



Navigating Visual Merchandising Research: Insights from Bibliometric Analysis

Prachi Dhillon^{1*}, Dr. Sujata Joshi², Sherjung Singh Dhillon³

¹Symbiosis International (Deemed University), Pune, Maharashtra. Email: prachikapte@gmail.com

²Symbiosis Institute of Digital and Telecom Management, Symbiosis International (Deemed University), Pune, Maharashtra., Email: sjoshi@sidtm.edu.in

³(Independent Researcher), Director, Defence forces. Email: sherjungsinghdhillon@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to conduct a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of Visual Merchandising (VM) research literature within Consumer Goods. Leveraging the Scopus database and VOS viewer, the paper examines publication trends, authorship patterns, and citation networks from 1985 to 2020. Through rigorous bibliometric review and analysis, this research sheds light on critical contributions, thematic clusters, and collaborative networks in the field of VM. By exploring publication trends, thematic clusters, and collaborative networks, this study provides valuable insights into the evolution and current state of VM research, offering researchers and practitioners a deeper understanding of this critical aspect of retail marketing. The foremost contributor to research publications in Visual Merchandising (VM) was the United States, with South Korea ranking second. Moreover, the United States also led in citations received, closely followed by the United Kingdom. However, there was limited contribution from certain countries in the Asian subcontinent, such as South Korea, India, and China, in visual merchandising. Scholars primarily relied on theories like the stimulus–organism–response (S-O-R) framework, alongside the Facet theory, critical incident theory, and cue utilization theory, to explore the domain of visual merchandising. The depth and scope of research on visual merchandising were examined to provide valuable insights into the subject. Furthermore, recent advancements and emerging trends were scrutinized to guide academicians and researchers' future research endeavours.

Keywords - Visual Merchandising, Bibliometric Analysis, Scopus Database, VOS Viewer, Publication Trends, Authorship Patterns, Citation Networks, Consumer Goods, Retail Marketing

Type of Paper: Bibliometric Review Paper

1. Introduction

1.1 Visual Merchandising (VM)

Visual merchandising (VM) displays refer to "visual features that create attention or pleasure in a store intending to enhance the shopping experience of the customer" (Mathew, 2008). VM is defined as "showing merchandise and concepts at their very best, with the end purpose of making a sale" (Pegler & Kong, 2018). It is also defined as "the process of promoting the sale of products by producing mental images that urge potential customers to make purchases." A common thread found in various definitions of VM is the activity or process of "showing" and "displaying" merchandise (Pegler & Kong, 2018).

VM is therefore concerned with how the product and brand is visually communicated to the customer and whether this message is decoded "appropriately" in this context, affecting a positive psychological or behavioral outcome, ultimately leading to purchase (Kerfoot et al., 2003).

VM's strategic role is communicating the brand and its offer to similar target customers in all markets. It

differentiates merchandise and the retail brand from competitors selling comparable products (Mehta & Chugan, 2012). Consumer purchase decisions are spontaneous, produced quickly while shopping online or in stores, often prompted by strategic visual presentations and merchandise assortments crafted by the retailer (Grewal et al., 2017). There has been an attempt to establish a link between 'VM and consumer behaviour' and 'VM and brand identification'; however, the subject area needs further exploration (Kerfoot et al., 2003). Advancements in technology, changing societal behaviours, and consumers' ever-increasing expectations for cost-effective solutions are redefining the retail landscape. Integrating offline and online experiences is advantageous for customers and vital for the sustainability of businesses. In the realm of online retail, where the sensory engagement of physical interaction is restricted, the enticement of digital storefronts is highly dependent on their visual engagement capabilities. There is a pivotal need to enhance and innovate online visual merchandising techniques to forge experiences akin to traditional in-store shopping.

Therefore, visual merchandising's influence is becoming more crucial in digital than physical retail, overturning initial beliefs about its significance in store-based environments.

Nonetheless, the current body of literature on visual merchandising is fragmented and scarce, with few studies systematically examining the field. A comprehensive bibliometric review would amalgamate existing and emerging concepts, offering a rich understanding of the subject matter. Such an analysis will navigate the expanse of visual merchandising research, illuminating under-studied areas, recognizing scholarly work, and setting the stage for future investigations by identifying unnoticed gaps and boundaries.

1.2 Originality of the Research Study

The overarching aim of scholarly inquiry within a given field is progressively enriching knowledge. While the academic sphere has engaged in considerable exploration within Visual Merchandising, comprehensive literature reviews synthesizing this fragmented scholarship are scarce. These limited reviews offer an incomplete fusion of the disparate strands of VM research, thus falling short in evaluating the extent of inquiry within VM's subtopics or pinpointing significant findings that could open new research pathways.

Traditionally, descriptive narrative review methods have been predominant and seek to consolidate existing literature. These methods aim to identify paths for future research and pinpoint issues within the field. However, there's been a scant emphasis on thorough quantitative assessments, which could be realized through bibliometric analyses. This would allow for examining research trends, influential authors, leading journals, and critical institutions in VM research, thereby providing a more profound comprehension of this academic terrain, including its uncharted gaps.

This paper aspires to make a novel scholarly contribution by delivering a combined qualitative and quantitative examination of VM research through a Bibliometric Analysis, offering an integrated narrative and statistical perspective of the field.

