

Effect of Visual Merchandising on Consumer Buying Behavior as Mediated by Advertising Effectiveness: A Mixed Methods Study

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the mediating effect of advertising effectiveness (AE) on the relationship between visual merchandising (VM) and consumer buying behavior (CBB) of SMEs in Region XII. Using an explanatory sequential QUAN–QUAL mixed methods design, along with stratified sampling, systematic selection, and thematic analysis, data were collected from 400 consumers of SMEs in Region XII. In the mediation analysis in determining the mediating effect of AE on the relationship between VM and CBB which was found to be significant partial mediation in this study. Through in-depth interviews, data were integrated with the findings in the quantitative aspect of the study. The participants confirmed the relationships and the functions of the variables in the mediation model. With this merging confirmation integration, it can therefore be concluded that substantial evidence exists indicating that advertising effectiveness serves as a key mechanism through which managerial practices influence consumer buying behavior among SMEs in Region XII, as demonstrated by the partial mediation model.

Keywords: business administration, visual merchandising, advertising effectiveness, consumer buying behavior, small and medium enterprises, industry innovation and infrastructure, responsible consumption and production, explanatory sequential design, thematic analysis, Region XII, Philippines

SDG Indicators: #8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), #12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)

1. Introduction

The markets are different and characterized by an increased competition, as well a constant innovation in products and services available and a greater number of companies in the same market. In this scenario it is essential to know the consumer well (Varadarajan, 2020). It is through the analysis of the factors that have a direct impact on consumer behavior that it is possible to innovate and meet their expectations. This research is essential for marketers to be able to improve their campaigns and reach the target audience more effectively (Ding et al., 2020). Consumer behavior refers to the activities directly involved in obtaining products /services, so it includes the decision-making processes that precede and succeed these actions. Thus, it appears that the advertising message can cause a certain psychological influence that

motivates individuals to desire and, consequently, buy a certain product/service (Wertenbroch et al., 2020).

Impulse buying emerges as a problematic manifestation of diminished self-regulation, wherein consumers experience an internal conflict between the pursuit of immediate gratification and the awareness of potential negative consequences. This tension often results in a loss of control, fostering compulsive purchasing tendencies that, over time, may develop into chronic and even pathological behavioral patterns (Pandya and Pandya, 2020). Moreover, as emphasized by Sohn and Ko (2021), the tendency to conflate unplanned purchases with impulsive buying obscures critical distinctions. While all impulse purchases are inherently unplanned, not all unplanned purchases are driven by impulsivity. Some arise from situational necessity rather than an uncontrollable urge. This misclassification is problematic, as it masks the underlying psychological drivers of true impulse buying particularly the urgency and emotional intensity that differentiate it from routine, need-based purchasing thereby complicating both analysis and intervention. Understanding consumer behavior helps marketers make the right decisions in their marketing, influencing purchasing decisions (Siregar & Aslami, 2022).

Consumer buying behavior involves the process of selecting, purchasing, and utilizing goods and services based on individual needs and desires (Hosseini, Hamidi & Hosseyni, 2025). This behavior is influenced by various factors and can manifest in diverse ways. Despite the extensive research conducted in this field, there remains a gap in the literature that covers the mediating effect of advertising effectiveness on the relationship between visual merchandising and consumer buying behavior.

This study endeavors to examine the interplay among advertising effectiveness, visual merchandising, and consumer buying behavior of small-scale enterprises in Region XII. Specifically, it intends to determine the current status of these three major constructs and assess the significance of the influence of advertising effectiveness and visual merchandising on consumer buying behavior. Furthermore, the study seeks to evaluate the mediating role of advertising effectiveness on the relationship between visual merchandising and consumer behavior. It also aims to explore the experiences of participants regarding their practices and perceptions related to advertising effectiveness, visual merchandising, and consumer buying behavior, as well as to understand their standpoints on the outcomes of the mediation model. Finally, the study endeavors to explain how qualitative data provide deeper insights into the significant issues that emerge from the quantitative results.

The study supports SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth by enhancing SME competitiveness and performance through effective visual merchandising and advertising, as reflected in indicators such as increased sales/revenue, employment generation, and improved productivity. It aligns with SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure by promoting innovative, data-driven marketing practices, with indicators including the adoption of modern marketing strategies, use of digital tools, and improved enterprise competitiveness. It also contributes to SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production by encouraging informed consumer decisions, as shown by increased consumer awareness, reduced impulsive buying, and more responsible purchasing behavior.

The main theory that describes the present study is anchored on The Dirichlet Model. This model is a probabilistic model widely used in marketing research to understand and analyze consumer buying behavior. This model is named after the mathematician Peter Gustav Lejeune Dirichlet, who made significant contributions to probability theory. In the context of marketing, the Dirichlet model helps explain empirical regularities observed in consumer purchasing patterns (Ehrenberg and Scriven, 1999). It recognizes that consumers make purchasing decisions based on a combination of factors, and these

decisions can be modeled using probability distributions. Ultimately, The Dirichlet Model can contribute valuable insights to the study on advertising effectiveness, virtual merchandising, and consumer buying behavior. It offers a quantitative approach to understanding how these factors interact and influence customer purchase patterns over time.

The connection between advertising effectiveness and consumer buying behavior is supported by The Hierarchy of Effects Model was created in 1961 by Robert J. Lavidge and Gary A. Steiner. This marketing communication model, suggests that there are six steps from viewing a product advertisement (advert) to product purchase. The job of the advertiser is to encourage the customer to go through the six steps and purchase the product (Namazi, Sadeghi and Moghaddam, 2019). This model suggests that consumers move through a series of stages, from awareness to interest, desire, and finally, action. Effective advertising can guide consumers through these stages, ultimately influencing their buying behavior.

Therefore, The Hierarchy of Effects Model provides a valuable framework for understanding the progression of consumer responses to advertising, from initial awareness to the ultimate purchase decision. Its relevance lies in helping marketers gauge the effectiveness of their advertising efforts and tailor strategies to guide consumers through the sequential stages, ultimately impacting their buying behavior. On other hand, the link between virtual merchandising and consumer buying behavior is pinned to the proposition of Woodworth (1929) on stimulus-organism-model (S-O-R) as an expansion of Pavlov (2010)'s classic theory of the stimulus-response mode. The stimulus-response model was first procedure to understand the buyer behavior of consumers. The consciousness of the Buyer depends upon the marketing and environmental stimuli while purchase decisions are successfully done with the help of the Buyer's characteristics and decision process.

Also, this model is considered to be best suited for understanding consumer decisions whether to admit and adopt or not (response) as it establishes cognitive appraisal of individuals (stimuli) (apprehensions & facilitating conditions). However, other models such as (Technology acceptance model) TAM, unified technology acceptance and use theory (UTAUT) etc. are constrained and insufficient in elucidating how a stimulus initiates attitude and intention of the consumers (Dzandu et al., 2020). Thus, researchers have adapted the SOR methodology to incorporate complex aspects like cognitive and affective components into the process in their own study settings, due to its widespread applicability (Kim et al., 2020).

Using the S-O-R model as an expansion of Pavlov's classic theory allows for a more fined distinction examination of the relationship between virtual merchandising and consumer buying behavior, considering the intricate cognitive and emotional processes that shape consumer responses in the digital marketplace.

Visual merchandising positively influences consumers' impulse buying behavior, with window display showing the strongest connection (Adam, 2020). Findings revealed that all four primary elements of visual merchandising thoughtful store layouts, attractive packaging, eye-catching signage, and well-organized product displays were highly effective in influencing consumer buying behavior. Notably, demographic factors such as gender showed no significant relationship with the effectiveness of visual merchandising strategies, suggesting that these techniques are universally applicable across consumer groups (Gagarin, 2025). Similarly, visual merchandising elements such as window displays, in-store displays, floor merchandising, and promotional signage were found to significantly stimulate consumers' impulse buying behavior (Yturalde & Lazatin, 2022).

More specifically, empirical evidence indicates that window display plays a dominant role in shaping impulse buying intention, particularly among sports product consumers, while other elements such as

lighting and layout also exert a positive influence (Singh & Basu, 2022). In this regard, store layout defined as the strategic management of internal space—serves as a fundamental component of the overall store atmosphere, directly affecting consumer movement and engagement (Turley & Milliman, 2000).

