing impulse buying

Few recent studies investigated the factors that affect impulse buying. Researchers have suggested that internal states and environmental/external factors can serve as cues to trigger consumers' impulse behavior to purchase. Research shows that situational factors have practical and theoretical significance in that many decisions are made at the point-of-purchase (Cobb & Hoyer, 1986) as a reflection of "low involvement" decision-making strategies (Hoyer, 1984). The research on situational influence can be described as examining the relationship among shopper characteristics

and the features of retailing or point-of-purchase situations. Shopper characteristics might include involvement (Smith & Carsky, 1996), attitude (Reid & Brown, 1996), and ethnicity (Crispel, 1997), while the retailing features could include outlet size (Owen, 1995), retail format (Fernie, 1996; Fernie & Fernie, 1997), and store personality (Abrams, 1996; Burns, 1992).

Internal factors

Affect or mood has been identified as a variable that influences impulse purchasing (Gardner & Rook, 1988; Rook, 1987; Rook & Gardner, 1993). Rook and Gardner (1993) found that 85% of their survey respondents indicated a positive mood would be more constructive to impulse buying than a negative mood. Respondents stated that, in a positive mood, they had an unconstrained feeling, the desire to reward themselves, and higher energy levels. Weinberg and Gotwald (1982) found that impulse buyers exhibited greater feelings of delight, enthusiasm, and joy while Donovan and Rossiter (1982) found that pleasure was positively associated with a likelihood of overspending.

A number of studies in consumer behavior show that impulse buying satisfies hedonic desires (Piron, 1991; Rook, 1987; Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1990). Individual consumers' impulse buying behavior is correlated with their desires to fulfill hedonic needs, such as fun, novelty and surprise (Hirschman, 1980; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). In addition, emotional support needs may also be satisfied by the social interaction inherent in the shopping experience. For instance, research findings indicate that consumers report feeling uplifted or energized after a shopping experience

(Cobb & Hoyer, 1986; Rook, 1987) supporting the recent concept of impulse buying behavior as a trait motivated by hedonic desire. The hedonic value of shopping reflects potential entertainment and emotional worth of shopping (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994). It has been suggested that shopping without specific intent, may be more significant than acquisition of products and can provide a highly pleasurable shopping experience (Maclinnis & Price, 1987; Sherry, 1990). Since the goal of the shopping experience is to provide satisfaction of hedonic needs, the products purchased during these excursions appear to be chosen without prior planning and represent an impulse buying event.

External factors

Specific situations and retail settings influence both in-store responses and future store choice decisions because of the changing and adoptive nature of expectations, preferences, and behavior (Hausman, 2000). For instance, the findings of Darden et al.'s (1983) study showed that consumers' beliefs about the physical attractiveness of a store had a higher correlation with a choice of a store than did merchandise quality, general price level, and selection. This supports the notion that consumers' choice of a store is influenced by the store environment, of which visual merchandising plays a vital role. This view is consistent with Bowers' (1973) observation that people approach, avoid, and create situations in accordance with their desires. Customers' avoid or leave retail settings that are stressful or obstructive (Anglin, Morgan, & Stoltman, 1999). The expectation/experience of positive feelings generally leads to approach responses, while avoidance is associated with expectations/experience of negative outcomes (Dovnovan & Rissiter, 1982; Mehrabian & Russel, 1974; Saegert & Winkel, 1990; Troye, 1985).

Researchers have suggested that various aspects of retailing environments can influence consumer behavior. Kotler (1973-1974) asserts the significant role of various retailing atmospherics. For instance, music and color have been related to consumer behavior (Bellizzi & Hite, 1992; Milliman, 1986; Yalch & Spangenberg, 1990) suggesting visual merchandising within the retail settings may influence consumer behavior as well.

Visual Merchandising

Visual merchandising, or visual presentation, is the means to communicate a store/company's fashion value and quality image to prospective customers. "The purpose of visual merchandising is to educate the customer, to enhance the store/company's image, and to encourage multiple sales by showing apparel together with accessories" (Frings, 1999, p. 347). Therefore, each store/company tries to build and enhance its image and concept through visual presentations, which appeal to shoppers and ultimately transform them into customers by building brand loyalty and encouraging customers' buying behaviors.

Visual merchandising is defined as "the presentation of a store/brand and its merchandise to the customer through the teamwork of the store's advertising, display, special events, fashion coordination, and merchandising departments in order to sell the goods and services offered by the store/company" (Mills, Paul, & Moorman, 1995, p. 2). Visual merchandising ranges from window/exterior displays to interior displays including form displays and floor/wall merchandising as well as promotion signage. It also broadly includes advertising and brand/store logo (Mills et al, 1995). In this study, however, only

window display and in-store display comprise of form/mannequin display, floor merchandising and promotional signage were investigated.

Visual Merchandising in Relation to Impulse Buying Behavior

In-store browsing may be a link between internal and external factors, as an important component in the impulse buying process as well as a link between consumers' impulse buying behavior and retail settings including exterior and interior display. "In-store browsing is the in-store examination of a retailer's merchandise for recreational and informational purposes without an immediate intent to buy" (Bloch, Ridgway, & Sharrell, 1989, p.14). Jarboe and McDaniel (1987) found customers who browsed in a store made more unplanned purchases than non-browsers in a regional mall setting. As a customer browses longer, she/he will tend to encounter more stimuli, which would tend to increase the likelihood of experiencing impulse urges. This supports Stern's (1962) conceptualization of impulse buying as a response to the consumer's exposure to in-store stimuli. Shoppers may actually use a form of in-store planning to finalize their intentions (Rook, 1987). The store stimuli serves as a type of information aid for those who go to the store without any predetermination of what they need or buy, and once they get into the store, they are reminded or get an idea of what they may need after looking around the store. In other words, consumer's impulse buying behavior is a response made by being confronted with stimuli that provoke a desire that ultimately motivate a consumer to make an unplanned purchase decision upon entering the store. The more the store stimuli, such as visual merchandising, serves as a shopping aid, the more likely the

possibility of a desire or need arising and finally creating an impulse purchase (Han, 1987; Han et al., 1991).

The importance of window display in relation to consumers' buying behavior has received minimal attention in the literature. However, since a consumer's choice of a store is influenced by the physical attractiveness of a store (Darden et al., 1983), and the first impressions of the store image is normally created at the façade level, it can be suggested that window display may influence, at least to some degree, consumers' choice of a store when they do not set out with a specific purpose of visiting a certain store and purchasing a certain item. The initial step to getting customers to purchase is getting them in the door.