1.3 Research Questions

This study uses bibliometric analysis, using tools like VOS Viewer and SCOPUS Analytical, to examine the various aspects of the subject. This review builds upon three research questions, as follows -

RQ1: What is the bibliometric review of visual merchandising in the existing literature through elaborating maps about the topic made by VOS viewer software?

RQ2: What are the primary areas undertaken by authors, and what are their significant contributions to the field of VM?

RQ3: What are the potential domains of VM research and opportunities for further study?

1.4 Objectives

This paper seeks to address the research questions mentioned above through the following objectives: (i) to study the overall trends in research production in the field of VM, published in the Scopus database from 1985 to 2020. (ii) To analyze all metadata of all the papers indexed in the Scopus database, the topic of which is "visual merchandising", using VOS Viewer. (iii) to identify and aggregate the critical aspects of VM representing the main research domains that authors and directions of future research in this field have undertaken. (iv) to pinpoint significant research gaps in the literature, unanswered issues and promising directions to provide foresight into the future of VM research.

1.5 Structure of Research Study

This manuscript is organized into eight distinct sections. The introductory segment presents an overview of the research. The second section reviews existing literature on Visual Merchandising and bibliometric analysis. The research methodology is thoroughly described in the third section. The fourth section presents a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of the research findings, followed by the study's concluding remarks in the fifth section. The sixth section discusses the theoretical and practical implications derived from the study.

The seventh section identifies the limitations inherent in the research. Finally, the eighth section proposes avenues for future research in this domain.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Visual Merchandising

Over the past 35 years, a substantial body of work has been dedicated to exploring the significance of Visual Merchandising (VM) and its intricate connections with various factors, such as consumer perception (Gudonavičienė & Alijošienė, 2015; Lange et al., 2016; Mohan et al., 2013; Venkateswara Raju & Prasanna Kumar, 2016), impulsive buying behaviour (Jampla et al., 2019), consumer experience (Siregar & Kent, 2019), and online buying behaviour (Ha et al., 2007; McCormick & Livett, 2012; Yoo & Kim, 2012). Despite the wealth of literature on this subject, a comprehensive review paper on VM is notably absent from the Scopus database, whether in the form of a bibliometric analysis or a systematic literature review. This research endeavor aims to fill this gap by integrating and synthesizing existing knowledge on VM, thereby illuminating key contributors, prominent journals, and active organizations in the realm of VM research. By doing so, this study seeks to elucidate the pivotal contributions made by authors, identify limitations in existing studies, and outline potential avenues for future research.

Although a broader search beyond Scopus revealed a few review papers dedicated to VM, their scope and depth varied. For instance, two review papers underscored the significance of VM in retail settings through systematic literature reviews (Upadhyay et al., 2017). Another review provided an overview of the literature on online VM, a relatively underexplored area (Ha et al., 2007). The fourth review paper focused on the effects of environmental cues, or "atmospherics," on buyer behaviour, indirectly addressing aspects of VM (Turley & Milliman, 2000). While these reviews offer valuable insights, they primarily adopt qualitative approaches and lack the systematic rigor of a comprehensive literature review.

Moreover, existing literature has identified various relationships between VM and other variables, such as the role of the merchandiser, retail communications, shoppers' buying behaviour, and store sales impact, among others. However, a more refined analysis of these themes and variables through a systematic literature review remains warranted (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009).

In sum, this review paper on VM represents a substantial contribution to the literature, offering a holistic overview of current trends in VM research and identifying key researchers, institutions, and journals in this domain. Through meticulous analysis and synthesis of existing literature, this study aims to inform future research directions and foster a deeper understanding of VM's multifaceted role in the retail landscape.

2.2 Bibliometric Analysis

Amidst the burgeoning significance of Visual Merchandising (VM) and the transformative landscape of the retail sector, this study beckons an exhaustive examination of the field from both quantitative and qualitative standpoints. Among the plethora of methodologies available to scrutinize and evaluate research in any scientific domain, the choice for this investigation falls upon "bibliometric analysis". Bibliometric analysis is a potent tool for gauging a discipline's advancement, publication trends, and patterns (Garaus et al., 2015).

In this study, the analysis of the amassed data is conducted utilizing the bibliometric analysis software known as VOS Viewer, pioneered by van Eck and Waltman (2010). VOS viewer employs the technique of visualizing similarities mapping (Eck et al., 2007), wherein networks are constructed to signify the proximity between nodes. This approach enables the exploration of similarities among articles concerning co-authorship, co-occurrence of keywords in titles, abstracts, and keywords, and co-citation of standard references cited in the articles.

Scopus is a pivotal resource for this study, a widely utilized comprehensive database compatible with the VOS viewer software. Scopus amalgamates a meticulously curated abstract and citation database with enriched data and interconnected scholarly literature spanning diverse disciplines. With its capacity to swiftly pinpoint pertinent and authoritative research, identify experts, and furnish access to reliable data, metrics, and analytical tools, Scopus is an invaluable asset in scholarly endeavors.

3. Methodology

The principal objective of this research is to discern the prevailing trends and publication patterns in Visual Merchandising literature through a review methodology underpinned by bibliometric analysis techniques.