Consequently, visual merchandising, as the art of designing and arranging retail displays, enhances not only store aesthetics but also sales performance and profitability by improving the overall shopping experience (Mondol, Karim & Salman, 2021). In essence, these findings collectively underscore the integral role of visual merchandising in fostering customer engagement and guiding purchase behavior, with particular emphasis on the effectiveness of window displays in retail environments (Saranza, Pendon & Andrin, 2024).

Furthermore, the close relationship between visual merchandising and store atmospherics highlights the need for an integrated framework that captures their combined influence, especially in the evolving landscape of both traditional and e-commerce retail settings (Basu, Paul & Singh, 2022). I

It is therefore, the convergence of these findings affirms that visual merchandising is not merely a complementary retail strategy but a critical determinant of consumer buying behavior. Its multidimensional elements ranging from store layout to promotional displays function synergistically to enhance consumer engagement and stimulate purchasing decisions across diverse market segments. Consequently, adopting an integrated and strategically aligned visual merchandising approach enables retailers to optimize customer experience, strengthen competitive positioning, and sustain business performance in an increasingly dynamic retail environment

Advertising effectiveness and consumer buying behavior are shaped by multiple cognitive, technological, and contextual factors. In terms of cognitive influences, Mecredy, Stocchi, and Feetham (2025) emphasize that evaluative measures vary significantly across age groups. Specifically, differences in associative penetration used as a proxy for advertising reach indicate that older consumers exhibit limitations in mental availability and responsiveness to advertising stimuli. Moreover, variations in purchase funnel processes and product category knowledge suggest that advertising strategies do not uniformly influence all segments. Consequently, the authors advocate the use of cognitive metrics in designing inclusive, cross-age advertising strategies.

In relation to structural and design factors, Imsa et al, 2026 (2020) identifies that appropriate advertisement size, concise and relevant message content, and engaging formats significantly improve click-through rates and user awareness. More importantly, advertisements that avoid intrusive or value-conflicting messages tend to generate more positive consumer responses, reinforcing the importance of user-centered advertising design.

From an industry-specific perspective, Carranza (2025) highlights that advertising effectiveness varies across sectors. For example, the fashion industry benefits from visual storytelling and influencer collaborations, while the electronics sector relies on detailed product reviews on platforms such as YouTube. Meanwhile, the food and beverage sector leverages shareable content to encourage trial purchases. However, despite these advantages, challenges such as privacy concerns, ad fatigue, and ethical issues persist across industries.

With regard to platform and media evolution, Korkames et al. (2026) reveal that although meta-analytic estimates of advertising-sales elasticity have declined due to methodological improvements, overall advertising effectiveness has increased. Notably, internet advertising demonstrates the highest elasticity, indicating stronger influence on consumer purchasing behavior compared to traditional media. Supporting

this shift, Annu and Dubey (2025) report a clear transition from traditional media toward digital and online platforms, reflecting the growing dominance of digital ecosystems in shaping marketing strategies.

In terms of content and engagement strategies, Titin Prihatiningsih et al. (2025) underscore the effectiveness of video-based advertising. Their findings indicate that video content is more capable of capturing attention and sustaining interest due to its ability to deliver emotional and complex messages. Furthermore, integration across platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok enhances engagement and increases conversion rates.

Empirically, advertising has been shown to significantly influence consumer buying decisions. Rahmi, Tayeb and Amerkhail (2020) found that emotional response, environmental response toward brands, brand awareness, and sensory-stimulated advertising all have a positive and significant relationship with consumer buying behavior.

Finally, in the context of technological advancements, recent studies highlight the growing role of emerging technologies in advertising effectiveness. Kim (2021) emphasizes that advertising in the metaverse requires new theoretical and methodological frameworks. Similarly, Shumanov et al. (2022) demonstrate that aligning advertising messages with consumers' personality traits enhances persuasive effectiveness. Additionally, Sahin et al. (2020) highlight the impact of environmentally friendly advertising visuals, while Molitor et al. (2020) note that location-based advertising increases engagement through contextual relevance. Moreover, Zhao, Butt, Murad, Mirza and Al-Faryan (2022) confirm that advertising significantly predicts brand awareness, brand loyalty, and consumer buying behavior, with brand awareness acting as a mediator and perceived quality as a moderator.

These findings collectively demonstrate that advertising effectiveness is multifaceted, shaped by cognitive differences, strategic design, industry context, technological innovation, and evolving digital platforms, all of which interact to influence consumer buying behavior.

Consumer buying interest remains inherently latent and difficult to predict, as individual preferences and expectations are not directly observable (Fasha et al., 2022). In this context, social media has emerged as a powerful determinant of purchasing behavior, significantly shaping consumer decisions and often triggering impulsive buying tendencies (Jacinto et al., 2021). More specifically, the presence of social media influencers further amplifies this effect, as it can lead to impulsive purchases that may compromise consumers' ability to make rational and well-informed decisions (Zafar et al., 2023).

Moreover, social media platforms provide businesses with opportunities for direct and real-time engagement, thereby strengthening customer-brand relationships and increasing the likelihood of purchase (Zhao et al., 2022). This influence is further reinforced by the type of content presented, wherein visual formats such as images and videos generate higher engagement and exert a stronger impact on consumer behavior compared to text-based content (Alhalalmeh et al., 2022; Andoh-Quainoo, 2022).

Finally, beyond external influences, impulsive buying behavior is also shaped by internal psychological and cultural factors. Personality traits such as extroversion and neuroticism, along with negative emotions and collectivist orientations, are positively associated with impulsive buying, whereas self-control mitigates such tendencies (Wang, 2022). Notably, negative emotions and collectivism also function as mediating variables, highlighting the complex interplay of direct and indirect factors that influence consumer purchasing behavior.

As illustrated in Figure 1, it is posited that independent variable is significantly related to dependent variable while the mediator variable mediates the relationship between independent variable and dependent variable. The independent variable is visual merchandising while the dependent variable is

consumer buying behavior. Advertising effectiveness is the mediator between visual merchandising and consumer buying behavior. The conceptual paradigm of the study illustrates that visual merchandising significantly relates to consumer buying behavior while advertising effectiveness mediates between visual merchandising and consumer buying behavior.

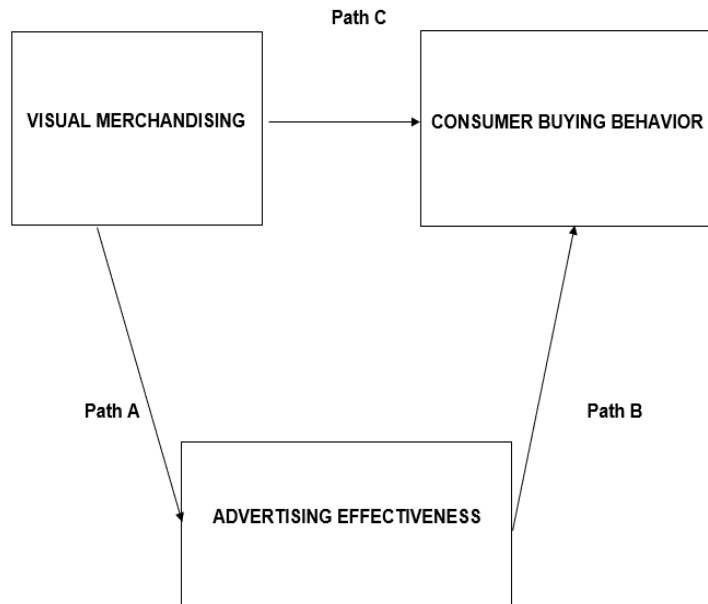


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

One gap could be a scarcity of empirical studies that specifically investigate the mediating role of advertising effectiveness between visual merchandising and consumer buying behavior. Researcher may find that there is a need for more concrete evidence and real-world examples to support or refute the hypothesized relationships. Many studies may overlook the influence of contextual factors such as cultural differences, industry-specific characteristics, and market conditions. The effectiveness of advertising as a mediator might vary across different contexts, and understanding these variations is crucial for a comprehensive analysis. The temporal aspects of the relationships between visual merchandising, advertising effectiveness, and consumer buying behavior may not be fully explored.