Summary

Impulse buying has been defined as a spontaneous, immediate purchase (Rook & Fisher, 1995) without pre-shopping intentions either to buy a specific product category or to fulfill a specific buying task (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). Impulse purchases account for substantial sales across a broad range of product categories (Bellenger et al., 1978; Cobb & Hoyer, 1986; Han et al., 1991; Kollat & Willet, 1967; Rook & Fisher, 1995; Weinberg & Gottwald, 1982). Without having prior information of a new product or intention to purchase a certain item, a consumer is exposed to stimuli, suggesting that a need can be satisfied through the purchase. The store stimuli serves as a type of information aid for those who go to the store without any predetermination of what they need or buy. The more the store stimuli, such as visual merchandising, serves as a shopping aid, the more likely the possibility of a desire or need arising and finally creating an impulse purchase

(Han, 1987; Han et al., 1991). Despite the importance of this relationship, little literature was found regarding visual merchandising and impulse buying suggesting timelessness of this research project.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Chapter three outlines and describes the methodology involved in this research. This includes the research hypotheses, operational definitions of variables, instrument development, sample recruitment and data collection procedure, data analysis methods, and study limitations and assumptions.

Research Hypotheses

Research on situational influences can be described by investigating the relationship among various shopper characteristics and the features of retailing or point-of-purchase situations. Shopper characteristics might include involvement (Smith & Carsky, 1996), attitude (Reid & Brown, 1996) and ethnicity (Crispel, 1997), while retailing features could encompass store size (Owen, 1995), retail format (Ferne, 1996; Ferne & Ferne, 1997) and store personality (Abrams, 1996; Burns, 1992). In this study, college students' impulse purchase tendency serving as a shopper characteristic and visual merchandising serving as an external cue are determined to be variables. Therefore, hypotheses were developed to investigate relationships between college students' tendency to purchase on impulse and four types of visual merchandising: window display, in-store form/mannequin display, floor merchandising and promotional signage.

H1. College students who purchase on impulse are influenced by window displays.

H2. College students who purchase on impulse are influenced by in-store form/mannequin display.

H3. College students who purchase on impulse are influenced by floor merchandising.

H4. College students who purchase on impulse are influenced by promotional signage.

Hypothesis 1 was constructed to find out whether there was a significant relationship between college students' impulse buying behavior and window display. Hypothesis 2 was designed to find out whether or not there was a significant relationship between college students' impulse buying behavior and in-store form/mannequin display. Hypothesis 3 was designed to find out whether or not there was a significant relationship between college students' impulse buying behavior and floor merchandising. Hypothesis 4 was designed to find out whether or not there was a significant relationship between college students' impulse buying behavior and in-store promotional signage.

Operational Definitions of Variables

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable of this study was consumer's impulse buying tendency. Five questions measuring college students' impulse buying tendency were included in the survey (Table 1, question numbers 1-5; Appendix. 1). These questions were developed through references to previous studies on impulse buying (Beatty & Ferrel, 1998; Han, 1987; Rook & Hoch, 1985; Weun et al, 1997; Youn & Faber, 2000). Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, which ranged from never=1 to frequently=5.

Table 1: Empirical Support for the Questionnaire

Questionnaire	Empirical Support (question number)
<p>Section 1: Impulse buying</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I go shopping to change my mood. 2. I feel a sense of excitement when I make an impulse purchase. 3. After I make an impulse purchase I feel regret. 4. I have difficulty controlling my urge to buy when I see a good offer. 5. When I see a good deal, I tend to buy more than that I intended to buy. <p>Section 2: Influence of window display</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. I tend to enter a store when I am attracted by an eye-catching window display. 7. I feel compelled to enter the store when I see an interesting window display. 8. I tend to choose which store to shop in depending on eye-catching window displays. <p>Section 3: Influence of in-store form/mannequin display</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. I get an idea of what I want to buy after looking through in-store form/mannequin displays. 10. When I see clothing featuring a new style or design on display, I tend to buy it. 11. When I see clothing that I like on in-store form/mannequin display, I tend to buy it. 12. I tend to rely on store displays when I make a decision to purchase clothing. <p>Section 4: Influence of floor merchandising</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. When I see clothing that catches my eye I tend to try it on without looking through the whole section. 14. When I walk along the aisle, I tend to look through the clothing close to me. 15. I tend to try on clothing that catches my eye when I pass by. <p>Section 5: Influence of promotional signage</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. If I see an interesting promotional offer (reduced price, sales promotion, and etc.) on in-store signs, I tend to buy. 17. Sale/clearance signs entice me to look through the clothing. 18. When I see a special promotion sign, I go to look at that clothing. 19. I am more likely to make an unintended purchase if the clothing has a sale or clearance sign. 	<p>Youn & Faber, 2000 (1-3) Han, 1987; Rook & Hoch, 1985; Weun, Jones, & Betty, 1997; Youn & Faber, 2000 (4) Beatty & Ferrel, 1998; Youn, 2000 (5)</p> <p>These items developed by the researcher.</p> <p>Han, 1987 (9-10)</p> <p>Rook & Fisher, 1995 (11)</p> <p>Rook & Fisher, 1995 (13, 15)</p> <p>Beatty & Ferrel, 1998; Youn & Faber, 2000 (16) Han, 1987; Rook & Hoch, 1985; Weun, Jones, & Betty, 1997; Youn & Faber, 2000 (19)</p>

Independent Variables

Independent variables of this study were four types of visual merchandising: window display, in-store form/mannequin display, floor merchandising, and promotional signage. It was hypothesized that these variables influence shoppers to buy on impulse. In other words, these four types of visual merchandising will influence consumer's impulse buying behavior. Each independent variable was comprised of at least three questions designed to measure each variable. Responses were recorded using five-point scale with choice options of never=1 to frequently=5.

The first independent variable was the influence of window display on college students' buying behavior. This variable was measured using three items designed to determine whether window display enticed customers to enter a store. These three questions were created by the researcher specifically for this study (See Table 1, question numbers 6-8; Appendix 1). Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, which ranged from never=1 to frequently=5.

Four questions measuring influence of in-store form/mannequin display on college students' buying behavior were included in the survey (See Table 1, question numbers 9-12; Appendix 1). Question number 9, 10, and 11 were adapted from previous studies (Han, 1987; Rook & Fisher, 1995), and question number 12 was created by the researcher. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, which ranged from never=1 to frequently=5.

Three questions were developed to measure the influence of floor merchandising on college students' buying behavior (See Table 1, question numbers 13-15; Appendix 1). Question numbers 13 and 15 were adapted from a previous study (Rook & Fisher, 1995), and the researcher created the question number 14 specifically for this study. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, which ranged from never=1 to frequently=5.

The last independent variable, the influence of promotional signage, was measured using four questions (See Table 1, question numbers 16-19; Appendix 1). Question number 16 and 19 were adapted from previous studies (Beatty & Ferrel, 1998; Han, 1987; Rook & Hoch, 1985; Weun, Jones, & Betty, 1997; Youn & Faber, 2000), and question number 17 and 18 were created by the researcher for this study. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, which ranged from never=1 to frequently=5.