3.1 Data source

The dataset for this investigation was sourced from the Scopus database on March 11, 2021, centered on the theme of "visual merchandising" from 1985 through 2020. This study's emphasis was constrained to entries within this specific repository, not extending the search spectrum to include alternative databases. Scopus's comprehensive coverage consists of many articles that other databases may not encapsulate, often containing

many references and citations. A targeted search within Scopus, looking at the article title, abstract, and keywords fields for "visual merchandising," culminated in identifying 199 documents. Out of the total retrieved, 180 documents fell within the established timeframe. Not all documents pertained strictly to visual merchandising concerning consumer goods, necessitating further categorization and assessment.

The types of documents were assorted, with 'Articles' being the predominant category, consisting of 139 entries or 77.2% of the total collection, followed by 'Conference papers', 'Short surveys', 'Reviews', 'Book chapters', 'Notes', 'Books', and 'Errata', comprising 10%, 4.45%, 3.35%, 2.78%, 1.12%, and 0.56% respectively. This distribution underscores the dominance of article publications compared to other mediums, such as conference presentations, suggesting potential avenues for expansion within academic and professional circles.

An in-depth screening based on abstracts and full texts was conducted to filter out interdisciplinary publications not directly aligned with visual merchandising within the consumer goods sector. Research falling under the subject areas of agricultural and biological sciences, chemical engineering, energy, environmental science, multi-disciplinary, chemistry, biochemistry, genetics and molecular biology, earth and planetary sciences, health professions, medicine, physics, astronomy, and engineering were omitted.

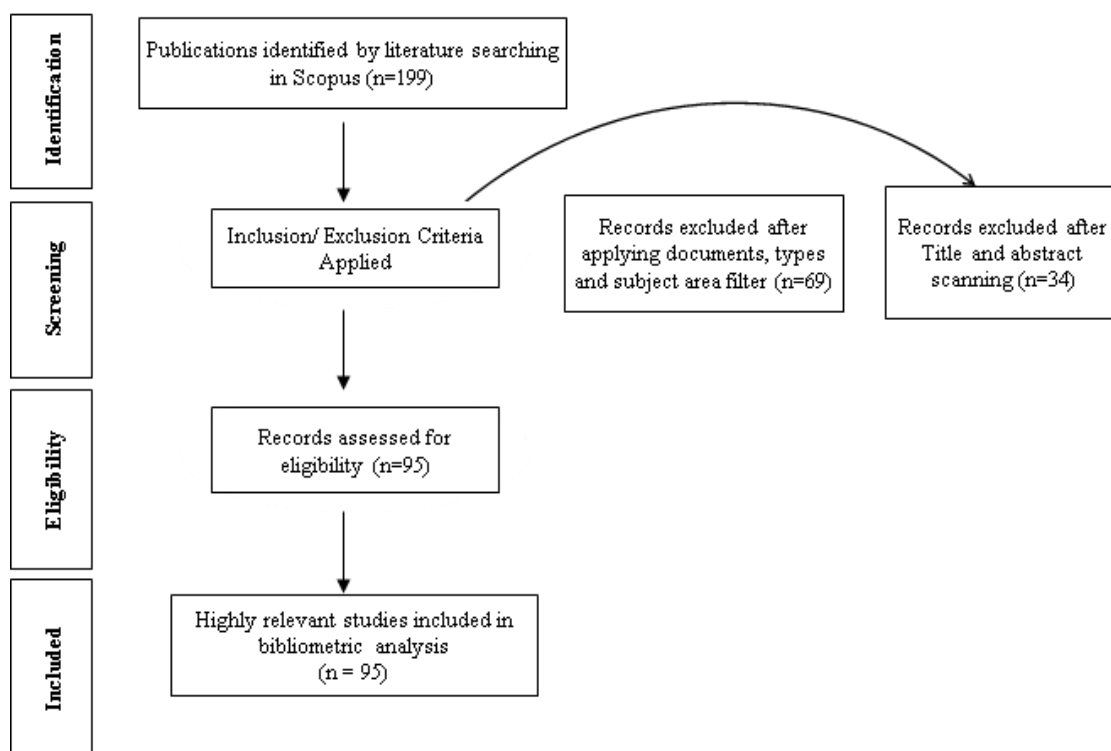


Figure 1. Four-phase flow chart of data extraction and filtration process.

English emerged as the primary language for publication, represented in 160 documents and constituting approximately 88.9%. Other languages in which publications were made include German, Korean, Chinese, Dutch, Italian, and Japanese.

The final selection considered papers in their final stages and articles in the press. The search was narrowed using keywords such as 'Visual Merchandising,' 'Retailing,' 'Marketing,' 'Merchandizing'.

3.2 Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

For the current study, the SCOPUS database served as the primary repository for literature retrieval, applying a temporal scope from 1986 to 2020. All publications, irrespective of language or year, were considered equal candidates for inclusion. A systematic evaluation was conducted to determine the suitability of each study for inclusion, with the initial assessment leading to 199 potential articles. These articles were then exported into an Excel spreadsheet for further examination. Subsequent screening emphasized the relevance of the content, leading to the exclusion of various document types, including notes, editorial content, reviews, short surveys, letters, interdisciplinary research, news items, meeting abstracts, and corrections. This refined process resulted in 95 records deemed apt for eligibility testing. No extraneous records were identified at this assessment stage, ensuring a focused and pertinent dataset for bibliometric analysis.