Examining how these variables unfold over time and the potential lag effects can provide a more understanding. The influence of potential moderating variables, such as consumer demographics, psychographics, and product characteristics, might not be thoroughly investigated. Exploring how these factors interact with advertising effectiveness and visual merchandising can enhance the generalizability of findings. Addressing these gaps in future research can contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how advertising effectiveness operates as a mediator between visual merchandising strategies and consumer buying behavior.

Advertising effectiveness functions as a critical mediating mechanism that amplifies the influence of visual merchandising on consumer buying behavior by extending and reinforcing brand communication beyond the physical store environment. While visual merchandising primarily engages consumers through sensory and experiential cues in-store, advertising broadens this interaction by delivering consistent messages across multiple platforms such as digital media, television, and print.

This synergy enhances brand awareness, strengthens message retention, and facilitates consumer education regarding product features, benefits, and value propositions. Consequently, consumers are better equipped to make informed purchasing decisions, as repeated and coherent exposure increases brand recall and positively shapes attitudes and preferences. Overall, the integration of effective advertising with visual merchandising creates a cohesive and immersive brand experience that significantly drives consumer purchase behavior.

The study offers practical and academic contributions by guiding retailers and marketers in aligning visual merchandising and advertising to improve consumer engagement and sales, while serving as a reference for future research. However, its findings are limited by a cross-sectional design, self-report bias, and restricted generalizability. Despite these constraints, it enhances understanding of how visual merchandising and advertising effectiveness influence consumer buying behavior and suggests directions for future studies.

2. Method

This paper employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods study. It comprehensively examines the impact of visual merchandising on customer purchasing behavior and to determine the mediating effect of advertising effectiveness. A mixed-methods approach was deemed appropriate because consumer decision-making is a complex phenomenon influenced by both quantifiable behavioral patterns and subjective interpretations of marketing cues. As emphasized by Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Kumar (2019), combining quantitative and qualitative evidence strengthens the validity of findings by providing both breadth and depth of insight. Likewise, Saunders et al. (2019) highlight that mixed-method designs are suitable for studies that aim to explain mechanisms behind statistical patterns, particularly when exploring consumer behavior.

Research Respondents

Quantitative Phase

In quantitative phase, the participants of the study were the consumer of the Small-Scale Enterprise in Region XII where stratified sampling will be used. The researcher uses the scientific process in selecting the respondents. In determining the number of SMEs, the researcher requested a copy of the updated list of Small-Scale Enterprise from the Department of Trade and Industry in Region 12. Respondents are selected using stratified sampling to ensure representation across relevant subgroups enabling the researcher in order to reach desired sample size of 400 respondents.

Stratified random sampling is used as there are several smaller groups in the population. The division into strata and samples is selected randomly. In proportion to the population, a strata is established having homogenous attributes (Nickolas, 2017). On the quantitative aspect, under an integrative mixed methods (IMM) study, the determination of an appropriate sample size requires a broader integrative perspective. Quantitative favors larger sample size (Castro, et. al, 2014). Hence, the desired samples will be not less than 400 consumers of small-scale enterprise in Region XII drawn from the population of cities and provinces: North Cotabato Province, General Santos City, Sarangani Province, South Cotabato Province, and Sultan Kudarat Province. The distribution of respondents shows that a total of 400 participants were drawn from 115 sampled establishments out of a population of 1,144 across selected provinces. Cotabato contributed the highest number of respondents with 131 (32.75%), followed by South Cotabato with 96 (24%), General Santos City with 75 (18.75%), Sultan Kudarat with 51 (12.75%), and Sarangani with 47 (11.75%).

Qualitative Phase

For the participants of this study for qualitative data were the ten informants for IDI-in-depth interview. I used the purposive sampling to select the participants. A purposive sample is a non-probability sample that is selected based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study (Harrison, 2013). In-depth interview (IDI) is a cornerstone of qualitative research, and the original classic setting for research of all types: detailed interviews, usually with one respondent (Merriam, 1998). This type of interview is ideal for detailed exploration of specific ideas, or evaluation of concepts and materials that require thorough focus and concentration. It can also often be the most appropriate setting for research covering more emotional topics, as the relationship between moderator and respondent is key to the outcomes and insight generated from each interview (Godinez, 2009).

The study included consumers who are 18 years old and above, have purchased products from the selected store or brand within the last three to six months, and have been exposed to both in-store visual merchandising elements such as window displays, product arrangements, lighting, and signage and at least one form of the store's advertising, whether online, print, or broadcast. Respondents must have personally made or contributed to the purchase decision, be able to read and understand the language of the instrument, and voluntarily agree to participate. On the other hand, the study will exclude individuals below 18 years old, those who have not purchased from the store within the specified period, and those who have not been exposed to its visual merchandising or advertising efforts. Employees of the store or its competitors, individuals working in marketing, advertising, or related industries, and close relatives of store owners or key personnel will also be excluded to prevent biased responses. Likewise, individuals who cannot provide informed consent and those who submit incomplete or invalid questionnaires will not be considered as part of the sample.

In terms of withdrawal, participants who have expressed willingness and later on change their mind and opted to discontinue their participation have all the right to do so; it is their prerogative, and the researchers will respect their decision. In the event of the termination of the respondents in the study, the facts accumulated are kept by the researcher and were not be eliminated. The researcher cannot removed the data despite of the respondent's consent presented. The researcher accepted participant's consent regarding the restriction such as providing information not included in the original consent contract. The University of Mindanao Ethics Research Committee (UMERC) will approve the consent contract.

The study locale is Region 12, also known as the Soccsksargen Region, is situated in the southern part of the Philippines. It is composed of four provinces: South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, and North Cotabato. The region is known for its diverse landscapes, encompassing fertile plains, mountainous terrains, and coastal areas. The administrative center of Region 12 is Koronadal City, located in the province of South Cotabato.

Materials and Instrument

Quantitative Phase

There were three sets of survey questionnaires in the quantitative strand adapted from different authors. Primarily, the set of survey questionnaire evaluated the level of advertising effectiveness adapted from Kumar (2018) with 25 items. Secondly, the set looked into the level of visual merchandising adapted from Kim (2015) measured in terms of impulse buying, influence of window display, influence of-inform display, influence of floor merchandising, and influence of promotional signage. Finally, the questionnaire assessed the level of consumer buying behavior adapted from Ningning (2020) in terms of problem recognition, problem search, brand features, service quality, and returns

The survey questionnaires were submitted to five research experts for evaluation purposely to achieve the validity of the instruments. The researcher will apply all the corrections as suggested by the experts. In terms of the reliability, research instruments are administered to selected forty (40) small-scale enterprises who are not research participants of the study. The results must exceed the minimum requirement of Cronbach's Alpha at .65 for the three survey questionnaires to be acceptable and reliable.

The three instruments were rated using the 5-point Likert scale.

Range of Means	Descriptive Level	Interpretation
4.20 – 5.00	Very High	This means that the item is always true and manifested
3.40 – 4.19	High	This means that the item is often true and manifested.
2.60 – 3.39	Moderate	This means that the item is sometimes true and manifested.
1.80 – 2.59	Low	This means that the item is seldom true and manifested.
1.00 – 1.79	Very Low	This means that the item is never practiced.

Qualitative Phase

The conduct of the study followed a systematic qualitative procedure to ensure rigor and consistency in data collection and analysis. After securing the necessary permissions and informed consent from the participants, data were gathered using a structured interview guide designed to elicit in-depth responses aligned with the research objectives.

The same interview guide was consistently employed across all in-depth interviews to maintain uniformity in questioning while still allowing flexibility for probing and clarification. Interviews were conducted in a conducive environment to encourage openness and authenticity, and responses were carefully documented through audio recording and note-taking.