Methodology

Sample

College students' overspending has grown as they have more purchasing power than before with relatively easy access to credit cards (Schor, 1998). In fact, they have grown up with debt and use it freely (Roberts & Jones, 2001). Therefore, the consumer behavior of an important sector of the young adult consumer group, college students, is worth researching. The sample group for this research survey was selected from students enrolled in the College of Family and Consumer Sciences at The University of Georgia in Athens. Because the majority of students in this College are women, the majority of

respondents were expected to be women. Previous research found women to be the major purchasers of soft goods such as apparel and household textiles (Williams & Davis, 1972). Therefore, this demographical limitation is considered not to be a negative factor for this study.

Survey Development

The instrument used for this study was in survey format (Appendix 1). Questions were adopted from previous research or were created by the researcher with the help of the researcher's thesis committee. External factors examined were forms of visual merchandising likely to be encountered in many retailing contexts. The research, therefore, focused on the effects of both in-store information and window display on college students' impulse buying behavior.

The questionnaire consisted of six major sections measuring college students' impulse buying tendency, influence of visual merchandising and demographics. The first section of the survey measured college students' impulse buying tendency. Sections two through the section five included questions measuring four distinctive visual merchandising practices that were expected to influence college students' buying tendency. These were window display, in-store form/mannequin display, floor merchandising, and promotional signage. Finally, the last section consisted of questions to determine the respondents' demographic profile, such as age, gender, disposable income, residential status, school status, major, and job status.

A five-point Likert scale, ranging from never=1 to frequently=5 was used to measure each variable (Appendix 1 section 1-5). Participants were asked to circle the number that best described their response. Some demographic items were measured using open-ended answer formats (Appendix 1 section 6). All instructions and consent information were included in the questionnaire. The survey was printed on both sides of one sheet and consisted of five sections (Appendix 1).

Youn and Faber (2000) identified three criteria for unplanned purchases: response to in-store stimuli, no previously recognized problem and rapidity of purchase decision. Therefore, questions in the first section concerned college students' impulse buying tendency in respect to this criteria (Appendix 1 section 1). Today more retailers are placing increased importance on window display to attract passerby's attention and ultimately to transform shoppers into consumers (Diamond & Diamond, 1996). Therefore, the second section included questions concerning college students' buying behavior influenced by window display to see if window display influenced respondents to enter a certain store or to make a purchase decision (Appendix 1 section 2).

Form/mannequin display provides customers information about new products, new and current trend, and coordination tips (Appendix 1 section 3). The third section included questions concerning college students' buying behavior influenced by in-store form/mannequin display to find out if the respondent was influenced by in-store form/mannequin display when he/she made a purchase decision (Appendix 1 section 3).

Many retailers make a floor merchandising plan-o-gram/zone-o-gram and strategically place focused merchandise near the aisle so that it can grab the customers'

attention when they pass by. Therefore, the fourth section included questions concerning college students' buying behavior influenced by floor merchandising (i.e., merchandise itself hanging on the hangers/racks or folded on tables) to find out if the respondent was influenced by floor merchandising when he/she made a purchase decision (Appendix 1, section 4). The fifth section included questions concerning college students' buying behavior influenced by promotional signage (i.e., clearance, reduced price, semi-annual sale, holiday sales.) to find out if the respondent was influenced by any kind of signs in store when he/she made a purchase decision (Appendix 1, section 5).

The final section included demographic questions related to age, gender, income, residential status, school status, and job status, to see the respondents' demographic profile (Appendix 1, section 6). Because of the nature of impulse buying, a strong relationship between emotional/affective reactions and behavior was expected despite of the possible fact that it might have been more likely influenced by external factors. Thus, respondents were asked to base their answers on their recent impulse purchase experiences.

Survey Administration/Data Collection

The survey questionnaire (Appendix 1) and the cover letter (Appendix 2) were created according to the guidelines of the Human Subjects Office at The University of Georgia. The cover letter accompanying the questionnaire provided information describing the need for the study, insuring confidentiality, and informing participants of their right to refuse participation as outlined in the guidelines of human subject consent form required by the University Institutional Review Board. Prior to the distribution, the

questionnaire was presented to a faculty committee to ensure the clarity of the questions. In addition to that, a statistician was consulted for the suitability of questions.

Data were collected from a convenience student sample. Because the survey was conducted at the University, participants were expected to be adults, aged 18 or over. However, the cover letter contained information constraining participation to adults only to insure the questionnaire was completed by participants, aged 18 or over. The researcher selected College core classes (courses requires of all majors within the College) from The University of Georgia Class Schedule book for spring 2003 and contacted professors for permission to give an oral presentation as well as distributing survey questionnaire in class. Two hundred forty-five self-report survey questionnaires were distributed to the students taking large-scale core classes in Family and Consumer Sciences at The University of Georgia over a two-week period of time in spring 2003. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire in class and return it as soon as they finished. In addition to the consent letter, participants were given an oral presentation about the study, directions, and rights by the researcher. The researcher was also ready to answer any questions from participants during the interaction. The survey completion time was approximately fifteen minutes. A total 238 of the 245 survey questionnaires administered were complete for a 97.14% usable response rate. There was no incentive offered for participation in this study.

Data Analysis Methods

Prior to survey distribution, a statistician was consulted to ensure the questions would be applicable and also to determine the most suitable statistical method to use for

this research. Statistical Packages for Social Sciences' (SPSS) software is used for the data analysis. The plan for analysis is as follows. First, descriptive statistics and frequency tables will be generated by SPSS for a data entry error check and demographic analysis. Then, principal component analysis with reliability test will be conducted. The Pearson correlation test will be conducted to see the correlations between college students' impulse buying tendency and each of four types of visual merchandising practices. Finally, regression analysis will be conducted for hypotheses testing to find out the relationship between college students' impulse buying tendency (dependent variable) and the four types of visual merchandising (independent variables). Table 2 shows the hypotheses and survey location along with the planned analysis for each hypothesis.

Limitations

The following limitations were considered in this study:

1. The sample was geographically limited and the age range was narrow. Data collected in other areas may produce different results.
2. Participants were limited to students enrolling in the College of Family and Consumer Sciences. Students' shopping traits and dependability on visual merchandising as an information aid may differ depending on their area of study.
3. The instrument was limited to a quantitative method. The survey asked participants to answer the questions based on their recent impulse buying experiences as long as they were aware of their behavior and influences. However, the qualitative research methods may bring different results.

Table 2: Research hypotheses, location of the related questions, and planned preliminary and hypothesis statistical tests.