3.3 Bibliometric Analysis

VOSviewer, created by van Eck and Waltman in 2010, was utilized for the visualization analysis within this research. This software employs the visualization of similarities technique, first introduced by Van Eck and Waltman in 2007, which creates network maps where the proximity between nodes reflects their similarity. This method facilitates an exploration of the associations among research articles through various bibliometric relationships, including co-authorship, the unity of keywords across titles, abstracts, and keyword listings, and the co-citation of references shared among studies. Particularly adept at rendering bibliometric networks with a minimum of 100 elements, VOSviewer allows for translating complex maps into digestible visual formats, per van Eck and Waltman's 2010 findings.

4. Analysis and Synthesis of Findings

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

After conducting a preliminary descriptive analysis, it's apparent that Visual Merchandising (VM) research is still in its early stages but shows promising growth. The primary objective of this analysis is to explore various critical parameters such as authors and their affiliations, document sources, contents, and bibliographies. This research endeavour aims to provide a comprehensive review of the existing knowledge within the discipline. Despite the limited corpus of literature in this field, the existing works are focused on the domain and address significant aspects of VM. As a result, only published journal articles, which constitute 73% of the existing literature, have been considered for this study. Out of the 180 documents authored by 160 individuals between 1985 and 2020, the breakdown is as follows: 95 journal articles, six short surveys, two book chapters, seven conference papers, and only one review.

4.1.1 Growth Trend Pattern

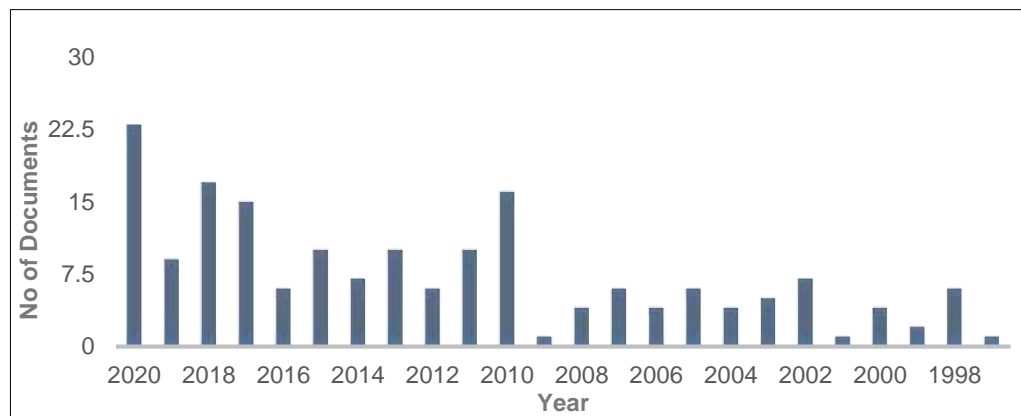


Figure A : Growth trend pattern

Figure A represents publications of VM literature from 1985 to 2020 regarding frequency bars. VM literature shows an appreciable rise between 2010 and 2020. The most successful publication year was 2020, with the most published articles (23).

4.1.2 Country-wise contribution

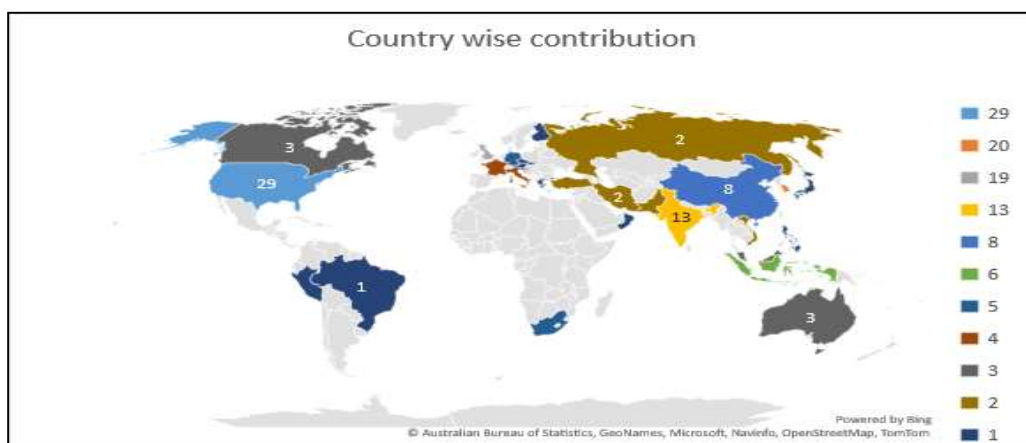


Figure B : Country wise contribution

Figure B illustrates the countries with the highest contribution to Visual Merchandising research. From 1985 to 2020, the most prolific nation generated 115 research papers within the timespan. The two leading countries together accounted for 49 papers, while the combined efforts of the top five countries resulted in the production of over 89 papers. The United States ranks at 29 publications, with South Korea following closely with 20. However, a portion of 48 publications remain that could not be distinctly categorized within the geographic scope of this study. The top 10 nations are responsible for the authorship of 115 documents out of the 180 analyzed in this research.

4.1.3 Top Authors

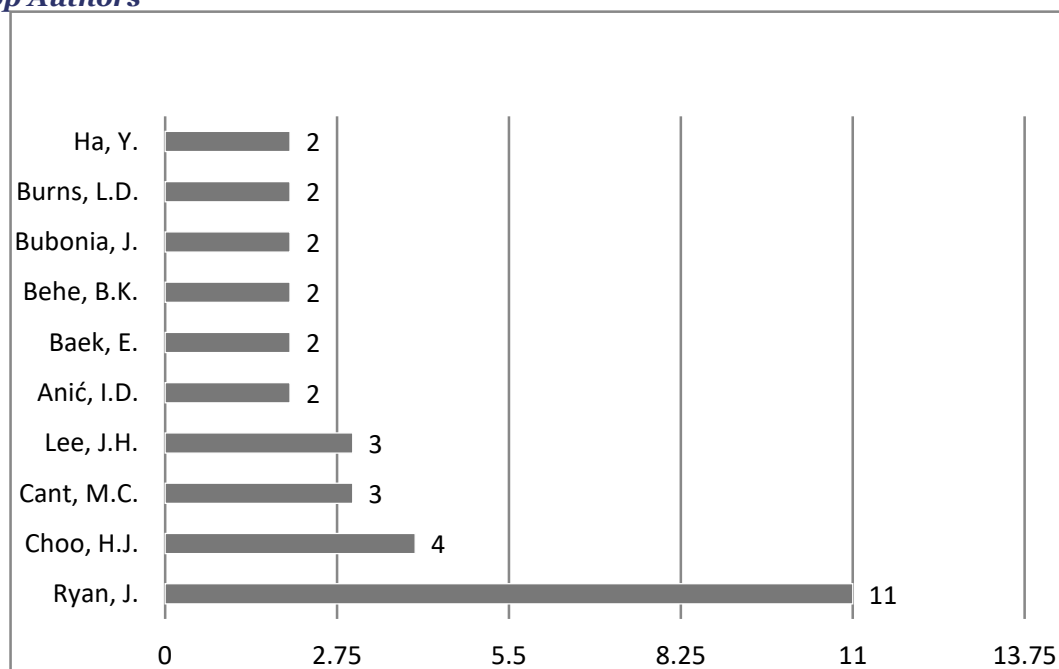


Figure C: Top authors

Figure C presents the authors with the highest publication count within the field of Visual Merchandising research. The number of published works from the identified scholars ranges from one to eleven within the examined period. "Ryan, J." emerges as the foremost contributing author with eleven publications, albeit with no citations to date, while "Choo, H.J." is recognized with four contributions. Overall, the study encompasses 160 authors who have contributed to Visual Merchandising. Most of these authors have works that typically span between two and three publications.

4.1.4 Typology

Between 1985 and 2020, the research corpus comprised 180 documents. This collection included 139 journal articles, 18 conference papers, five book chapters, six reviews, eight short surveys, two notes, and one each of a book and an erratum derived from various sources. The classification of these published works is depicted in Table 1. Articles represent the bulk of this aggregation, accounting for 77% of the total, with conference papers making up an additional 10%. The remainder, encompassing short surveys, reviews, book chapters, notes, books, and errata, constitutes 13% of the extant documentation within the prescribed research boundary.

Document Type	No of Documents	Percent
Article	139	77.22222
Conference Paper	18	10
Short Survey	8	4.444444
Review	6	3.333333
Book Chapter	5	2.777778
Note	2	1.111111
Book	1	0.555556
Erratum	1	0.555556
	180	

Table 1: Typology

4.1.5 Cite score of journals

The citation scores of several journals have demonstrated an upward trend over the years, showing consistent growth from 2011 to 2020, as illustrated in Figure E. For instance, the Cite Score of the International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management increased from 2 in 2011 to 4.6 in 2022. Similarly, the Cite Score for the Journal of Global Fashion Marketing rose from 1.4 in 2012 to 2.7 in 2022. However, journals like Drapers, Textil, Wirtschaft, and Fashion Business International maintained a Cite Score of zero throughout the study period. The 2011-2016 and 2016-2021 periods were particularly significant regarding the Cite Score variations observed across various journals. Notably, the International Journal of Retail and Distribution and the Journal of Global Fashion Marketing emerged as two significant journals with relatively high Cite Scores.

4.2 Bibliometric Analysis

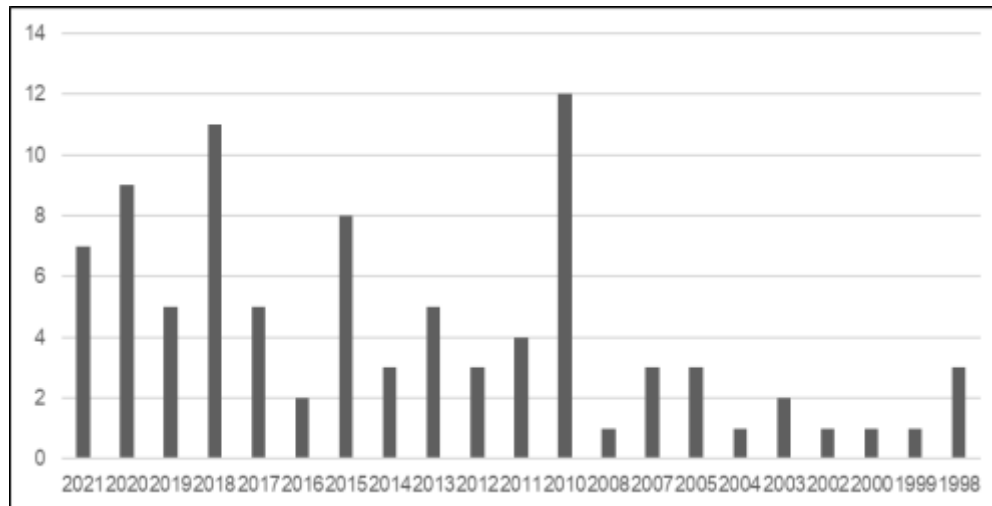


Figure F : Annual Research Production Trend

4.2.1 Annual trend in research production

Between 1998 and 2021, 91 papers were published on this topic. The rounded average of publications on this topic between 1998-2021 was 4. The year with the most significant number of publications is 2010, with 12 (Figure F). Through VOS viewer software, the most cited articles within the research sample were separated. Of 189 valid documents, 136 were mentioned in at least one publication. The most cited document (128 citations) was "The Influence of Display Characteristics on Visual Exploratory Search Behaviour." The author of this article is Janiszewski C.

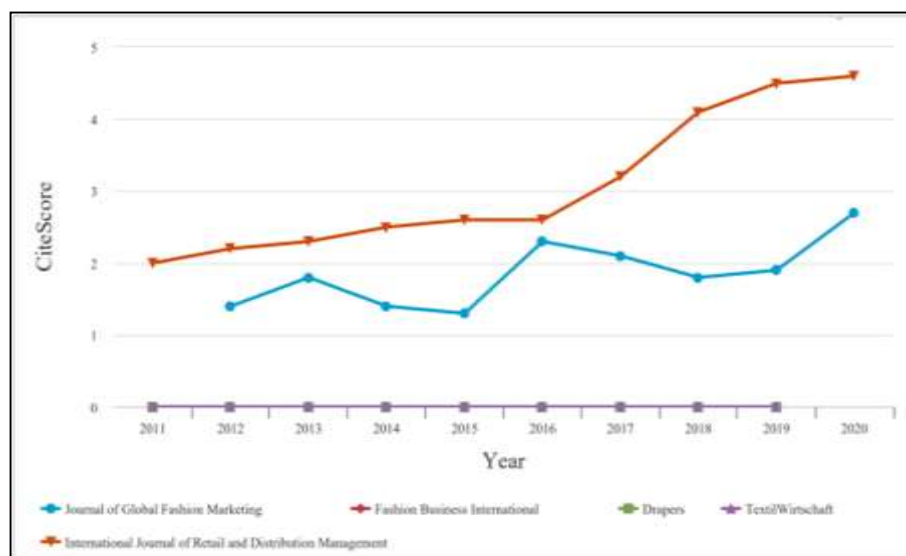


Figure E: Cite Score of Journals

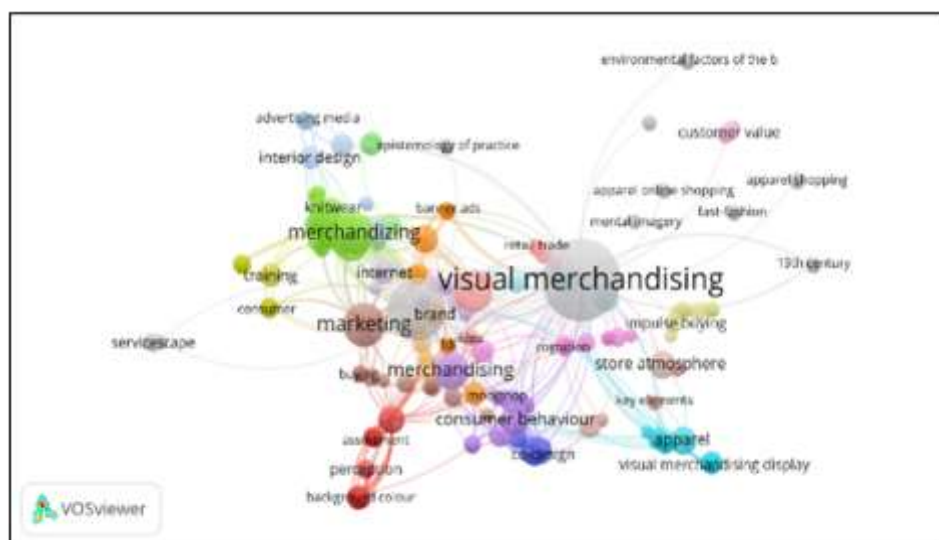


Figure G: Network map

4.2.2 Co-occurrence of Keywords

Table 2: Top Keywords		
Keyword	Occurrences	Total link strength
Branding	8	27
Company information	5	21
Consumer behavior	5	7
Fashion	9	18
Footwear	5	20
Marketing	10	19
Menswear	5	22
Merchandising	7	10
Merchandising	9	31
Retailing	20	39
Visual merchandising	35	16

The co-occurrence of keywords was studied, and 371 results were generated (Figure G). 11 keywords were selected (Table 2) after the filter of a minimum of five occurrences needed to be considered in the co-occurrence keywords network was applied. The "Retailing" keyword exhibited the highest total link strength, and "merchandising" was next in line in total link strength. The term 'Visual merchandising' showed maximum occurrences with average link strength.

4.2.3 Co-authorship network

The co-authorship analysis was limited to articles with a maximum of 25 authors per document, resulting in 189 researchers (Figure H). The number was then reduced to 3 by only including authors with at least three publications. The final network map shows the most extensive connected items, including 189 authors. As shown in Table 2, Out of the top 3 authors, only one has a maximum of 30 citations for three documents. Another author has written ten papers but with no citations.

4.2.4. Co-authorship countries network

Table 3. Top authors ranked by total link strength			
Author	Documents	Citations	Total link strength
Cant m.c.	3	12	0
Choo h.j.	3	30	0
Ryan j.	10	0	0

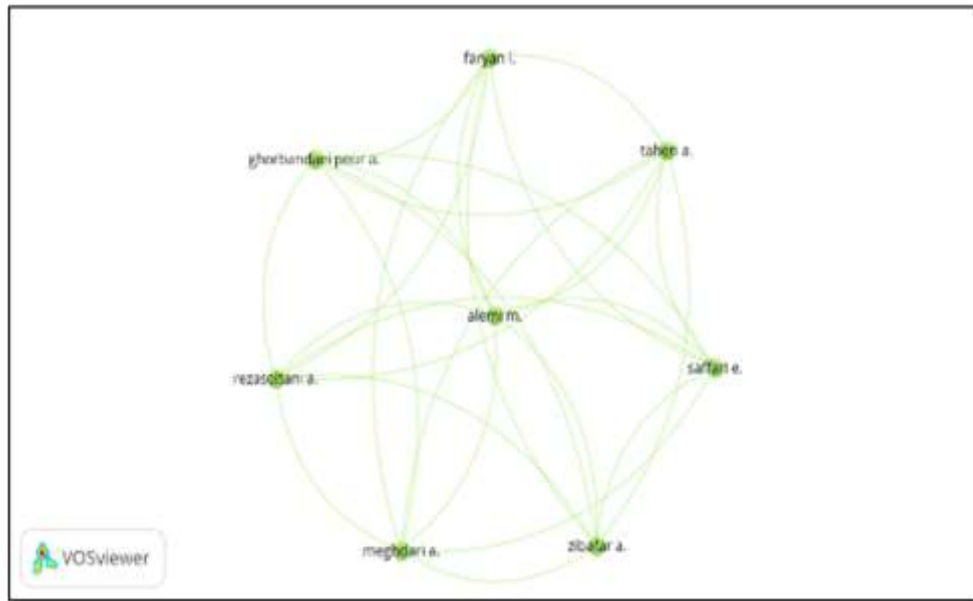


Figure H: Network map of authors

Documents restricted to 25 countries per article were considered for the Analysis (Figure I). A total of 32 countries met this requirement, and 6 met the threshold of having at least 5 publications as shown in the network map (Table 3). The USA and South Korea have a strong collaborative relationship, as seen by the proximity of their nodes.

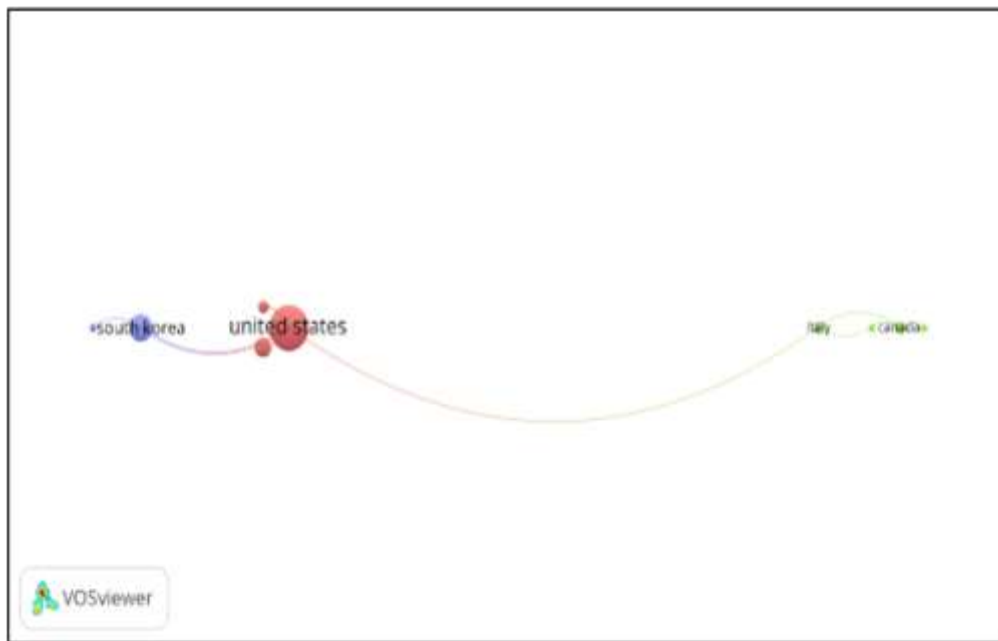


Figure I: Network map of Countries based on total link strength.

4.2.5 Citation analysis of journals

Citation analysis was conducted, and the resulting network map is displayed in Figure J. The top 5 journals listed in Table 5 are ranked based on total link strength. The journal "Drapers" ranks highest, with 14 articles published. The citation analysis reflected the fields of study that provided details about online and offline VMs.

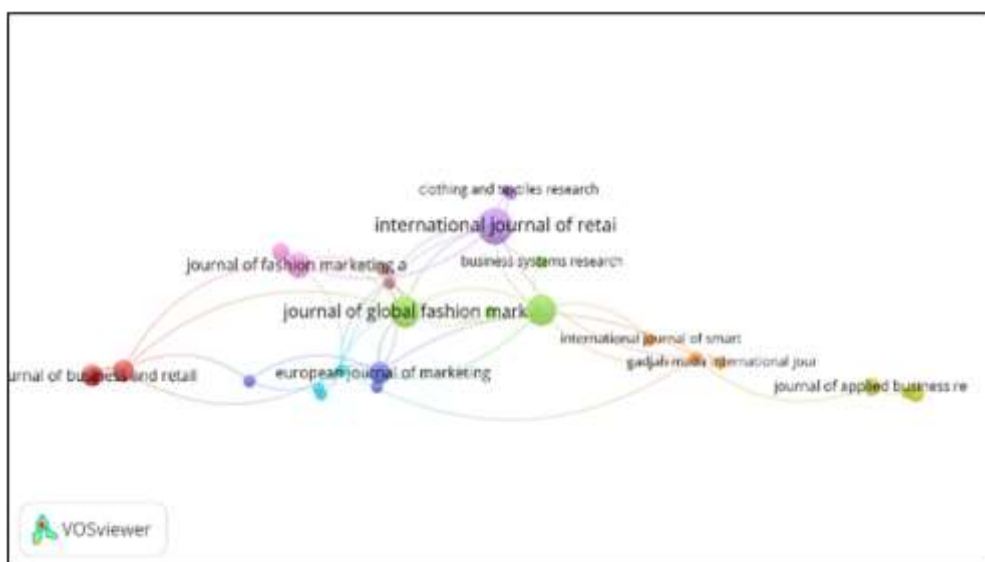


Figure J: Network map of citations analysis of journals based on total link strength.

Table 5: Top Journals based on documents produced			
Source	Documents	Citations	Total link strength
Drapers	14	0	0
European journal of marketing	3	82	2
Indian journal of marketing	2	0	1
International journal of clothing science and technology	2	0	0
International journal of retail and distribution management	8	246	5
Journal of Applied Business Research	2	5	0
Journal of business and retail management research	3	11	1
Journal of fashion marketing and management	4	88	5
Journal of Global Fashion Marketing	6	51	7
Journal of research in interactive marketing	2	7	0
Journal of retailing and consumer services	6	108	2
Journal of sociology	2	37	0
Psychology and marketing	3	99	3

5. Conclusion

This paper presents a structured bibliometric analysis of research done in the domain of VM over the last 35 years. The bibliometric analysis gives a snapshot of the objective fact that the research in the VM domain has fascinating and impactful implications on the academic field; however, the field is highly under-researched. The geographical analysis indicates that the USA is the top contributing country regarding the number and quality of research work published. India has a vast scope in this field, as the topic is gaining traction over the past few years. India, being at the cusp of a hybrid retail market, has given a new dimension to the field of VM. This paper provides direction to researchers and academicians to help them identify vast research gaps and emerging research trends in the field of VM. It will indeed give a direction for exploring new research avenues as this is the novel attempt to establish an integrative review paper in the VM domain.

6. Implications of study

6.1 Theoretical implications

Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative analysis of the research literature in a domain of knowledge over some time. In addition to providing various metrics of analysis concerning VM, this study has outlined multiple theories used in the domain of VM on which extensive work has been done in the past three decades based on the dataset used for bibliometric review. This shall provide future researchers with guidelines on the theories that can provide a foundation for their research in the field of VM.

6.2 Managerial implications

The study has implications for marketers of businesses and all managers working in both online and offline retail environments, as they would be able to identify the key contributors to the research in VM. A detailed study of the research papers of these key contributing authors would help marketers understand current trends

in VM and the impact of VM on consumer behaviour. With the changing preferences of consumers, this study will help marketers bridge the gap between consumer expectations and their retail offerings.

Due to the shift in consumer preferences, multi-channel retailing has gained much attention, and as a consequence, online VM has become an integration of traditional VM with modern channels. It has started gaining the attention of the academic fraternity and business community.

Online marketers and brick-and-mortar retailers should aim to develop robust and effective VM systems to facilitate their customers' shopping experience and convenience. Marketers can effectively use VM to their advantage by implementing various techniques highlighted in this paper to gain a competitive advantage.

7. Limitations

One potential constraint of this study is its exclusive reliance on research papers from the Scopus database. Future researchers might consider expanding their scope to include additional databases for a more comprehensive analysis. Furthermore, another limitation could stem from the relatively limited availability of citation data and trends.

8. Future research directions

Visual Merchandising (VM) is a specialized function that drives brand sales by influencing customer behaviour. Previous research endeavours predominantly focus on establishing the pivotal role of VM in achieving its primary objective. However, VM encompasses more than just a store's visual and experiential aspects; it extends to its impact on brand knowledge, consumer responses, and patronage intentions. This broader scope offers significant opportunities for further research, enabling a deeper understanding of VM's diverse effects on the target audience. Such insights can empower retailers to tailor their strategies effectively.

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