Ethical considerations such as confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw were strictly observed throughout the process. In terms of tool validation, the interview guide underwent a validation process prior to its actual use. It was reviewed by subject matter experts to ensure content validity, clarity of questions, and alignment with the study's conceptual framework. Necessary revisions were incorporated based on feedback to enhance the relevance and comprehensibility of the instrument. After data collection, all recorded responses were consolidated and systematically transcribed. Transcriptions in the local language were translated into English to ensure consistency in analysis. The data were then subjected to qualitative analysis, involving coding, categorization, and thematic interpretation to identify emerging patterns and core themes. This rigorous process ensured that the findings were credible, reliable, and reflective of the participants' actual experiences and perspectives.

Design and Procedure

For the design and procedure, this study utilized Creswell's mixed methods approach which is anchored to a philosophical worldview; pragmatism (Creswell, 2007) that recognizes the value of different approaches about how to conduct inquiry (Morgan, 2013) where the researcher draws liberally from both quantitative and qualitative assumptions (Creswell, 2017). The practicality of mixed methods research focuses on the notion that individuals tend to solve problem using both numbers and words (West, 2012). The sequential explanatory mixed methods design adopted in this study typically involved two phases: (1) the quantitative strand followed by a (2) qualitative strand that builds directly on the results of the quantitative strand (Wisdom & Creswell, 2013; Ivankova & Stick, 2007). The quantitative strand or first phase of this study utilized a survey design that provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends,

attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population (Creswell, 2009). In the quantitative strand, it utilized non-experimental quantitative research design employing descriptive correlational technique. As discussed by Paladino and Hill (2018), descriptive research is used to capture the status quo of things. In other words, descriptive statistics tell what it is, rather than trying to determine the cause and effect. The most common measures of central tendency used are: mean (or average), frequency, mode and median. Lastly, mediation analysis is a statistical method used to explain how an independent variable affects a dependent variable through a mediator. Instead of examining only the direct relationship, it separates the effect into direct and indirect paths. The indirect effect occurs when the independent variable influences the mediator, which then affects the dependent variable, helping explain the mechanism behind the relationship.

The qualitative strand or second phase of the study employed a phenomenological design in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by the participants (Groenewald, 2004). The researcher will not simply be collecting and analyzing both kinds of data; but also involved the use of both approaches in tandem so that the overall strength of a study is greater than either quantitative or qualitative research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2006) or of equal importance.

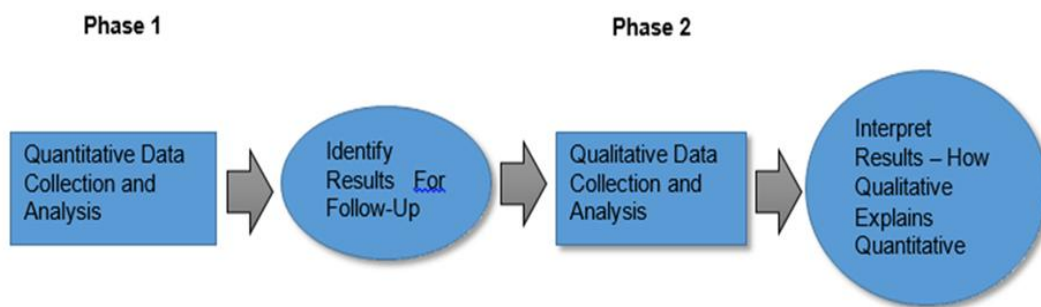


Figure 2. Explanatory Sequential Design (Two-Phase Design)

Figure 2 illustrates an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, where the study is conducted in two distinct phases. In Phase 1, quantitative data are collected and analyzed to identify general patterns or relationships. Key results from this phase are then selected to guide further inquiry.

In Phase 2, qualitative data are gathered to explain or elaborate on the quantitative findings. This follow-up phase provides deeper insight into the “why” and “how” behind the numerical results. Overall, the design emphasizes a connecting approach, where qualitative evidence is used to interpret and strengthen the initial quantitative outcomes.

Quantitative Phase

In the quantitative phase, data are collected using structured instruments such as survey questionnaires administered to a defined sample of respondents. The process typically involves systematic sampling, distribution of the instrument, and gathering measurable responses.

Data were analyzed first through descriptive statistics, reliability testing, correlation, regression, and mediation analysis to determine the direct and indirect influence of visual merchandising and advertising effectiveness on purchasing behavior, following the analytical procedures recommended by Hair et al. (2019) and the mixed-method guidelines of Creswell and Creswell (2018).

Qualitative Phase

The quantitative results guided the selection of participants and interview questions for the qualitative phase, consistent with the explanatory model of Saunders et al. (2019). Interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis to uncover deeper meanings behind consumer interpretations of visual merchandising and advertising cues, reflecting the qualitative approaches emphasized by Kumar (2019) and supported by consumer behavior studies such as Park and Lennon (2019) and Chinomona and Maziriri (2019).

Integration occurred during interpretation, where qualitative themes were merged with quantitative findings through narrative explanation and joint displays, as recommended in mixed-method integration literature by Kotler et al. (2021). This combined analytical process ensured both statistical rigor and contextual understanding of how marketing cues shape consumer purchasing behavior.

Ethical considerations are a critical part of the study, ensuring that participants voluntarily take part with full understanding of the research purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits. Participation is based on informed consent, free from coercion, and participants may withdraw at any time without consequence. This upholds respect for their rights, autonomy, and dignity. To protect privacy and confidentiality, the researcher secures all collected data through encryption and restricted access, ensuring that only authorized personnel can handle the information.

Data are organized systematically for easy retrieval and are disposed of responsibly through secure deletion or shredding once no longer needed. Compliance with data privacy laws, such as the Data Privacy Act, is strictly observed throughout the process. The study also ensures transparency in recruitment and consent procedures, emphasizing inclusivity, accessibility, and cultural sensitivity. Potential risks are carefully assessed, with appropriate safeguards implemented to protect participants' well-being. Non-material benefits, such as educational resources, may be provided to acknowledge participation and encourage engagement. Finally, research integrity is maintained through plagiarism checks, data validation, and careful review to ensure accuracy and avoid misrepresentation. Conflicts of interest are disclosed, deception is avoided, and ethical observation protocols are followed. Proper authorship is also observed, ensuring fairness, accountability, and credibility of the research output.

The study obtained ethical clearance from the University of Mindanao Ethics Review Committee (UMERC), as evidenced by the issued certification (UMERC No. UMERC-2025-507). This approval signifies that the research protocol has undergone thorough ethical review and complies with established scientific and internationally accepted ethical standards.

The clearance ensures that the rights, safety, and welfare of the participants are adequately protected throughout the conduct of the study. Furthermore, the approval confirms that all procedures involving data collection, informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation adhere to ethical research practices, thereby validating the study's implementation within the prescribed ethical framework.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the data and findings of the study based on the responses of the respondents on the mediating effect of advertising effectiveness on the relationship between visual merchandising and consumer buying behavior in conformity to the objectives of the study. This includes the explanation of the quantitative results of the study.

Quantitative Strand

Status of Visual Merchandising, Advertising Effectiveness and Consumer Buying Behavior

Table 1
Status of Advertising Effectiveness, Visual Merchandising and Consumer Buying Behavior

Main Variables/Indicators	Standard De- viation	Mean	Descriptive Level
Advertising Effectiveness	.545	3.78	High
Visual Merchandising	.742	3.53	High
Impulse Buying	.726	3.53	High
Influence of Window Display	.758	3.63	High
Influence of in-Store Form	.742	3.43	High
Influence floor Merchandising	.763	3.55	High
Influence of Promotional Signage	.724	3.62	High
Consumer Buying Behavior	.774	3.53	High
Problem Recognition	.691	3.63	High
Information Search	.758	3.36	High
Brand Features	.769	3.84	High
Service Quality	.711	3.84	High
Returns	.941	2.96	Moderate

Status of Visual Merchandising. Table 1 presents the status of visual merchandising, the overall mean score of 3.53 with a standard deviation of 0.742 indicates a high level of influence on consumers. All indicators under visual merchandising were rated high, with influence of window display (M = 3.63) and promotional signage (M = 3.62) obtaining the highest means, implying that visually attractive displays and clear promotional messages effectively capture consumer attention. Impulse buying (M = 3.53) and floor merchandising (M = 3.55) also showed high influence, while in-store form (M = 3.43), though slightly lower, still reflected a high level, suggesting consistency in consumers’ positive perceptions.