Hypothesis	Survey Location	Planned Statistical Tests	
		Preliminary Tests	Hyp. Test
H1. College students who purchase on impulse are influenced by window displays.	Section 1: Questions 1-5 Section 2: Questions 6-8	Frequency table Principal component analysis Reliability test Pearson correlation	Regression analysis
H2. College students who purchase on impulse are influenced by in-store form/mannequin display.	Section 1: Questions 1-5 Section 3: Questions 9-12	Frequency table Principal component analysis Reliability test Pearson correlation	Regression analysis
H3. College students who purchase on impulse are influenced by floor merchandising.	Section 1: Questions 1-5 Section 4: Questions 13-15	Frequency table Principal component analysis Reliability test Pearson correlation	Regression analysis
H4. College students who purchase on impulse are influenced by promotional signage.	Section 1: Questions 1-5 Section 5: Questions 16-19	Frequency table Principal component analysis Reliability test Pearson correlation	Regression analysis

4. Participants had time constraints. Since the survey was asked to be completed in class and to be returned immediately, the time pressure of the respondents may have affected the quality of the data.

Summary

This chapter provided description of the research hypotheses, operational definitions of variables, instrument development, sample recruitment and data collection procedure, data analysis methods, and study limitations and assumptions. Hypotheses in this study were developed to investigate relationship between college students' tendency to purchase on impulse and four types of visual merchandising: window display, in-store form/mannequin display, floor merchandising and promotional signage. The survey questions were adopted from previous research or were created by the researcher and distributed to convenient student sample with 97.14 % usable response rate. Statistical Packages for Social Sciences' (SPSS) software will be used for analysis.

CHAPTER 4

ANAYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter provides a detailed description of the data analysis and discussion of research findings as a result of various statistical tests. Data were collected via self-administered survey in College of Family and Consumer sciences core courses at The University of Georgia and entered into an Excel file. The data file was imported from Excel to the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences' (SPSS) software for analysis. Statistical methods used for the data analysis in this study were descriptive statistics and frequency tests, principal component analysis and reliability tests, Pearson correlation tests, and regression analyses. The significance level chosen for this study was .01.

Descriptive Findings

First, a descriptive statistic analysis was conducted to examine whether or not there was an error in the data entry. In addition, frequency tables were generated to describe the sample in terms of demographics as well as respondents' impulse buying tendency and the influence of four types of visual merchandising on their buying behaviors. The frequency tables included frequency, percent, valid percent, and cumulative percent as well as mean and standard deviation for each data set.

Descriptive Statistics for demographics

Descriptive statistics for the sample can be found in Table 3, providing information regarding the respondents' demographical profile, such as age, gender, disposable income, residential status, school classification, major, and job status. The

majority of respondents were women (85%) whereas only 13% of respondents were men (Table 3). Since women are the major purchasers of soft goods (e.g., apparel and household textiles), shown in the previous research (Williams & Davis, 1972), this demographical limitation is not considered to affect the result in a negative way.

The majority of respondents lived in an apartment (55%), followed by houses (28%) including rental and purchased, and residence halls (16%), and the majority of the respondents (87%) appeared to live with roommates. Most respondents (72%) were ages 20 (31%), 21 (22%), and 19 (19%), as expected, and the average age of respondents was 21 years old. The disposable income of the respondents ranged from \$2 to \$1400. The distribution of disposable income was skewed with an average of \$224. The largest proportion (21%) of the respondents was majoring in Child Development followed by Fashion Merchandising (15%) and Nursing (13%). Eighty-two percent of respondents were either sophomores (46%) or juniors (36%). Almost one half (46%) of respondents were unemployed and the other half had a part-time job (45.6%).

Descriptive Statistics for variables

Since responses were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale, which ranged from never=1 to frequently=5, a respondent scoring above three (3) on this scale in section 1 through 5 could be considered to support the variables (i.e., college students' impulse buying tendency, influence of window display on college students' impulse buying behavior, influence of in-store form/mannequin display on college students'

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Demographics

Question		Frequency	Valid Frequency Percent (%)
Gender	Male	30	12.7
	Female	201	84.8
Age	18	6	2.5
	19	46	19.4
	20	73	30.8
	21	53	22.4
	22-25	28	11.8
	26-55	10	4.1
Residence	Residence Hall	37	15.6
	Apartment	131	55.3
	House	66	27.8
Living Arrangement	Alone	10	4.2
	Roommate	205	86.5
	Parents	6	2.5
	Spouse	5	2.1
Disposable income	Under \$49	9	3.6
	\$50-99	23	9.7
	\$100-199	45	18.9
	\$200-299	45	19.0
	\$300-399	16	6.7
	\$400-499	22	5.0
	Over \$500	17	7.0
School Classification	Freshman	15	6.3
	Sophomore	109	46.0
	Junior	85	35.9
	Senior	21	8.9
	Graduate	5	2.1
Job Status	Unemployed	109	46.0
	Part-time	108	45.6
	Full-time	13	5.5

impulse buying behavior, influence of floor merchandising on college students' impulse buying behavior, and influence of promotional signage on college students' impulse buying behavior). The descriptive statistics for each variable is shown in Table 4.

The mean score (3.32) for the first section of the survey, measuring college students' impulse buying tendency, suggested respondents tended to purchase on impulse. Section two through section five measured influences of four types of visual merchandising on college students' shopping behavior. As long as College students were aware of the influences on their buying decision from their recent shopping experience, it appeared that they tended be influenced by window display, floor merchandising, and promotional signage when they made a purchase decision (Table 4). However, for the fifth section of the survey, measuring influence of in-store form/mannequin display on college students' buying behavior, the mean scale exhibited 2.62; in-store form/mannequin display was not rated as strongly as the in-store visual merchandising variables. Bivariate correlation among variables and directional relationships between college students' impulse buying behavior and the influencing factors will be discussed later in Pearson correlation and regression analysis section.

Data Reduction and Reliability Test

Three to five items were constructed to measure each variable under study. Principal component analyses with Varimax rotation were conducted for five variables (i.e., college students' impulse buying tendency, college students' buying behavior influenced by window display, college students' buying behavior influenced by in-store form/mannequin display, college students' buying behavior influenced by floor merchandising, college students' buying behavior influenced by promotional signage) to

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Variables

Variables	Number of Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation
Impulse Buying Tendency	237	3.32	0.7944
Influence of Window Display	237	3.35	0.9486
Influence of Form/Mannequin Display	237	2.62	0.7673
Influence of Floor Merchandising	237	3.49	0.7826
Influence of Promotional Signage	237	3.89	0.7654

Scale values: Never=1 to Frequently=5

reduce these measures into single variables. Components with Eigenvalues over one for each of the five multi-item scales were extracted. Once the five sets of multi-item measures were condensed to one component each, internal consistency was checked using Cronbach's alpha to ensure the reliability of data reduction.

The items in the first section of the survey, measuring college students' impulse buying tendency, initially loaded into two components with Eigenvalues over one (Table 5). Four of the five items loaded into the first component, and one item loaded into the second component. This result suggests that one item (i.e., "3. After I make an impulse purchase, I feel regret.") represented a concept different from that of the other four items. A reliability test of all five items indicated that removing the item comprising the second component would improve the overall reliability from .62 to .70. Therefore, question number 3 was discarded because of its irrelevance to other questions, and four questions were retained for use in analysis. Another principal component analysis was executed after eliminating question three, resulting in a single component with an Eigenvalue of 2.10 (Table 6). This component accounted for 53% of the total variance (Table 6). The reliability for this component was .70 (Table 7).

For the second section of the survey, measuring the influence of window display, the principal component analysis resulted in one component with an Eigenvalue of 2.32 (Table 8). This component consisted of three questions. These three questions (see Table 8, question numbers 6-8) were closely related, representing the same concept: college students' buying behavior influenced by window display. The overall variance explained by this component was 77% (Table 8). The reliability test for internal consistency

Table 5: Initial Component Matrix of Multi-item scale for Impulse Buying

Items (Impulse Buying Tendency)	Component	
	1	2
1. I go shopping to change my mood.	0.689	-0.207
2. I feel a sense of excitement when I make an impulse purchase.	0.722	-0.409
3. After I make an impulse purchase, I feel regret	0.104	0.882
4. I have difficulty controlling my urge to buy when I see a good offer.	0.798	0.278
5. When I see a good deal, I tend to buy more than that I intended to buy.	0.679	0.183
Component Eigenvalue	2.105	1.099
% of Variance Explained	42%	22%

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation

Highlighted component loadings indicate assignment into component one or two.

Table 6: Component Matrix for Impulse Buying Tendency after Eliminating Item Three

Items (Impulse Buying Tendency)	Component
	1
1. I go shopping to change my mood.	0.690
2. I feel a sense of excitement when I make an impulse purchase.	0.734
4. I have difficulty controlling my urge to buy when I see a good offer.	0.790
5. When I see a good deal, I tend to buy more than that I intended to buy.	0.679
Component Eigenvalue	2.100
% of Variance Explained	53%

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Table 7: Reliability Test Result for Internal Consistency

Survey Questions	Cronbach Alpha (Correlation to Total)
Section 1: Impulse buying	0.70
1. I go shopping to change my mood.	(0.66)
2. I feel a sense of excitement when I make an impulse purchase.	(0.62)
3. (Excluded from analysis.)	
4. I have difficulty controlling my urge to buy when I see a good offer.	(0.58)
5. When I see a good deal, I tend to buy more than that I intended to buy.	(0.66)
Section 2: Influence of window display	0.85
6. I tend to enter a store when I am attracted by an eye-catching window display.	(0.75)
7. I feel compelled to enter the store when I see an interesting window display.	(0.76)
8. I tend to choose which store to shop in depending on eye-catching window displays.	(0.86)
Section 3: Influence of in-store form/mannequin display	0.83
9. I get an idea of what I want to buy after looking through in-store form/mannequin displays.	(0.80)
10. When I see clothing featuring a new style or design on display, I tend to buy it.	(0.76)
11. When I see clothing that I like on in-store form/mannequin display, I tend to buy it.	(0.76)
12. I tend to rely on store displays when I make a decision to purchase clothing.	(0.81)
Section 4: Influence of floor merchandising	0.64
13. When I see clothing that catches my eye I tend to try it on without looking through the whole section.	(0.55)
14. When I walk along the isle, I tend to look through the clothing close to me.	(0.55)
15. I tend to try on clothing that catches my eye when I pass by.	(0.53)
Section 5: Influence of promotional signage	0.84
16. If I see an interesting promotional offer (reduced price, sales promotion, and etc.) on in-store signs, I tend to buy.	(0.84)
17. Sale/clearance signs entice me to look through the clothing.	(0.77)
18. When I see a special promotion sign, I go to look at that clothing.	(0.78)
19. I am more likely to make an unintended purchase if the clothing has a sale or clearance sign.	(0.80)

Table 8: Component Matrix for Influence of Window Display

Items (Influence of Window Display)	Component
	1
6. I tend to enter a store when I am attracted by an eye-catching window display.	0.904
7. I feel compelled to enter the store when I see an interesting window display.	0.808
8. I tend to choose which store to shop in depending on eye-catching window displays.	0.691
Component Eigenvalue	2.316
% of Variance Explained	77%

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

resulted in a Cronbach alpha of .85 indicating good internal consistency of the component (Table 7). Because all three items in this section loaded in one component, conducting an additional principal component test was not necessary for this section.

In the analysis of the third section of the survey, measuring influence of in-store form/mannequin display, the result of the principal component analysis showed that all four items in this section loaded in one component with an Eigenvalue of 2.64 accounting for 66% of the variance (Table 9). This result suggested that these four questions (see Table 9, question numbers 9-12) were relevant and representing the same concept: college students' buying behavior influenced by in-store form/mannequin display. The reliability test exhibited good internal consistency of a component with a Cronbach alpha of .83 (Table 7). Therefore, all four items were retained for use in analysis.

The result of the principal component analysis for the fourth section of the survey, measuring influence of floor merchandising, all three items loaded in one component with an Eigenvalue of 1.76 (Table 10). This result suggests that all three questions (Table 10, question numbers 13-15) in this section were closely related and represented the same concept: college students' buying behavior influenced by floor merchandising. The reliability test for internal consistency resulted in a Cronbach alpha of 0.64 indicating the good internal consistency of the component (Table 7).

The principal component analysis for the fifth section, measuring influence of promotional signage, resulted in one component with an Eigenvalue of 2.71 accounting 68% of variance (Table 11). This component consisted of four questions. These four questions (Table 11, question numbers 16-19) were closely related representing the same concept: college students' buying behavior influenced by promotional signage. The

Table 9: Component Matrix for Influence of Form/Mannequin Display

Items (Influence of Form/Mannequin Display)	Component
	1
9. I get an idea of what I want to buy after looking through in-store form/mannequin displays.	0.788
10. When I see clothing featuring a new style or design on display, I tend to buy it.	0.843
11. When I see clothing that I like on in-store form/mannequin display, I tend to buy it.	0.844
12. I tend to rely on store displays when I make a decision to purchase clothing.	0.772
Component Eigenvalue	2.639
% of Variance Explained	66%

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Table 10: Component Matrix for Influence of Floor Merchandising

Items (Influence of Floor Merchandising)	Component
	1
13. When I see clothing that catches my eye I tend to try it on without looking through the whole section.	0.767
14. When I walk along the isle, I tend to look through the clothing close to me.	0.758
15. I tend to try on clothing that catches my eye when I pass by.	0.770
Component Eigenvalue	1.756
% of Variance Explained	59%

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Table 11: Component Matrix for Influence of Promotional Signage

Items (Influence of Promotional Signage)	Component
	1
16. If I see an interesting promotional offer (reduced price, sales promotion, and etc.) on in-store signs, I tend to buy.	0.748
17. Sale/clearance signs entice me to look through the clothing.	0.864
18. When I see a special promotion sign, I go to look at that clothing.	0.851
19. I am more likely to make an unintended purchase if the clothing has a sale or clearance sign.	0.826
Component Eigenvalue	2.712
% of Variance Explained	68%

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

reliability test for internal consistency resulted in a Cronbach alpha of .85 exhibiting good internal consistency of the component (Table 7). Therefore, all four items were retained for use in analysis.