The high overall rating of visual merchandising, particularly in terms of impulse buying, influence of window display, influence of in-store form, floor merchandising, and promotional signage, implies that well-designed visual merchandising strategies play a significant role in attracting customers and shaping their purchasing decisions. The findings corroborate those of Florea et al. (2025), demonstrating that store design elements particularly visual merchandising and layout significantly influence customer purchase decisions. Likewise, the results align with Ayudia (2025), who emphasizes that visual merchandising strategies, including the effective use of layout, signage, lighting, color, and product displays, play a crucial role in attracting consumer attention and shaping purchasing behavior.

Status of Consumer Buying Behavior. In terms of consumer buying behavior, the overall mean of 3.53 and standard deviation of 0.774 likewise reflect a high level. Most indicators were rated high, particularly brand features ($M = 3.84$) and service quality ($M = 3.84$). Problem recognition ($M = 3.63$) and information search ($M = 3.36$) were also rated high. However, returns ($M = 2.96$) was rated at a moderate level.

The findings imply that consumer buying behavior is strongly influenced by brand features and service quality. For advertising effectiveness, recorded the highest overall mean score of 3.78 with a relatively low standard deviation of 0.545. This indicates that advertising strategies are highly effective and consistently perceived by consumers. The results show that consumer buying behavior obtained a high overall rating, particularly in problem recognition, information search, brand features, and service quality, while returns received a moderate rating.

This implies that consumers generally have positive perceptions of the products and services and actively engage in identifying their needs, seeking information, and evaluating product attributes before making purchase decisions. This is in connection with the study of Hashmi et. al. (2021) that defines customer engagement as customer behaviors influenced by motivational drivers that extend beyond purchases, including active involvement like providing feedback and suggestions for product and service improvement. the quality of the product itself and associated service like guarantees, after-sale service, availability, and engagement, which indicates that consumers evaluate multiple attributes.

Status of Advertising Effectiveness. The results indicate that advertising effectiveness obtained a mean score of 3.78 with a standard deviation of 0.545, interpreted as high. The findings show that advertising effectiveness was rated high, implying that promotional messages and advertising strategies successfully communicate product information, increase consumer awareness, and influence purchase decisions.

Effective advertising helps consumers recognize product needs, search for relevant information, and develop favorable perceptions of brand features and service quality. Prihatiningsih, Panudju, and Prasetyo (2025) found that video content is highly effective in capturing attention and sustaining consumer interest, and that its integration with social media platforms significantly enhances engagement and conversion rates.

Similarly, Khimich and Perfilova (2021) explain that Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are determined by the specific objectives of advertising campaigns, such as increasing brand awareness, generating customer leads, or driving direct sales through websites or applications.

Correlation between Variables

Table 2 shows the correlation between advertising effectiveness, visual merchandising, and consumer buying behavior of SMEs’ consumers using Pearson’s correlation coefficient. The results reveal that all relationships are positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level, indicating meaningful associations among the variables.

Table 2
Correlation between Variables

Variables	1	2	3
1. Visual Merchandising	—	.410**	.615**
2. Advertising Effectiveness		—	.494**
3. Consumer Buying Behavior			—

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

Influence of Advertising Effectiveness and Visual Merchandising on Consumer Buying Behavior

Table 3
Coefficient

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	2.864	.211		13.552	.000
Advertising Effectiveness	.128	.053	.125	2.427	.016
Visual Merchandising	.047	.044	.056	1.082	.280

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Buying Behavior

Table 4
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics		
					R Square Change	F Change	Sig. F Change
1	.156 ^a	.024	.020	.5541	.024	5.586	.004

a. Predictors: (Constant), Visual Merchandising Advertising Effectiveness

b. Dependent Variable: Consumer Buying Behavior

The regression analysis examined the influence of advertising effectiveness and visual merchandising on consumer buying behavior. The model yielded an R value of .156, indicating a weak positive relationship

between the independent variables and consumer buying behavior. The R Square value of .024 shows that 2.4% of the variance in consumer buying behavior is explained by advertising and visibility. Although this percentage is small, the overall model is statistically significant ($F = 5.586$, $p = .004$), suggesting that the predictors collectively have a meaningful effect on consumer buying behavior.

The constant ($B = 2.864$, $p < .001$) indicates the expected level of consumer buying behavior when both advertising and visibility are held at zero. Advertising effectiveness has a significant positive effect on consumer awareness ($B = .128$, $\beta = .125$, $t = 2.427$, $p = .016$). This means that as advertising increases, consumer awareness also increases. Visual merchandising (vis_ave) shows a positive but non-significant effect ($B = .047$, $\beta = .056$, $t = 1.082$, $p = .280$), indicating that visibility alone does not significantly predict consumer buying behavior in this model.

The findings suggest that advertising plays a more important role than visibility in influencing consumer buying behavior. While the model explains only a small portion of the variance, its statistical significance implies that advertising is a meaningful predictor of consumer buying behavior, whereas visibility does not have a significant independent effect. This relates the study of Arora et al., (2020) that indicates significant relationships which can be useful in understanding the attitude and behavioral responses of Indian millennials towards social media advertising. The study can be useful to the marketers, advertisers and brand managers in designing advertisements on social media sites by embedding certain essential features which can positively shape up the attitudes and further develop behavioral responses.

Mediating Effect of Advertising Effectiveness on the Relationship between Visual Merchandising and Consumer Buying Behavior

This mediation analysis will explain how visual merchandising affects consumer buying behavior through advertising effectiveness in small-scale enterprises in Region XII. The results have shown a partial mediation model that offers valuable insights into the underlying processes by which visual merchandising affects consumer purchasing decisions.

The total effect of visual merchandising on consumer buying behavior is very significant at $b = 0.476$, and $p < 0.001$, accounting for 37.8% of the variation in consumer behavior. The strong association, therefore, indicates that visual merchandising practices in small-scale enterprises significantly influence how consumers make their purchasing decisions.

When advertising effectiveness was introduced as a mediating effect, analysis showed that there were two critical paths. First, VM strongly predicted AE ($b = 0.343$, $p < 0.001$), with 16.8% of the variance explained. This showed that good VM enhances perceived advertising effectiveness; attractive displays and strategic product placement amplify the power of promotional messages. Second, advertising effectiveness was seen to significantly influence CBB when controlling for VM ($b = 0.270$, $p < 0.001$).

Crucially, the direct effect of visual merchandising on consumer behavior remains significant after accounting for the mediating effect: $b = 0.383$, $p < 0.001$. This suggests partial mediation rather than full mediation. The indirect effect through advertising effectiveness is significant, $b = 0.092$, 95% CI [0.061, 0.126], confirming that around 19.4% of the total effect operates via this route, $0.092 / 0.476 = 0.194$.

These results indicate a dual-pathway model for small-scale enterprises in Region XII: VM affects CBB directly and indirectly by improving advertising effectiveness. The direct pathway ($c' = 0.383$) represents about 80.6% of the total effect, thereby showing that visual merchandising has strong main effects beyond

merely serving to magnify advertising. This might reflect immediate sensory and emotive reactions to product displays, store atmospherics, and layout design that automatically trigger purchasing decisions without the need for conscious processing of advertising messages.

The indirect path via advertising effectiveness a total effect of 19.4%-indicates that effective visual merchandising synergizes with advertising. When the visual displays are well-designed, they make advertisements more credible, memorable, and persuasive. This finding should especially prove beneficial in small-scale enterprises with limited marketing budgets, since such a strategy not only directly attracts customers to their stores but also enhances the return on advertising dollars spent.

The combined model explains 44.8% of the variance in consumer CBB, which implies that VM and the AE jointly account for almost half of the variability in purchase decisions. This interaction effect is non-significant at $F = 0.75$ and $p = 0.386$, thus confirming that the impact of visual merchandising upon consumer behavior is consistent across both levels of advertising effectiveness and, therefore, supporting the straightforward mediation model.