All multi item scales were successfully reduced to individual variables representing each of the intended variables. The following section outlines the use of these variables to test the hypotheses tests.

Analysis and Discussion of Hypotheses Findings

Pearson Correlation and Regression Analysis

Pearson correlation tests were conducted to see the correlations between the independent variable and dependent variables. In addition to the Pearson correlation test, a simple bivariate analysis, a multiple regression analysis was conducted for the hypotheses testing using impulse buying tendency as a dependent variable and each visual merchandising variable as predictors in order to see if there is relationships that were uncovered in a multiple context and to determine the relative importance of the various type of influences on college students' impulse buying behavior. Hypothesis 1 was designed to test whether or not there was a significant relationship between college students' impulse buying behavior and window display. Hypothesis 2 was constructed to determine whether or not there was a significant relationship between college students' impulse buying behavior and in-store form/mannequin display. Hypothesis 3 was prepared to test whether or not there was a significant relationship between college students' impulse buying behavior and floor merchandising. Hypothesis 4 was designed to determine whether or not there was a significant relationship between college students' impulse buying behavior and any type of in-store promotional signage.

H1. College students who purchase on impulse are influenced by window displays.

In the result of a Pearson correlation test, a significant correlation was shown between impulse buying and window display with a p-value less than .001 (Table 12). Since the p-value ($p < .001$) was smaller than an alpha level .01, the data provided sufficient evidence that window display was significantly related with college students' impulse buying behavior. However, the regression analysis found that window display did not significantly influence college students' impulse buying behavior (Table 13) even though the Pearson correlation test showed the significant relationship between impulses buying and window display (Table 12). Since the p-value (.281) from the regression analysis was greater than the level of alpha .01, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This suggested that there was not a directional relationship where window display significantly influenced college students' impulse buying behavior. The data did not provide sufficient evidence that there was a significant relationship between college students' impulse buying behavior and window display suggesting that although college students' impulse buying behavior and window display are correlated, the directional relationship (i.e., influence of window display on impulse buying) was not found to be statistically significant.

This result might have come from the fact that window display was also significantly correlated with other variables including the variables (i.e., form/mannequin display and promotional signage) that had the stronger relationship with impulse buying from the regression analysis; the significant relationship with impulse buying shown from the a simple bivariate analysis might have resulted from the significant relationship with

Table 12: Correlation with Impulse Buying

Variables	Coefficient (r)	Significance (p)
Window Display	0.292**	0.000**
Form/mannequin Display	0.406**	0.000**
Floor Merchandising	0.286**	0.000**
Promotional Signage	0.404**	0.000**

** . Correlation is significant at $p < .001$

Table 13: Hypotheses and conclusion with determining coefficients and p-values from regression analysis

Hypothesis	Coefficient (β)	p-value	Conclusion
H1. College students who purchase on impulse are more likely influenced by window displays.	0.069	0.281	Although college students' impulse buying behavior and window display are correlated, the directional relationship was not found to be statistically significant.
H2. College students who purchase on impulse are more likely influenced by in-store form/mannequin display.	0.287	0.000**	In-store form/mannequin display significantly influences college students' impulse buying behavior.
H3. College students who purchase on impulse are more likely influenced by floor merchandising.	0.072	0.249	Although college students' impulse buying behavior and floor merchandising are correlated, the directional relationship was not found to be statistically significant.
H4. College students who purchase on impulse are more likely influenced by promotional signage.	0.297	0.000**	Promotional signage significantly influences college students' impulse buying behavior.

** . Relationship is significant at $p < .001$

Dependent Variable: College students' impulse buying tendency

Predictors: Influence of window display, in-store form/mannequin display, floor merchandising and promotional signage on college students' buying behavior.

these variables. Even though the result showed the window display did not significantly influence college students' actual impulse buying decision in a direct way, it may play a role to attract college students' to enter the store by creating attractiveness of a store (Darden et al., 1983), which may ultimately contribute their impulse buying.

H2. College students who purchase on impulse are influenced by in-store form/mannequin display.

A Pearson correlation test resulted in a small p-value ($p < .001$) for the second hypothesis, suggesting a significant correlation between impulse buying and in-store form/mannequin display (Table 12). The data provided sufficient evidence that in-store form/mannequin display was significantly related to college students' impulse buying behavior. In consistence with the result of the correlation test, the regression analysis found that in-store form/mannequin display significantly influenced college students' impulse buying behavior (Table 13). The p-value ($p < .001$) was smaller than an alpha level .01, supporting the researcher's hypothesis. The data provided sufficient evidence that there was a significant relationship between college students' impulse buying behavior and in-store form/mannequin display. This finding was not surprising because the result of the Pearson correlation test showed much higher coefficient ($r = .406$) for the relationship with in-store form/mannequin display than the coefficient ($r = .292$) for the relationship with window display even though they both appeared to have significant relationships with college students' impulse buying behavior. This result suggests that in-store form/mannequin display significantly influences college students' impulse buying behavior. This result is in line with Stern's (1962) conceptualization of impulse buying as a response linked to the college students' exposure to in-store stimuli. The more

consumers use the in-store stimuli, such as interesting form/mannequin display, as an information aid, the more likely the possibility of a desire or need arising creating impulse buying (Han, 1987; Han et al, 1991).

H3. College students who purchase on impulse are influenced by floor merchandising.

The result of a Pearson correlation test found a significant correlation between impulse buying and floor merchandising (Table 12). The p-value ($p < .001$) was smaller than an alpha level .01, suggesting that the data provided sufficient evidence that window display was significantly related with college students' impulse buying behavior. However, even though the Pearson correlation test showed a significant relationship between impulse buying and floor merchandising (Table 12), the regression analysis suggested that the floor merchandising did not significantly influence college students' impulse buying behavior (Table 13). Since the p-value (.297) from the regression analysis was larger than .01, the researcher's hypothesis was not proven. The data did not provide sufficient evidence that there was a significant directional relationship between college students' impulse buying behavior and floor merchandising suggesting that although college students' impulse buying behavior and floor merchandising are correlated, the directional relationship (i.e., influence of floor merchandising on impulse buying) was not found to be statistically significant. Like the case of window display, this result might have come from the fact that floor merchandising was also significantly correlated with other variables including the variables (i.e., form/mannequin display and promotional signage) that had the stronger relationship with impulse buying from the regression analysis; the significant relationship with impulse buying shown from the a simple

bivariate analysis might have resulted from the significant relationship with these variables. College students' buying decisions are sometimes contingent or/and altered by environmental circumstances (Rook, 1987), and consumers may actually use a form of in-store planning to finalize their intentions (Rook & Fisher, 1995). Since information that creates a desire or reminds a need to buy can be obtained from various sources, despite of its possible influence, consumers may not be aware of the floor merchandising that presents actual merchandise and variety of assortments as a form of an information aid.

H4. College students who purchase on impulse are influenced by promotional signage.

A Pearson correlation test found a significant correlation between impulse buying and promotional signage with a p-value less than .001 (Table 12). Because the p-value ($p < .001$) was smaller than an alpha level of .01, the result suggested that the data provided sufficient evidence that promotional signage was significantly related with college students' impulse buying behavior. As expected, the regression analysis found that promotional signage significantly influenced college students' impulse buying behavior (Table 13). The p-value ($p < .001$) was smaller than an alpha level .01, suggesting that the data provided sufficient evidence that there was a significant directional relationship between college students' impulse buying behavior and promotional signage. This result was expected because the result of the Pearson correlation test showed much higher coefficient ($r = .404$) for the relationship between college students' impulse buying behavior and influence of promotional signage than the coefficients for the relationship with window display ($r = .292$) or floor merchandising

($r = .286$) (Table 12). This result suggests that promotional signage significantly influenced college students' impulse buying behavior. Rook and Hoch (1985) identified internal psychological state as a factor that influenced impulse buying behavior. In-store signs, such as holiday promotions and new product introduction, serve as an obvious information aid concerning with college students' cognitive and emotional responses. Youn & Faber (2000) identified triggers for impulse buying. These were money (e.g., having money and credit cards), good deals (e.g., sale, low prices and free samples/gifts) and events (holidays, leisure and vacation). These signs trigger the desire to make an unanticipated purchase, which may demand immediate buying action persistently (Hirschman, 1985).

Summary

Statistical methods used for the data analysis in this study were descriptive statistics and frequency test, principal component analysis and reliability test, Pearson correlation test, and regression analysis. The results of the Pearson correlation test showed significant relationships between college students' impulse buying behavior and each independent variable (i.e., window display, in-store form/mannequin display, floor merchandising, and promotional signage) at an alpha level of at least 0.01 (Table 12). Hypothesis test by regression analysis resulted in significant directional relationships between college students' impulse buying behavior and two independent variables: form/mannequin display and promotional signage. Window display and floor merchandising appeared not to be significant factors that influence college students' impulse buying behavior (Table 13).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides summary and discussion of research findings along with implications for industry. In addition, recommendations for future research and limitations of the study will be discussed.

Conclusions

Impulse buying is a sudden and immediate purchase with no pre-shopping intentions either to buy the specific product or to fulfill a specific buying task (Rook, 1987). Researchers have attempted to determine if consumers' who frequently engage in impulse buying behavior have some common personality traits. This study further investigated some external factors that influence impulse buying behavior. In attempt to examine this relationship, this study primarily tried to explain the relationship between college students' impulse buying behavior and various types of visual merchandising. An important finding of this study was that visual merchandising practices certainly influence college students' impulse buying behavior. The results proved that there were significant relationships between college students' impulse buying behavior and in-store form/mannequin display and promotional signage. Even though the window display and floor merchandising did not appear to significantly lead to college students' impulse buying behavior, the results still suggested that these variables and consumers' impulse buying behavior are significantly correlated. It can be agreed that all four types of visual merchandising (i.e., window display, in-store form/mannequin display, floor

merchandising, and promotional signage) are significantly interrelated and that relationship generates the influences on consumers' impulse buying behavior.

A significant contribution of the present study is its elucidation of the relationship between impulse buying and visual merchandising, which has been neglected in academic research (Buttle, 1988). Despite the utilization of visual merchandising to improve desirability of products and to encourage consumers' buying behavior, a dearth of research exists that investigates its influence on consumer buying behavior. The result of the present study proves that there is a pivotal relationship between college students' impulse buying behaviors and two type of visual merchandising practices: in-store form/mannequin display and promotional signage. When consumers are exposed to these visual stimuli, they more likely make purchase decisions on impulse. This suggests that these visual merchandising practices, serving as stimuli that provoke a desire that ultimately motivates a consumer to make an unplanned purchase decision upon entering the store, significantly influence consumers' impulse buying behaviors.

In-store browsing appears to be positively affected by consumers' impulse buying tendency, and in turn, has a positive impact on consumers' positive feelings and impulse buying urges (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998). Despite the importance of this relationship, visual merchandising, which was relevant of browsing, has received minimal attention from researchers. This study showed usefulness of visual merchandising in understanding impulse buying.

Implications

Impulse buying occurs when a consumer experiences a sudden, often powerful and persistent urge to buy something immediately, and the impulse to buy is hedonically

complex (Rook, 1987). Babin et al (1994) further asserted the hedonic value of shopping suggesting that it reflects shopping's potential entertainment and emotional worth. It has been suggested that browsing, or shopping without specific intent, may be more important than the actual acquisition of products and can provide a pleasurable shopping experience (MacInnis & Price, 1987; Sherry, 1990). Therefore, in addition to exposing consumers to stimuli, such as retail settings, browsing tends to produce positive feelings for many shoppers. These positive feelings, produced by browsing, play a role as positive affects to encourage consumers' impulse buying behavior. Retail setting, such as visual merchandising, therefore, can influence consumers' impulse buying by providing information or reminding needs as well as producing positive feelings. At the stages of the impulse buying process, retailers can attempt to provoke consumers' desire for the products, and the awareness of the products, which can satisfy the desire, can be achieved by browsing and being exposed to the stimuli, such as visual merchandising.

The way in which merchandise will eventually be displayed and promoted at the store level is an important consideration in the strategic marketing/merchandising plan. The findings of this study provided information concerning the influence of visual merchandising on consumers' impulse buying behavior. The result signified importance of visual merchandising influences on impulse buying behavior. Since in-store form/mannequin display and promotional signage significantly influence college students' impulse buying behavior, retailers should continuously reinforce usage of in-store form/mannequin displays and functions of signs to create favorable shopping environments to influence consumers' both in-store responses and future store choice decisions. Although window display and floor merchandising did not appear to

significantly influence college students' impulse buying behavior, significant correlation found between college students' impulse buying behavior and both window display and floor merchandising. Since a previous study proved that physical attractiveness of a store had a higher correlation with a choice of a store than did merchandise quality, general price level, and selection (Darden et al., 1983), retailers should put more efforts creating attractive and eye-catching window display providing information regarding new products, fashion trends, or coordination tips. Even though floor merchandising did not appear to significantly influence impulse buying decision, research found that perceptions of variety are an important determinant of attitudes and store choice (Arnold, Oum, & Tigert, 1983). Therefore, creative merchandise presentation and variety of assortment can still influence customers' satisfaction and perceptions about the store choice. The findings of this study provided sufficient evidence that retailers can utilize visual merchandising to increase desirability of products and to help customers being aware of the products as well as to create favorable attitudes. This study also provided insights to retailers about types of visual merchandising that can influence consumers' impulse buying behaviors.