The findings show that visual merchandising has a significant positive direct effect on consumer buying behavior. This indicates that elements such as product displays, store layout, and visual appeal independently shape consumers' purchase decisions. In practical terms, consumers respond immediately to what they see well-organized, attractive displays can directly trigger buying actions without requiring additional persuasion. At the same time, visual merchandising significantly affects advertising effectiveness, which in turn also significantly influences consumer buying behavior. This suggests that visual merchandising enhances how consumers perceive and process advertising messages making advertisements more credible, noticeable, and persuasive.

The presence of both significant direct and indirect effects confirms partial mediation. This means that while advertising effectiveness plays a meaningful role, it does not fully explain the relationship between visual merchandising and buying behavior. Instead, visual merchandising operates through dual mechanisms: (1) Immediate sensory and emotional impact (direct effect) and (2) Cognitive reinforcement via advertising (indirect effect). This has been articulated in the study of Florea, et.al (2025) that enhancing the visibility of window displays, advertisements, and the store's overall visual theme strengthens the store's brand image and appeals to customers on a sensory level.

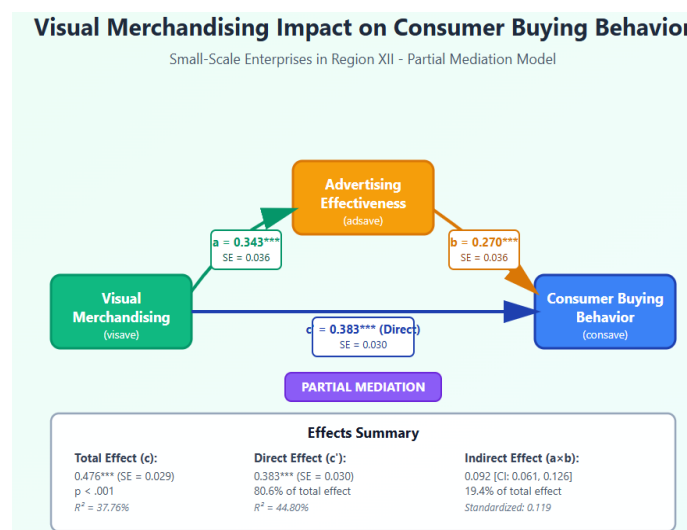


Figure 3. Mediation Model

Qualitative Strand

Table 5 presents the profile of the qualitative participants using pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality, along with their gender and industry affiliation. The majority of participants are female (8 out of 10), while only two are male. In terms of industry, the participants represent a diverse range of small and medium enterprise sectors, including grocery stores, hardware, pharmacy, manufacturing, sari-sari stores, fashion boutiques, and service industries. Notably, grocery stores are the most represented sector, indicating a stronger participation from this type of business. Overall, the table reflects a predominantly female sample with varied industry backgrounds, providing a broad perspective on SME practices.

Table 5
Profile of the Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Industry
Sunshine / IDI_P001	Female	Grocery Store
Glandy Co / IDI_P002	Female	Hardware
Mr. Botod / IDI_P003	Male	Pharmacy
Money Bross / IDI_P004	Female	Grocery Store/Retailer
Rosal Glan / IDI_P005	Female	Manufacturing
Beauty Fully/ IDI_P006	Female	Sari-Sari Store
Bunso / IDI_P007	Male	Grocery Store
Alpa Fecca / IDI_P008	Female	Fashion Boutique
Milk Tea / IDI_P009	Female	Service industry
Black Thorn / IDI_P010	Female	Grocery Store

Standpoints of the Participants on the Quantitative Results

Regarding the Status of the Independent, Dependent, and Mediating Variables

Table 6 shows the standpoints of the participants on the quantitative results regarding the visual merchandising, consumer buying behavior, and advertising effectiveness.

Visual Merchandising.

The essential themes for the visual merchandising are (1) attracting attention and encouraging product exploration through visual merchandising; and (2) influencing buying decisions through both advertising and visual merchandising. These themes are anchored to the indicators as priori themes namely; impulse buying, influence of window display, influence of in-store form, influence floor merchandising, and influence of promotional signage.

Attracting attention and encouraging product exploration through visual merchandising.

Hereunder are the shared narratives of the participants. Money Bross expressed his insights about visual merchandising. In his words, he said:

The way products are presented really influences my interest. If the display is neat, colorful, and well-lighted, it encourages me to stop and look at the products even if I was not planning to buy them (IDI_P004).

Beauty Fully also expressed her perspective on visual merchandising. She stated:

A well-designed product display makes shopping more interesting. When products are presented creatively (IDI_P006).

Influencing buying decisions through both advertising and visual merchandising. Influencing buying decisions through both advertising and visual merchandising is another essential theme emerged. This theme implies that buying decisions are shaped through a combined effect of in-store visual appeal and external promotional strategies. Visual merchandising directly influences consumers at the point of purchase, while advertising builds awareness and interest prior to store engagement. When integrated effectively, these two elements create a synergistic effect that enhances consumer motivation and ultimately leads to stronger purchasing behavior. This aligns the study of Achuka et al. (2023) that television advertising has a positive and statistically significant effect on consumer buying behavior. Black Thorn shared;

Advertising allows initial interest and understanding, while visual merchandising reinforces that interest through captivating in store presentation, resulting in stronger purchase decisions (IDI_P010).

Consumer Buying Behavior.

SMEs should strive to influence buying behavior to consumers through effective promotional activities and visually stimulating merchandising strategies.

Attaining Consumer Buying Behavior as an Outcome of Promotional and Visual Stimuli. The participants confirm the high rating for consumer buying behavior as obtained in the quantitative results of the study. The essential theme which is attaining consumer buying behavior as an outcome of promotional and visual stimuli is positive. Most participants indicated that both promotional efforts and the visual attractiveness of product displays significantly influence their decision to buy a product. This implies the consumer buying behavior is attained through the combined impact of advertising and visual merchandising.

This finding is consistent with Gagarin et al. (2025) who reported that key elements of visual merchandising such as strategic store layouts, appealing packaging, engaging signage, and organized product display significantly influence consumer buying behavior. It also supports the results of Moes et al (2022) which found that highly interactive advertising screens in store windows enhance impulse visits and purchases by stimulating consumers' sense of self-agency. Consequently, retailers can leverage interactive advertising technologies to increase impulse buying by activating consumers' perceived control and engagement.

Table 6
Standpoints of the Participants on the Quantitative Results Regarding the
Status of the Independent, Dependent and Mediating Variables

Status	Essential Theme	Core Ideas from the Participants
Independent Variable	Confirmation of:	
Visual Merchandising	Attracting Attention and Encouraging Product Exploration through Visual Merchandising	Organized shelves, eye-level placement of products, clear signages, effective room lighting, and attractive product displays immediately catch customers' attention and encourage product scrutiny and curiosity
	Influencing Buying Decisions through both Advertising and Visual Merchandising	Advertising allows initial interest and understanding, while visual merchandising reinforces that interest through captivating in-store presentation, resulting in stronger purchase decisions.
	Confirmation of :	
Dependent Variable		
Consumer Buying Behavior	Attaining Consumer Buying Behavior as an Outcome of Promotional and Visual Stimuli	Buying behavior is the result of both advertising information and the visual experience in the store environment influencing buyers' decision.
Mediating Variable	Confirmation of:	
	Building Awareness, Product Familiarity, and Trust	Advertising helps participants understand product value, benefits, and promotions before going to the store and purchasing products. For the participants, their exposure to advertisements builds brand familiarity and increases product trust.
Advertising Effectiveness	Increasing Purchase Confidence through Recognition of Advertised Products	Seeing a product advertised beforehand makes them more confident prioritizing it when they later encounter it in a store display

Sunshine also provided her views concerning consumer buying behavior. She mentioned that:

For me, promotions really catch my attention first, especially when there are discounts or special offers. But what makes me decide to buy the product is when I also see it displayed nicely in the store. When the product looks attractive and organized, it makes me feel more interested in trying it. (IDI_P001)

Similarly, participant Rosal Glan also shared her experiences and practices. She confidently stated:

I think stores become more effective when they promote their products and at the same time make them visually appealing in the store. When I see both, I feel more confident about purchasing the product. (IDI_P005)

Advertising Effectiveness.

The findings confirm the high-rating for advertising effectiveness as obtained in the quantitative results of the study. The essential themes are all positive that advertising effectiveness contributes to building awareness, product familiarity, and trust and Increasing purchase confidence through recognition of advertised products.

Building Awareness, Product Familiarity, and Trust. The theme emphasizes that effective visual merchandising and advertising first create awareness, allowing consumers to recognize the product. Repeated exposure builds familiarity, helping them understand its features and value. This familiarity then develops trust, as consistent and credible experiences reduce uncertainty, ultimately influencing purchase decisions. This is supported the study of Md Husin et al. (2023) that brand familiarity and perceived trust have a significant relationship with attitude. Brand familiarity and attitude have a significant relationship with investment decision behavior.

Increasing Purchase Confidence through Recognition of Advertised Products. This theme indicates that consumers feel more confident purchasing products they recognize from advertisements. Familiarity with the product reduces uncertainty and perceived risk, making decision-making easier. As a result, recognized and well-advertised products are more likely to be chosen and purchased. This indicates that advertising strengthens the impact of visual merchandising by reinforcing prior knowledge and reducing uncertainty during decision-making.

This corroborates the findings of the study of Moes, et. al (2022) that highly interactive advertising screens in store windows positively affect impulse-visit and impulse-buying urges through self-agency. Retailers can therefore use interactive advertising screens to increase the number of impulse purchases if feelings of self-agency are activated.

The participants of this study revealed their understanding on advertising effectiveness that recognition of advertised products increases consumers' confidence in making purchasing decisions. Participant Bunso revealed her perspective of being a consumer, she articulated:

When I frequently see a product being advertised, I become more familiar with it. Because of that, I feel more confident and trusting toward the product, especially when I see it in the store. It gives me the impression that the product is reliable and worth trying. (IDI_P007)

Likewise, Sunshine emphasized that advertising effectiveness is the bridge between promotion and action. She said:

In practice, I see advertising effectiveness as the bridge between promotion and action. Visual merchandising works as an immediate stimulus that captures my attention inside or

outside the store, while advertising reinforces that interest by explaining why the product is worth buying. Together, these influence my buying behavior by shaping my perceptions, preferences, and purchase decisions. (IDI-P001)

Standpoints of the Participants on the Mediating Effect of Advertising Effectiveness on the Relationship between Visual Merchandising and Consumer Buying Behavior

Table 7 reveals the standpoints of the participants on the mediating effect of advertising effectiveness on the relationship between visual merchandising and consumer buying behavior of consumers of SMEs in Region XII. The table further reveals essential themes: confirmed importance of visual merchandising to consumer buying behavior, confirmed mediating effect of advertising effectiveness on the relationship of visual merchandising and consumer buying behavior.

Table 7

Standpoints of the Participants on the Mediating Effect of Advertising Effectiveness on the Relationship between Visual Merchandising and Consumer Buying Behavior

Mediating Model	Essential Theme	Core Ideas
Significant Relationship of Visual Merchandising and Consumer Buying Behavior in the Mediation Model	Confirmed Importance of Visual Merchandising to Consumer Buying Behavior	<p>Visual merchandising attracts, and advertising strengthens this influence by giving information, emphasizing familiarity, and supplying reassurance about the product.</p> <p>Visual merchandising presents the product and catches attention, while advertising substantiates its value and purchase-related decisions.</p> <p>Visual merchandising still directly affects attention and interest, but advertising improves its impact and create buying decisions easier and more certain</p>
Significant Mediating Effect of Advertising Effectiveness on the Relationship of Visual Merchandising and Consumer Buying Behavior	Confirmed Mediating Effect of Advertising Effectiveness on the Relationship of Visual Merchandising and Consumer Buying Behavior	<p>The mediation model is reflective of real consumer behavior, thus shaping purchase decisions by both visual attraction and informational persuasion instead of one factor alone.</p> <p>There is more confidence in purchase decisions when a product from advertisements is recognized and the same is displayed attractively.</p>

Confirmed Importance of Visual Merchandising to Consumer Buying Behavior. The participants of this study confirmed the importance of visual merchandising to consumer buying behavior as an essential theme. This indicates that visual merchandising directly influences consumers' purchase decisions. The confirmed importance of visual merchandising suggests that elements like store layout, product display, and visual appeal are strategic drivers of consumer behavior. When effectively executed, they enhance attention, engagement, and ultimately purchase intention.

This is in connection the findings of Megat Zambri, Zur and Saleh, M. (2026) that reveals a strong positive relationship between visual merchandising and customer impulse buying behavior. The following are the shared narratives of the participants:

Participant Money Bross expressed his views on the model. In his words, he said:

When the store organizes their products in an attractive way, I feel interested to look at them and sometimes I end up buying because the display makes the product more appealing. (IDI_P004).

Another participant expressed that creative visual presentation makes the store look more professional and trustworthy. Alpa Fecca confidently mentioned,

If the products are displayed nicely and the store looks attractive, it gives me the impression that the products are good and worth buying. IDI_P008

Confirmed Mediating Effect of Advertising Effectiveness on the Relationship between Visual Merchandising and Consumer Buying Behavior. Given the standpoints of the participants from in-depth interview, the participants confirmed the mediating effect of advertising effectiveness on the relationship between visual merchandising and consumer buying behavior. Below are the utterances of the participants. This indicates that visual merchandising influences purchasing not only directly but also indirectly through effective advertising. In essence, advertising strengthens the impact of visual merchandising by enhancing awareness, trust, and product recognition, leading to a more pronounced effect on consumer buying behavior.

This relates the findings of Moes et al. (2022) that highly interactive (compared to less interactive) advertising screens in store windows positively affect impulse-visit and impulse-buying urges through self-agency.

Glandy Co explained that advertisements often create initial awareness of a product, while visual merchandising inside the store strengthens their interest and influences their decision to purchase. She stated,

When I see advertisements on social media, I already have an idea about the product. But when I go to the store and see the product displayed nicely, it makes me more confident to buy it because the advertisement and the display match what I expect. (IDI_P002)

Mr. Botod highlighted those advertisements introduce the product and build familiarity, while the visual presentation of the product in the store reinforces the message and encourages purchase. He mentioned:

Sometimes I notice a product first because of advertisements. When I see the same product displayed attractively in the store, it reminds me of the advertisement and makes me want to try or buy it. (IDI_P00)

Data Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

Since this study employed a mixed-methods design using an explanatory sequential approach, Table 7 presents the joint display of both quantitative and qualitative findings, integrating the data and information gathered from the different phases of the research.

Status of Visual Merchandising. Based on the quantitative results, the five indicators of visual merchandising obtained high mean ratings ranging from 3.43 to 3.63. The indicators include impulse buying, influence of window display, influence of in-store form, influence of floor merchandising, and influence of promotional signage. The qualitative findings further confirmed these quantitative results, as informants or participants shared positive experiences and observations regarding the effectiveness of the visual merchandising indicators. Thus, it demonstrates a connecting and merging (confirmation) of results, where the qualitative narratives validate the quantitative data.

Table 8
Joint Display of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

Research Area	Quantitative Results	Qualitative Results	Nature of Integration
1. Status of Visual Merchandising, Consumer Buying Behavior, and Advertising Effectiveness among consumers of SMEs			
1.1 Status of Visual Merchandising	High level ratings of the five indicators of Visual Merchandising ranged from 3.43 to 3.63 namely impulse buying, influence of window display, influence of in-store form, influence of floor merchandising, and influence of promotional signage or high which indicate that respondents manifested most of the time these items.	Informants/ participants confirmed the high rating of the five indicators presence of Visual Merchandising with positive core ideas in the qualitative result.	Connecting, Merging (Confirmation)
	(Refer to Table 1)	(Refer to Table 5)	
1.2 Status of Consumer Buying Behavior	The five indicators of Consumer Buying Behavior; <i>problem recognition, information search, brand features, service quality & return</i> obtained high level ratings ranged from 2.96 to 3.84 indicate that <i>consumer buying behavior</i> is evident most of the time.	The five indicators appeared as positive themes in the qualitative results, based from the core ideas of responses generated from their responses	Connecting, Merging (Confirmation)
	(Refer to Table 1)	(Refer to Table 5)	
1.3 Status of Advertising Effectiveness	Advertising Effectiveness has an overall mean of 3.78 or high level which indicate that oftentimes manifested this variable	Informants/ participants confirmed the presence of FA as shown in the core ideas generated from their responses	Connecting, Merging (Confirmation)
	(Refer to Table 1)	(Refer to Table 5)	
2. Relationship Between Visual Merchandising & Consumer Buying Behavior	Significant ($p > .05$) relationship exist between Visual Merchandising and Consumer Buying Behavior (.615)	Informants/Participants expressed their ideas on the importance of Visual Merchandising to Consumer Buying Behavior.	Connecting, Merging (Confirmation)
	Refer to Table 2	(Refer to Table 6)	
3. Mediating Effect of Advertising Effectiveness on the Relationship Between Visual Merchandising & Consumer Buying Behavior	Significant ($p > 0.001$) partial mediating effect of Advertising Effectiveness on the relationship between Visual Merchandising & Consumer Buying Behavior. ($b = 0.76$)	Majority of informants/ participants expressed their ideas on the help of Advertising Effectiveness to Visual Merchandising in influencing Consumer Buying Behavior	Connecting, Merging (Confirmation)
	(Refer Computation in Figure 5)	(Refer to Table 6)	

The high rating of visual merchandising in the quantitative results is explained by the qualitative findings, where participants consistently described how store displays, layouts, and visual cues effectively captured attention, encouraged product exploration, and influenced their purchase decisions. This high rating

reflects that SMEs are able to implement visually appealing and organized merchandising strategies that align with consumer preferences.

As supported by participants' experiences, these visual elements not only enhance store attractiveness but also create a positive shopping experience and increase buying motivation, thereby justifying the strong quantitative evaluation.

This aligns with assertion of Jaini, Ismail & Hussain (2022) that the elements of color, lighting, mannequins, music and floor merchandising as important elements in attracting the customers' responses and results in impulse buying behavior.

Status of Consumer Buying Behavior. For the status of consumer buying behavior, quantitatively, the five indicators problem recognition, information search, brand features, service quality, and return obtained high ratings ranging from 2.96 to 3.84. Qualitatively, these same indicators emerged as positive themes from participants' responses, confirming the survey results. Therefore, the findings demonstrate connecting and merging (confirmation) between the quantitative and qualitative data. The high rating of consumer buying behavior in the quantitative results is confirmed by the qualitative findings, where participants described active engagement in the buying process such as recognizing needs, searching for information, and making purchase decisions influenced by product appeal and store experience.

These shared experiences validate that consumers are responsive to marketing stimuli and confident in their purchasing actions, thereby supporting the strong quantitative results and demonstrating a clear confirmation between both data sources. Such finding substantiates the assertions made by Cai (2023). that both price skimming and marketing-sharing websites have a significant and positive influence on consumers' decision-making processes.

Status of Advertising Effectiveness. Regarding the status of advertising effectiveness, the quantitative results reveal a high overall mean of 3.78. Similarly, the qualitative data confirmed this finding, as participants recognized the presence of advertising effectiveness based on the core ideas derived from their responses. Overall, the findings demonstrate a connection and confirmation between the quantitative and qualitative results.

The overall high rating of advertising effectiveness SMEs in the quantitative results is being confirmed in the qualitative results through interview and focus group discussion. The connecting-merging-confirmation integration implies that advertising efforts are not only measurable in performance but are also genuinely experienced by consumers as persuasive, informative, and influential in their buying decisions.

This highlights the study of Pangarkar (2026) that native advertising has become a highly effective strategy for engaging consumers, as it blends seamlessly into their online experience and enhances both attention and interaction.

Relationship Between Visual Merchandising and Consumer Buying Behavior. The finding indicates that there is a significant relationship between visual merchandising and consumer buying behavior, with a computed value of .615 from the quantitative analysis. The qualitative findings support this result, as participants expressed their views on the importance of visual merchandising in shaping consumer buying behavior. Thus, the integration of both findings demonstrates connecting and merging (confirmation) between the quantitative and qualitative results.

On the relationship between visual merchandising and consumer buying behavior, the participants confirmed the significant relationship, hence integration is connecting-merging-confirmation. Such relationship substantiates the assertions made by Gagaran, et. al (2025) that all four primary elements of

visual merchandising thoughtful store layouts, attractive packaging, eye-catching signage, and well-organized product displays were highly effective in influencing consumer buying behavior.

This is supported the findings of Manuere and Martha (2024) that reveals a strong positive relationship between visual merchandising and customer impulse buying behavior.

On the Mediating Effect of Advertising Effectiveness on the Relationship Between Visual Merchandising and Consumer Buying Behavior. The data indicate a significant partial mediating effect of advertising effectiveness on the relationship between visual merchandising and consumer buying behavior ($b = 0.76, p > .001$). The quantitative results show that advertising effectiveness strengthens the influence of visual merchandising on consumers' purchasing decisions. This finding is supported by the qualitative data, where the majority of participants expressed that advertising effectiveness helps enhance the impact of visual merchandising in influencing consumer buying behavior.

Generally, the results demonstrate connecting and merging (confirmation) between the quantitative and qualitative findings.

Lastly, on the partial mediating effect of advertising effectiveness on the relationship between visual merchandising and consumer buying of SMEs, the connecting-merging-confirmation shows that while visual merchandising directly affects purchase decisions, its impact becomes more effective when supported by strategic advertising, highlighting the need for SMEs to integrate both approaches to maximize consumer response.

This is consistent with the findings of the study of Moes et al. (2022) which show that highly interactive in-store advertising screens, compared to less interactive ones, increase impulse visits and buying tendencies by enhancing consumers' sense of self-agency.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The main issue that this study would like to highlight is that consumer behavior has become more complex in a highly competitive market, where advertising strongly influences buying decisions. At the same time, impulse buying is often misunderstood and confused with simple unplanned purchases. This confusion hides the real reasons behind why people buy impulsively, making it harder for marketers to clearly understand consumers and create effective strategies.

Considering the findings of the study, several conclusions are drawn. The participants demonstrated a high level of visual merchandising, indicating that such practices are consistently manifested among consumers of SMEs. Likewise, both consumer buying behavior and advertising effectiveness were rated high, suggesting that these are frequently evident among consumers and businesses. Furthermore, the results confirmed a significant relationship between visual merchandising and consumer buying behavior.

Although consumer buying behavior is generally high, the moderate rating in returns suggests the need to improve product quality, ensure accurate product information, and strengthen after sales services. Clear return policies and well-trained staff can help reduce customer dissatisfaction and minimize product returns.

Given the high level of advertising effectiveness, SMEs should further invest in strategic advertising, particularly through digital platforms. Utilizing data analytics and aligning advertising with in-store merchandising can create a consistent and persuasive customer experience that enhances purchase decisions. Additionally, SMEs should standardize service and operational processes to ensure consistency

in customer experience. Monitoring feedback and addressing recurring issues, especially related to returns, is essential.

The result confirms a significant relationship between visual merchandising and consumer buying behavior within the mediation model. This indicates that visual merchandising directly influences consumers' purchase decisions, while its effect is further strengthened through mediating factors such as advertising effectiveness. SMEs should adopt an integrated marketing approach by aligning visual merchandising with advertising strategies, ensuring that in-store displays reflect and reinforce advertised messages to maximize their combined effect on consumer purchase decisions.

Lastly, advertising effectiveness significantly and partially mediates the relationship between visual merchandising and consumer buying behavior. This means visual merchandising directly influences purchases, while advertising strengthens its effect. SMEs should improve both strategies to maximize impact.

The confirmation of the quantitative findings by qualitative results during the integration of results provided concrete evidence of the essential themes that emerged in both phases. This also provided in-depth understanding on consumer buying behavior with the essential themes that emerge. The themes identified have helped strengthen and explain the profoundness of the level of the variables under study as well as the mediating effect of the advertisement effectiveness on the relationship between visual merchandising and consumer buying behavior of SMEs in Region XII.

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