Jarboe and McDaniel (1987, p. 47) suggest that not only are browsers important to the study of impulse buyers, they "are also likely to be effective word-of-mouth advertisers, peer influencers, and trend setters, especially for socially visible products." Even though the impulse buying process is speedy and done without prior information search and alternative evaluation, customers perceive high value and satisfaction when the benefits, the satisfaction from acquisition of the actual product or fulfillments of the desire from the internal states, significantly outweigh the negative consequence (Hoch &

Bradlow, 1999). The positive impulse buying experiences contribute to establishing store loyalty and customers' perceived value and satisfaction influence future buying decisions. Effective visual merchandising practices can influence consumers' positive impulse purchase experiences.

Recommendations for Future Research

Because impulse buying behavior was strongly related to emotional/affective reactions and behavior despite of the possible fact that it might have been more likely influenced by external factors, the type of influence/response was somewhat difficult to determine by the survey questionnaires. If consumers were aware of their responses to various situations, the influence of different factors/events could have been directly examined. Therefore, combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods (e.g., observational or experimental research methods) is recommended for future research.

In addition, since impulse buying is phenomenon in a modern society, expended research with various demographical and geographical groups as well as influences of visual merchandising in various non-store formats are recommended.

Summary

This study primarily explained the relationship between college students' impulse buying behavior and various types of visual merchandising. The result of the present study proves that there is a pivotal relationship between college students' impulse buying behaviors and two type of visual merchandising practices: in-store form/mannequin display and promotional signage. This suggests that these visual merchandising practices, serving as stimuli that provoke a desire that ultimately motivates a consumer to make an unplanned purchase decision upon entering the store, significantly influence consumers'

impulse buying behaviors. The findings of this study proved sufficient evidence that retailers can utilize visual merchandising to increase desirability of products and to help customers being aware of the products as well as to create favorable attitudes.

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APPENDIX A: A SAMPLE OF SURVEY

Section1: Impulse buying

	Never			Frequently	
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I go shopping to change my mood.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I feel a sense of excitement when I make an impulse purchase.	1	2	3	4	5
3. After I make an impulse purchase I feel regret.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I have difficulty controlling my urge to buy when I see a good offer.	1	2	3	4	5
5. When I see a good deal, I tend to buy more than that I intended to buy.	1	2	3	4	5

Section2: Influence of window display

	Never			Frequently	
	1	2	3	4	5
6. I tend to enter a store when I am attracted by an eye-catching window display.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I feel compelled to enter the store when I see an interesting window display.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I tend to choose which store to shop in depending on eye-catching window displays.	1	2	3	4	5

Section3: Influence of in-store form/mannequin display

	Never			Frequently	
	1	2	3	4	5
9. I get an idea of what I want to buy after looking through in-store form/mannequin displays.	1	2	3	4	5
10. When I see clothing featuring a new style or design on display, I tend to buy it.	1	2	3	4	5
11. When I see clothing that I like on in-store form/mannequin display, I tend to buy it.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I tend to rely on store displays when I make a decision to purchase clothing.	1	2	3	4	5

Section4: Influence of floor merchandising

	Never			Frequently	
	1	2	3	4	5
13. When I see clothing that catches my eye I tend to try it on without looking through the whole section.	1	2	3	4	5
14. When I walk along the aisle, I tend to look through the clothing close to me.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I tend to try on clothing that catches my eye when I pass by.	1	2	3	4	5

Section5: Influence of promotional signage

	Never			Frequently	
	1	2	3	4	5
16. If I see an interesting promotional offer (reduced price, sales promotion, and etc.) on in-store signs, I tend to buy.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Sale/clearance signs entice me to look through the clothing.	1	2	3	4	5
18. When I see a special promotion sign, I go to look at that clothing.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I am more likely to make an unintended purchase if the clothing has a sale or clearance sign.	1	2	3	4	5

Section6: Demographic questions

20. Residential status?
a. I reside in
b. I live with
21. What is your gender?

22. What is your age?

23. How much is your disposable income after paying your bills?
\$ _____ /month
24. School status?
Freshman Sophomore Junior
Senior Graduate
Unemployed Full-time
Part-time
25. Job status?

26. What is your major?

Thank you for your participation! Have a great day!

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask now or a later date. You may contact Jiyeon Kim, Department of Textiles, Merchandising, and Interiors at the University of Georgia at (678) 407-9800 or jiyeon@uga.edu (Additional questions to Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D. Human Subjects Office, UGA, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center; PH (706) 542-2400; E-MAIL: cajoseph@uga.edu)

APPENDIX B: CONSENT LETTER

College Students' Apparel Impulse Buying Behaviors in Relation to Visual Merchandising

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Today's fierce competition and the similarity of merchandise force each segment of the fashion industry to utilize visual merchandising to improve the desirability of its products. Especially apparel retailers have placed more importance on visual merchandising to differentiate their offerings from others'. Since impulse buying accounts for substantial sales across a broad range of product categories, and impulse buyers usually do not set out with the specific purpose of visiting a certain store and purchasing a certain item, it is worthwhile for retailers to understand the type of retail setting that triggers their impulsive reactions. Therefore, this research will provide information as why visual merchandising should be considered an important component of a strategic marketing plan in support of sales increase and positive store/company image.

I am asking you and other students aged 18 and over who are enrolled in this course to complete a questionnaire related to your shopping habits. Please complete the questionnaire and return it to me as soon as you finish. I will be ready to answer any questions you may have during the time you are filling out the questionnaire or after. Survey completion time is expected to be approximately 15minutes.

By completing and returning the questionnaire, you are agreeing to participate in this study, which is being conducted by Jiyeon Kim, a masters student in the Department of Textiles, Merchandising, and Interiors at the University of Georgia. Participation is entirely voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time without penalty. If a participant chooses to withdraw, any information, to the extent that it can be identified as the participant's, will be removed from the research records and destroyed.

Confidentiality of participants will be insured. The returned survey will be locked in a cabinet, and access to questionnaires will be limited to the researcher. All questionnaires will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask now or a later date. You may contact Jiyeon Kim, Department of Textiles, Merchandising, and Interiors at the University of Georgia at (678) 407-9800 or jiyeon@uga.edu.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D. Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu