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How Visual Merchandising Influences Generation Z Purchasing Behavior in A Retail Store

Matilde Vitorino Aires

Master's in Business Administration

Supervisor:
Prof. Álvaro Dias;
Invited Professor; Department of Marketing, Operation and Management (IBS) - ISCTE Business School.

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"Talvez não tenha conseguido fazer o melhor, mas lutei para que o melhor fosse feito. Não sou o que deveria ser, mas Graças a Deus, não sou o que era antes".

Marthin Luther King

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Resumo

O contexto competitivo das marcas e dos retalhistas tem vindo a gerar a necessidade de otimizar estratégias e planos que levem o consumidor a comprar mais. Através de elementos de Visual Merchandising é possível levar o consumidor a comprar determinado produto ou marca, mesmo que essa compra não seja planeada. Ainda assim, diferentes gerações apresentam diferentes necessidades, e por isso exigem estratégias distintas. Este estudo tem como principal objetivo analisar o efeito de elementos de Visual Merchandising na tendência de compra por impulso da Geração Z, através da análise das seguintes variáveis: Layout de Loja, Cores, Iluminação, Promoções de Loja, Ambiente de Loja, e Interações com Empregados. Foi efetuada uma revisão de literatura focados nos variáveis em análise, bem como no comportamento do consumidor, e nas características de Geração Z. Posteriormente, foram formuladas e testadas nove hipóteses através de um questionário online, que resultou num total de 206 respostas por parte da Geração Z, e que procurava entender qual a perceção do consumidor destes elementos no seu comportamento de compra por impulso. Os resultados obtidos relevaram que as Promoções de Loja, e o Ambiente de Loja têm um efeito positivo no comportamento de compra por impulso de Geração Z, enquanto a Iluminação apresenta um efeito negativo. O Layout de Loja também apresenta efeito na tendência de compra por impulso desta geração, mas apenas na presença do efeito mediador do Ambiente de loja.

Palavras-chave: Visual Merchandising, Geração Z, Comportamento do Consumidor, Compra por Impulso.

JEL Classification System: L81, M37.

Abstract

The competitive context of brands and retailers has been generating the need to optimize strategies and plans that lead the consumer to buy more. Through Visual Merchandising elements it is possible to lead the consumer to buy a certain product or brand, even if this purchase is not planned. Still, different generations have different needs, and therefore require different strategies. This study's main objective is to analyze the effect of Visual Merchandising elements in the impulse buying tendency of Generation Z, through the analysis of the following variables: Store Layout, Colors, Lighting, In-store Promotions, Store Ambience, and Salesperson Interactions. A literature review was conducted focusing on the variables under analysis, as well as on consumer behavior, and the characteristics of Generation Z. Subsequently, nine hypotheses were formulated and tested through an online questionnaire, which resulted in a total of 206 responses from Generation Z, and sought to understand the consumer's perception of these elements in their impulse buying behavior. The results obtained revealed that In-store Promotions and Store Ambiance have a positive effect on the impulse buying behavior of Generation Z, while Lighting has a negative effect. Store Layout also has an effect on the impulse buying tendency of this generation, but only in the presence of the mediating effect of Store Ambiance.

Keywords: Visual Merchandising, Generation Z, Consumer Behavior, Impulse Buying.

JEL Classification System: L81, M37.

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1. Introduction

This dissertation arises within the scope of the Master's in Business Administration, at ISCTE Business School, and seeks to study "How Visual merchandising influences Generation Z purchasing behavior in a retail store".

Over the last few years we have seen an increasingly competitive market, which in turn leads to an increase in consumer demand, seeking products and services that satisfy their basic needs, but not only. This intensification of competition, namely in the retail sector, promotes among them the development and improvement of strategies that lead to purchase and customer satisfaction, and consequently to their retention (Marques et al., 2013). The relationship that exists between consumers and retailers is crucial to their success, and for this reason, it is essential to create atmospheres and environments in line with customer's needs, providing them with quality services and products, at competitive prices and surrounded by a pleasant experience. In order to respond to these retailers' needs, techniques capable of creating purchase desires in the consumer were designed, and it is in this sense that the theme of this dissertation emerges.

There are several moments along the consumer's purchase cycle, in which the retailer can act: research, evaluation, category, brand and product selection, new purchase, and recommendation (Shankar & Yadav, 2011). And in all these phases, there are strategies available that aim to impact the consumer: technological and digital innovation, multichannel marketing, store environment and design, store merchandising, salespeople, promotions, among others. All these strategies create stimulus which are likely to induce a desire or need to purchase in the consumer, partly justifying the reason why more than half of purchase decisions are made inside the store (Inman et al., 2009).

In this way, it is already possible to have a brief notion of the relevance of merchandising, an essential communication tool. It is based on this concept and on the importance (or not) of it in the purchasing behavior of Generation Z that the entire dissertation will unfold. We know that Generation Z came full of new habits and ideals, so the question arises: "Do all these strategies at the point of sale continue to impact these young people?".

The main objective of this dissertation is to identify which merchandising tools influence the purchase behavior of Generation Z, more specifically in the impulsive buying tendency, by analyzing 9 hypotheses using SmartPLS3 software. Briefly, at the end of this exercise, we will understand the perception that consumers have about these factors in their in-store impulse buying tendency.

This study is divided into six chapters. In accordance with the objectives of this research, a brief background of the evolution of marketing, the role of visual merchandising and its areas of operation is made, as well as a notion of consumer behavior and the main traits that define Generation Z. The literature review of this set of concepts allowed the development of nine hypotheses and consequently of a conceptual model. Following, the research method used is explained, as well as the data collection process and the respective measurement. Subsequently, the results obtained are presented, which in turn are interpreted and related to existing theory. Finally, the conclusions, the contributions, and the limitations and suggestions for future studies are presented.

2. Literature Review

The following point presents the literature review that supported the present work. First, the main concepts on which this study is based are introduced, and then the hypotheses that gave rise to the conceptual model are presented.

2.1 Main Concepts

2.1.1 The Evolutionary Perspective of Marketing

It is not easy to identify the temporal moment of the emergence of marketing, as its use is almost as old as the first commercial exchanges carried out by the first civilizations. For this reason, and as would be expected, the strategies were quite primitive and archaic. (Etzel et al., 2005; Laurindo, 2018).

Currently, the most widespread definition of the marketing concept is shared by the AMA - American Marketing Association, and states that marketing is the activity and process for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offers that have value for consumers, clients, partners, and society in general, planning and facilitating exchanges aimed at satisfying human wants and needs. In a more synthetized way, Kotler and Keller (2013) describe marketing as the science and art of finding, keeping, and increasing profitable customers.

Over the years, marketing has undergone clear changes, and has evolved consecutively, making it possible to identify three major moments: production, sales, and marketing (Ferreira et al., 2015; Teixeira, 2021).

The production phase began in the 1920s with the inclusion of mechanized production which led to a significant commercial advance. As a result, access to cheaper products became easier, which led to demand quickly outstripping supply (Laurindo, 2018). At that time, the main objective was to maintain mass productions, which represented a reduced cost per unit, and where the consumer served only as a way to sell these products. Naturally, in this period there was no type of personalization or differentiation since companies' interests on consumer requirements were not the focus (Lima, 2016).

After the era in which the focus was on scale productions that led to an exponential increase in demand, the sales phase began, around the 1950s (Laurindo, 2018). During this period, and due to the war and the subsequent crisis that affected most consumers, there was a

drastic reduction in purchasing power. Allied to this problem, the increase in competition and similar products led to difficulties in the sale of the product (Ferreira et al., 2015).

Due to changes in the financial availability of consumers, and the increasing number of companies selling similar products and services, price has become a determining factor, and triggered the need for companies to have products with added value. There was a need to define variables and factors that would make competition possible, and that had the ultimate goal of obtaining one more sale or one more customer. That's how what we now know as the Marketing Mix conceived by McCarthy came about. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2018), the Marketing Mix, also known as the 4 Ps - Product, Price, Promotion and Place - encompasses a group of controllable marketing variables that the company uses as a way of responding to what the target audience is looking for (Kwok et al., 2020).

Then the marketing era begins, where as a result of the end of the Second World War there is a remarkable industrial growth. It is at this stage that producers realize that, more than putting products on the market, it is necessary to know and satisfy the needs of consumers (Kotler et al., 2013). They recognized that, in order to attract customers and retain them, it is also necessary to provide experiences and emotional bonds, emphasizing the values of brands and companies (Ferreira et al., 2015).

It is at this moment that the consumer is seen to become a complete human being, with desires and emotions (Kotler et al., 2017). And it is for this reason that it is believed that the future of this science will be related to the creation of products, services and corporate cultures that reflect human values.

Therefore, consumer loyalty and building lasting relationships should be the main focus of every business. Customers become, more than ever, the main business partners. Also due to the increase in competition and information available in the market, consumers start to make more thoughtful and informed decisions when selecting the product, starting to include in their reflection and decision the way products are developed and created (Fonseca, 2015). Marketers began to realize that working to acquire new customers and expand their business is as important as maintaining the loyalty of their current customers (Boone & Kurtz, 2015).

It is thus clear that it was in this era of marketing that the consumer became the center of attention and of companies, and there was a greater interest and search for the satisfaction of their needs and desires.

But these phases do not end here, as there is currently a fourth phase within marketing, online marketing. This is an extremely fast and dynamic type of marketing, which is based on the reactions, opinions, and responses to the stimulus of consumers. More planning of certain

elements is necessary so that a personalized experiences with more added value can be delivered to the consumer (Świeczak, 2017). This new moment of marketing continues to focus on the needs, demands and desires of the consumer, but offers the answer to these needs through the online path. Currently, conversations between consumers about certain products become more credible than certain advertisements recommending it, in the same way that social groups or recommendations from experts or public figures sometimes go beyond personal preference. It is therefore essential to study and get to know the consumer well. The future of marketing will involve a continuous mix of experiences, both online and offline, as a way of being closer to the consumer and of any generation, providing them with more information and giving them more power of choice (Farias et al., 2020).

2.1.2 Merchandising

Merchandising is a communication tool increasingly used by retailers and distributors with the aim of increasing sales and retaining customers. This tool becomes even more indispensable in retail stores that represent and sell a vast number of brands (Farias et al., 2020).

Merchandising acts in the last stage of the consumer's purchase process, and for this reason it can have great power over their final decision. This communication tool consists of the set of operations carried out at the point of sale in order to place the right product, in the exact quantity, at the correct price, at the ideal time, and with the appropriate visual impact (Kotler & Keller, 2013).

In short, Araújo et al., (2017) describe the concept of merchandising as the set of all efforts dedicated to valuing the product in the eyes of the consumer with the main objective of boosting sales in the establishment itself.

2.1.2.1 The Principles of Merchandising

There are numerous techniques and tools that can be used to communicate with a specific target, whether advertising, sales promotions, personal selling, among others. From the second that the consumer comes into contact with a brand or service (whether online or in a physical store), there are numerous strategies put into practice so that the final objective is fulfilled - sale of a product or service, presentation of a new range, sale of a brand that is leaving the market, among others.

Thus, we realize that merchandising is "any technique, action or promotional material used at the point of sale that provides information and greater visibility to products, brands, or services, with the purpose of motivating and influencing consumers' purchasing decisions. It is the set of marketing and communication activities designed to identify, control, establish and promote brands, products, and services at points of sale." (Zamberlan et al., 2010).

According to Buttle (1984), this method came to help stores in the presentation of items on the shelf and in the stimulus that this presentation triggers in consumer's purchase behavior. It is used as a means of capturing consumers' momentary attention to the store and trying to keep it. I also describe him as the 'silent salesman', the advertising's most neglected relative (Buttle, 1984).

Later, the four axes of merchandising were defined, which refer that, for a product to be profitable, it is necessary to fulfill certain steps: it is essential that the product is available in the store, it must be correctly positioned so that it is visible, it is important that is highlighted, and finally its profitability must be permanently controlled (Masson & Welloff, 1997).

Although the concept is increasingly established, it can vary depending on the points of view and the objectives with which it is used. Pancrázio (2000) states that, while for a communication professional, merchandising is an indirect way of getting a brand message to the final consumer, which is very close to advertising, for a marketing professional, these promotional techniques only aim to promote the product, regardless of whether it is at the point of sale or not.

The success of this tool is closely linked to the good alignment between suppliers and distributors, but also in terms of the layout and exposure of the articles. Factors such as lighting, ventilation, traffic, and helpful service can be added to this calculation (Filipe et al., 2018; Zenone & Buairide, 2006).

Blessa (2003) highlights as main objectives and functions: increasing impulse sales, attracting consumer attention, positioning the product in a captivating way, sending information to the reseller and consumer, improving promotions, and identifying brands and products (Araújo et al., 2017). In this way, constant innovation at the point of sale becomes crucial, with merchandising being one of the main pillars.

2.1.2.2 Visual Merchandising: Point of Sale Strategies

Visual merchandising generates a promising environment that induces the consumer to buy more and return to the store, simplifies the work of retailers, improves productivity, and makes the sale of items more profitable (Cordova et al., 2020).

According to Kotler (1974), visual merchandising is considered the quality of the surrounding space. And for this reason, any technique that allows to create a good store environment, whether through colors, different designs, decoration, communication, music, or even smells, can lead the consumer to reach the desired end.

There are still some dualities when it comes to defining which elements make up the concept of visual merchandising. Some authors consider lighting and colors, store layout and display materials, location and linear as the main components (Araújo et al., 2017), while others only refer to the store environment, the visual components of the exterior of the facade, the shop windows, the billboards, along with others (Gudonavičienė & Alijošienė, 2015).

Although there is still no consensus on the number of tools and strategies that can be used as visual merchandising, the most commonly mentioned elements that have the most impact on impulse buying are storefronts, store design, store layout and ambience, promotional signage, and finally, and with less impact, colors, and lighting of space (Gudonavičienė & Alijošienė, 2015).

During the purchase process of consumers, the most used sense is vision, which ends up triggering the choice process, since it is the first stimuli to make the brain react to what is presented to it. And the function of visual merchandising is to work on that first impact and impression. Since consumer's attention disperses quickly, only being focused on an object for 2 to 10 seconds, it is the first impression that the consumer has of the product, which will determine whether to take it with him or not (Blessa, 2003).

Visual merchandising becomes so relevant because the entire set of elements that compose it control the last moment of purchase. And for this reason, it is important to have teams specialized in these techniques in order to stimulate the best possible reaction in the consumer (Bahman et al., 2013).

All this set of stimuli will interfere in some way (positively or negatively) with the consumer's perception of the surrounding environment. In this sense, we will now evaluate in more detail the function and importance of the main elements that make up visual merchandising.

2.1.2.2.1 Store Layout

Store Layout is how each retail store is organized, and how each zone and element is distributed. Here it can also be included any signage that exists in the store, as well as displays, islands in the central aisle of the store, among other materials. This distribution is designed from the outset to ensure that the consumer stays in the store longer and that he walks through all the aisles whenever possible (Parente, 2000).

According to Ong (2002), there are several ways to organize the layout of shelves, however, retailers essentially focus on three methods: the grid pattern, the free-flow, and the forced-path layout. In line with what Ong (2002) says, Levy and Waitz (2004) also identified three similar ways of organizing the space and aisles of a store, which are the grid, the freeform and the circular layout.

Ong (2002) states that the grid pattern layout turns out to be the one that brings more profitability to the store, and therefore, it becomes the most interesting. This method is characterized by rectangular spaces with long, parallel corridors. In this way, consumers are more exposed to all products, and end up having to go through most aisles since the main products are in the corners of the store. In addition, the author also states that this method is favorable to store workers, as it facilitates the replacement of shelves, inventory control, among other things. Commonly, supermarkets use this type of store layout.

The second method of layout organization, free flow, is characterized by islands, displays and shelves spread freely and randomly throughout the store. In this way the consumer is free to make his own way inside the space. This type of layout is more characteristic of clothing stores, and ends up giving more emphasis to the store environment and the aesthetics of the space, in order to become more captivating for the consumer. This layout also allows the consumer to go through the various areas, leading to the possibility of impulse purchases. However, it becomes more expensive for the retailer (Ong, 2002).

The last method, forced path, is a store layout in which consumers necessarily have to go all the way through the store, until they reach the checkout area again, which gives them visual contact with most items as they go through them (Ong, 2002). This store layout is more often used by companies like IKEA, Tiger and Normal.

At the end of the day, what is important in supermarkets is to design a space organization that directs the consumer to areas, but mainly to areas where the most sought after and profitable items are exposed (Peter & Olson, 1999). However, it is important not to neglect the comfort given to the consumer, keeping the areas ample, organized, and easily accessible.

2.1.2.2.2 Lighting and Colour

Color and Lighting are also fundamental in the consumer's purchasing process. These two elements should support the store layout and help guide the customer through products and aisles. It is something that should also be well planned, as it can truly affect the consumer's mood, both positively and negatively (Carvalho & Motta, 2004).

In addition to the primary and obvious need for lighting at the point of sale, for the sake of visibility over the products and the space, lighting is also a very relevant aspect for the interior of the store. When it comes to retail stores, this detail becomes even more important, as it has the ability to give the space personality and highlight areas and products. According to Ou et al., (2011), this effect is enhanced when combined with the correct colors and tones.

Morton (2004) studied how individuals interpret colors and what they represent to them in a store environment. He concludes that certain colors have an effect on the buying process: the color red, for example, is a symbol of passion and attraction, while the color yellow conveys happiness to the consumer.

Color aligned with lighting allows retailers to improve product presentation, increase visibility, and make the environment more comfortable, attractive, and in turn, conducive to shopping. According to Newland and Hopper (2016), these two factors have an influence on consumers' mood and final decisions, so they should be strategically used.

2.1.2.2.3 In-store Promotions

Sumeisey (2014) consider Promotional Signage to be all signs, communications, or images that communicate a unique and differentiated promotional message, which immediately captures the consumer's attention, and which acts indirectly as a salesperson which aims to sell.

The promotions that exist inside the store have the goal to provide information to the consumer that helps him in his purchase decision. Ali and Hasnu (2013) emphasize the importance of the effects of promotions and the materials used to highlight them, because when well developed, they can be the key in a moment of consumer indecision.

In addition to the promotions themselves, supermarkets also make a lot of use of posters and other communication materials placed in the aisles, shelves, and checkouts, with the main objective of informing or advertising a campaign regarding products or services (Newlands & Hooper, 2016). These promotions help consumers to decide between brands regarding recurrently bought products (eg: eggs, water, toilet paper, etc.), but can also lead to impulsive

purchase of products. These are products which at the outset would not be on the shopping list, but the realization that they are on sale, gives consumers the feeling that they should seize the opportunity and buy them.

2.1.2.2.4 Salesperson Interactions

During the shopping process, consumers are more likely to follow suggestions and consecutively make impulse purchases, when they need to buy a product about which they have no prior knowledge (Lo et al., 2016). These suggestions can reach the shopper through interaction with store workers, or even through the opinions of people who may be accompanying the customer.

According to Argo and Dahl (2020), interactions with store salespeople also seem to influence consumer orientation in product analysis, which, in turn, has an impact on consumers' purchasing choices, and ultimately, to impulsive decisions.

Likewise, consumer companions also tend to make recommendations that end up influencing the final purchase decision. Interestingly, customers tend to spend more time shopping when they are accompanied, which is positive because not only are they subject to more opinions, but they end up spending more time in contact with the variety of products in the store, with greater possibilities of shopping for impulse (Pradhan, 2016).

2.1.2.2.5 Store Ambiance

According to Foster and McLelland (2015), store ambience includes not only the physical elements existing in a retail store, such as the store layout, the floor, shelves, shop windows, etc., but also non-palpable elements like lighting, colors, and smells. Naturally, this topic has aroused increasing interest among retailers, who are more frequently looking for techniques and strategies to increase in-store sales.

Zhou and Wong (2004) reveal that the store ambience is a conscious and collective effort done by retail store teams to create an environment that generates emotional effects on consumers, and consequently, a desire to buy. If the consumer feels good when he enters the store, and if the emotions that the environment arouses in him are pleasant, the probability of staying for a longer period of time is higher, meaning that retailers can, in a certain way, actively manipulate the shopper's stimuli (Vieira, 2013).

2.1.3 Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior began to be studied in the 60s, with the main objective of understanding which factors impacted the consumer (Mowen & Minor, 2003). The first studies on this topic argue that individuals purchase goods and services rationally and in order to maximize their benefits. However, other research developed later indicates that consumers can buy on impulse and are regularly influenced by those around them, by advertising, and even by their current state of mind and emotions (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000).

According to Cant (2010), consumer behavior is considered to be the study of persons, groups, or entities and the methods they employ to select, secure, use, and discard products, services, experiences, or ideas to fulfil the demands, as well as the impact these practices have on the consumer. Any responses that arise from the consumer (whether mental, emotional, or behavioral) to the aforementioned stimulus are also considered consumer behavior (Kardes et al., 2014).

In this sense, several authors address the importance of the consumer. According to Garcia et al. (2010) business success does not depend on the retailer, but on the consumer. Likewise, understanding the consumer is crucial for any company. However, and due to the individuality of each person, we know that their behaviors can be different even in the face of the same stimuli.

2.1.3.1 Consumer behavior at the Point of Sale and Impulse Purchase

Consumers are in daily contact with stimulating environments. Upon entering a supermarket, where there are thousands of products, people, colors, sounds, and smells, each consumer reacts differently and sometimes unexpectedly to these stimuli. It is based on these reactions and desires created by the various stimuli that consumers make their decisions (Cant et al., 2006).

It is through this analysis that each store and retailer must draw their marketing and visual merchandising strategies. All the competition currently existing in the retail area, makes each retailer strive more and more to provide the best and most engaging shopping experience to the consumer (Cant et al., 2013).

However, unpredictability is part of the process, and knowing that not all consumers will react in the same way, it is important to group them into segments that have the same characteristics. Thus, by developing specific strategies for each target, it will be possible to obtain a more accurate response from consumers.

The entire sales process is centered on the shopper, and for this reason it is important to understand which are the spaces within the point of sale that can generate more interest, what arouses their curiosity, and even what can make them change their ideas at the moment of purchase (Araujo et al., 2017).

Zenone and Buairide (2006) highlighted some motivations and factors that interfere with the customer's buying process: the shopper is sensitive to all the surroundings at the point of sale, be it the store ambience, the noise, the cleanliness, the lighting, and even the behavior of the store salespeople and the layout of the products.

After having an overview of the environment that surrounds him, the customer begins his purchases thinking about his immediate needs. It is throughout the buying process that the consumer gains enthusiasm and motivation. Usually, these motivations take into consideration impulse purchases, be they of complementary, appealing, and innovative products, the level of exposure of the products, and the existing promotions and advertisements. However, for this to happen the shopper needs to recognize utility in the product, complementarity and even the notion of rotation that the product has. This can be achieved through visual or auditory advertising, or through point-of-sale materials.

For the buying decision to be made, the consumer has to feel comfortable and confident, and that's when store ambiance can have an impact, through the colors, the lighting, the framing of the product in the space, the layout, etc. The cleanliness of the space is also linked to comfort, as well as the availability of information that is granted through employees, labels, price, and promotion information, among others.

During the buying process, economy also has its weight in the decision since all consumers wish to save. That is why it is important to have good product value, by keeping the product in a good light, creating a good brand image, and showing the added value it has. In turn, the novelty also helps the loyalty process, since in the future the shopper will associate the store where he usually does shopping, with original, quality products. Furthermore, transparency and credibility are also factors capable of impacting the customer, so it is crucial to be excellent at marking prices as well as at registering the products at the checkout.

Last but not least, emotions, sum up the motivations and factors that interfere with the customer's buying process, and these are presumed to be the feelings of fulfillment from the customer, especially when making an impulsive purchase. Briefly, the motivations that Zenone and Buairide (2006) highlight are related to sensitivity, enthusiasm, profitability, comfort, cleanliness, information, economy, innovation, credibility, and emotion.

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Therefore, all these motivations have their weight and relevance in the impulsive buying tendency. According to Beatty and Ferrel (1998), the impulse buying tendency is the propensity to purchase products spontaneously and unplanned, without any reflection or consideration of the consequences.

2.1.3.2 Generation Z's Buying Behavior

This is how Generation Z appears in this dissertation, a recent generation barely studied and with disruptive habits and routines, which differ from previous generations.

According to Fister-Gale (2015), Generation Z is made up of young people who were born in 1995 or later, and are the most educated generation. They are also characterized by being extremely knowledgeable about the technology that surrounds them, being innovative, and truly creative (Priporas et al., 2017). The fact is that since Generation Z emerged, turns out to be quite different from previous generations, and therefore it is believed that they will generate big changes in consumer behavior (Schlossberg, 2016).

Four great movements characterize this age group, and that allows them to be distinguished from the others. First, the interest and curiosity for new technologies, and the need to be constantly updated with everything that goes on in the world. Second, searching and choosing everything that is easy, meaning that having two options to choose from, Generation Z will tend to opt for the easiest option that requires less effort. Third, the need to feel safe and in their comfort zone, and lastly the desire to sometimes step outside of their own reality (Ernst & Young, 2015).

Due to this new way of being as a consumer, it is clear that Generation Z is less loyal to different brands and retailers, and more concerned with the experience and values that the brands defend. Thus, this industry increasingly feels the need to do more and better, in order not to lose the attention of this segment (Schlossberg, 2016).

Özkan (2017) state that Generation Z, not yet as involved in business as the other generations, generally follows consumer trends. Part of this generation is still monetarily dependent on their parents, so they end up being more conscious and selective in how they spend their money, and in the products they choose to buy. They are increasingly aware and sensitive to the concepts defended by brands, but they are no more loyal than previous generations. Generation Z, constantly surrounded by information and alternative products, continually waits for market innovations. These young people have a preference for products that actually bring some convenience to their lives, and for this reason they are the generation

that does the most research on products before purchasing them. Their final decision usually falls on the vendors who offer the best price.

It is at this point that the question arises: how will these very young but so peculiar consumers be impacted by the visual merchandising of a channel that they visit less and less? It is this issue that I will be focusing on over the next chapters.

2.2 Development of Hypotheses and Conceptual Model

Following the topic under analysis, which seeks to understand how visual merchandising impacts the buying behavior of generation Z in a retail store, more specifically the impulse buying tendency, it is crucial to understand the relevance of the hypotheses under study.

2.2.1 The impact of Store Layout on Impulsive Buying Tendency

Davies and Tilley (2004) point out the importance of stores strategizing a good layout, since this factor can lead consumers to adopt interesting behaviors, such as increasing their purchasing decisions. Most consumers make their decisions based on what they observe at the point of sale, so it is important that the organization of the spaces, aisles, and even the shelves visually attract them.

An optimized store layout allows consumers to find products more easily, which facilitates decision making. If the consumer feels confident and comfortable in their usual supermarket, this feeling will put the shopper more vulnerable to the desire to make impulse purchases (Aghazadeh, 2005). Even shoppers with more self-control tend to make impulse purchases in stores with a good layout (Sherman et al., 1997).

Ghani and Kamal (2010) also consider the layout of the point of sale as an important stimulus for unplanned purchases. Thus, the following study hypothesis was formulated:

H1: Store layout positively impacts the impulsive buying tendency of Generation Z in a retail store.

2.2.2 The effect of Lighting and Colors on Impulsive Buying Tendency

According to Dunne and Lusch (2008) lighting has an influence on the consumer and is able to impact their buying behavior. Supermarkets use these light positioning techniques as a way to

motivate the consumer to buy more of the featured products. As stated by Espinoza et al. (2004), the impulsive will to buy increases when they are in an environment that pleases them and makes them comfortable, either at the level of lighting or appropriate colors.

In line with what the previous authors argue, Yildirim et al. (2007) states that colors arouse some positive emotions in consumers and therefore can contribute to their purchase decisions. If they made him feel more comfortable and confident in his environment, he is more predisposed to make unplanned purchases. Thus, the following hypotheses arise:

H2: Lighting positively impacts the impulsive buying tendency of Generation Z in a retail store.

H3: Colors positively impact the impulsive buying tendency of Generation Z in a retail store.

2.2.3 The importance of In-store Promotions on Impulsive Buying Tendency

In-store promotions and discounts are increasingly used techniques to drive consumers to make impulse purchases (Lo et al, 2016). In addition, communications regarding promotions, offers, and coupons scattered throughout stores can also serve as a reminder to use a coupon or a reminder that something else may be missing from the home, leading the shopper to an unplanned purchase.

Brands are increasingly aware of the impact of in-store promotions on sales, so together with retailers, they are increasingly betting on samples, vouchers, coupons, or other types of promotions (Atulkar & Kesari, 2017). In turn, the consumer's attention is also increasingly drawn to these types of actions since his final decision is largely related to the price and the value that the item has for him. For this reason, supermarkets bet on what they know is one of the main drivers of impulse purchases (Atulkar & Kesari, 2017). Having said this, the following hypothesis was developed:

H4: In-store promotions positively impact the impulsive buying tendency of Generation Z in a retail store.

2.2.4 The influence of Salesperson Interactions on Impulsive Buying Tendency

Generally, store salespeople are equipped with skills and instructions to, when necessary, assist the consumer and contribute to the actual purchase of products (Badgaiyan and Verma, 2014).

Within the various existing techniques used in the interaction with customers, one of the most common is demonstrating the similarities between the shopper and the salesperson. When this happens, the consumer gains trust and tends to evaluate positively the salesperson and the point of sale, which in turn increases their purchase intentions (Mohan et al., 2013).

Aside from all of these techniques Hartmann et al. (2020) mentions salesperson interactions impact buying behavior, and the way these interactions happen can truly manipulate impulse purchases. For this reason, it was hypothesized:

H5: Salesperson interactions positively impact the impulsive buying tendency of Generation Z in a retail store.

2.2.5 Store Ambiance as a mediating effect

Store ambience aggregates a set of physical and non-physical factors (store layout, displays, music, colors, lights, etc.) and therefore has been attracting interest in stores (Mohan et al. 2013). Retailers use these elements in order to provide the shopper with a pleasant, comfortable, and stimulating experience, which consecutively induces even more to buy.

A smart, user-friendly store layout, shelves arranged the way shoppers plan their purchases, lights pointing at strategic points, and colors and music creating a welcoming environment make the shopper experience much more interesting (Mohan et al. 2013). Thus, by strategically aligning each of these factors, store ambiance has the ability to influence unplanned shopping behavior. In this sense, the following hypothesis arises:

H6: Store ambiance positively impact the impulsive buying tendency of Generation Z in a retail store.

Since store ambience theoretically aggregates a set of variables, it was also used as a mediating effect of the individual variables (store layout, lighting, and colors) and of the impulsive buying behavior to understand how strong each one is when combined with the other factors. Thus, the following mediating hypotheses emerged:

H7: Store ambiance mediates the relationship between store layout and impulsive buying tendency of Generation Z in a retail store.

H8: Lighting mediates the relationship between store layout and impulsive buying tendency of Generation Z in a retail store.

H9: Color mediates the relationship between store layout and impulsive buying tendency of Generation Z in a retail store.

2.2.6 Conceptual Model

According to the topics presented in the Literature Review, and taking into account the different relationships exposed among the several variables, we propose the theoretical model represented below (Figure 1).
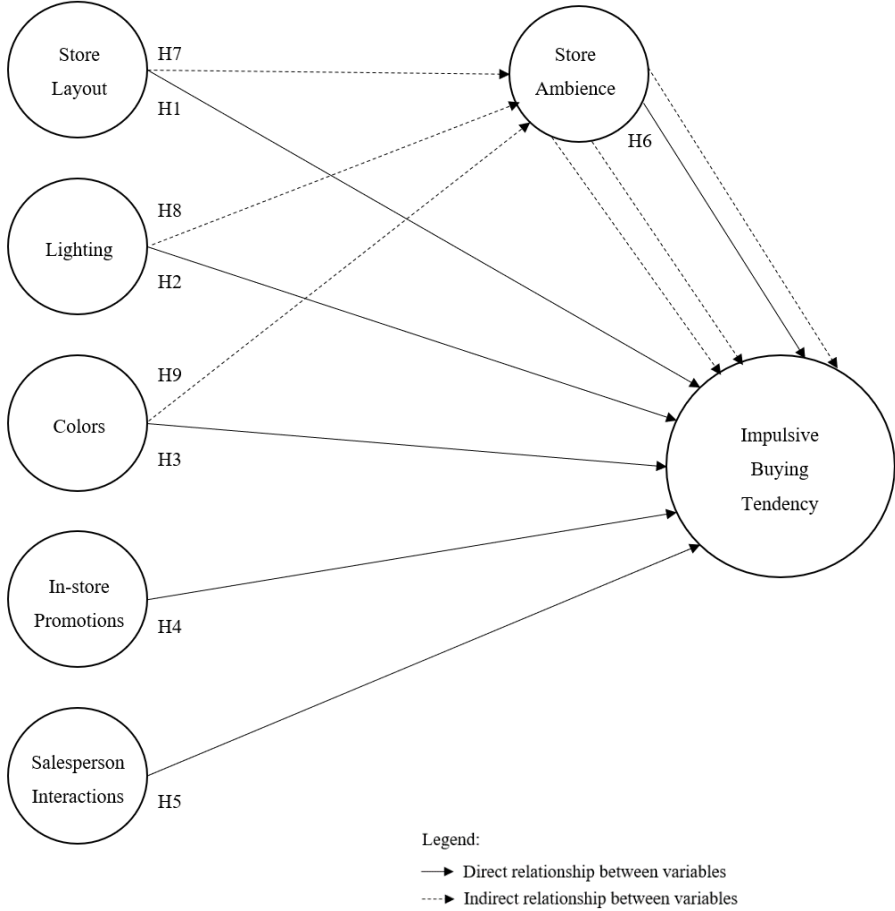

Figure 1. Conceptual Model

3. Methodology

3.1. Data collection and Sample

In the course of this work, the analysis of primary data was used as a methodology. A quantitative study was carried out, using the literature review that allowed the development of viable hypotheses and a conceptual model. The stated hypotheses in this deductive analysis are supported by existing ideas and literature (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018). According to Locke (2007), the deduction approach entails moving from the general to the specific, which translates to beginning with a theory that will result in the development of a hypothesis.

Based on the model that was designed and on the hypotheses that were intended to be evaluated, a questionnaire was developed aimed at Generation Z. A questionnaire was chosen as the means of data collection, since it is the most used method in this type of research, not only because of its reduced costs, but also because of the ease of processing information and low probability of error (Vilelas, 2009).

In a first instance, the questionnaire was tested by a group of 8 individuals, composed not only of people familiar with the terms and related to this aspect of marketing, but also family and friends with no connection to the area. In this way, it was possible to identify possible errors, or less clear and perceptible issues. After the analysis of the questionnaire carried out by this group, and the necessary improvements concluded, the questionnaire was officially released. It should be noted that the answers collected in the pre-test were not considered in the final sample.

This questionnaire, built using the Google Forms platform, was circulated through social networks from the 15th to the 22nd of March, obtaining a total of 206 valid responses.

This questionnaire consisted of a brief introduction that aim to convey the main objectives of the study carried out, as well as the confidential nature of the data provided there, followed by a set of questions that were divided into three large groups. The first group, composed of 5 questions and called "Consumer Profile", sought to analyze the main purchase and consumption behaviors of these young people. The second group, in turn, analyzed the respondents' perception of the variables that support the hypothesis. And finally, a brief set of sociodemographic questions were made.

Regarding sociodemographic data, the sample consisted of 206 young people born until 1995, which about 71% were female, the remainder being male. As for the level of education,

more than 57% have a degree, and almost 28% have a master's degree, with the remaining sample having lower education levels.

Regarding the key points of the consumer profile, we can highlight that: 47% of the sample shop at a supermarket once a week, 34% two to four times a week, and only 2.5% go to these spaces daily. Which shows us that about 83% of respondents are impacted at least once a week by the merchandising used by retailers. Analyzing the type of purchases usually made by the participants of this study, it is interesting to observe that, despite the growth of online, and the possibilities of buying through the internet, 87% of the sample claims to make all their purchases in a physical store, with no one in this group of people making all their purchases through the retailers' websites.

Concerning the way the consumers in this study shop inside the supermarket, around 75% say they carry a shopping list, and try to understand inside the store if there is anything else that might be missing. Only 10% of the sample is limited to what they have previously decided to buy, while the remaining 15% analyze everything they need in the store. With this data, we can see the impact that visual merchandising can effectively have on consumers, namely in impulsive purchase decision making, since almost 90% recognize that the final decisions are made in the store.

In order to have a first view of some aspects that can directly or indirectly influence the consumer, respondents were asked about the importance of a set of factors in their decision making. Analyzing the answers obtained, it can be seen that the first two factors considered the most relevant were the price, and consequently the promotion. The third aspect also considered important was the recommendation of family and friends, and therefore considered as reasonably important we see innovation in the market and the recommendation of experts. In the end, and considered by the sample as not very important, we have the recommendation of influencers. This set of factors are usually used in stores as triggers for an impulsive purchase, either through materials that highlight prices and/or promotions through flashy colors such as yellow and red, or through the use of materials that use images of influencers or statements as "Recommended by experts".

The last question of this group intended for individuals to reflect on the supermarket where they tend to shop. Around 42% mentioned Continente as their first option, and around 31% said they opted for Pingo Doce. This question was particularly important as it was the starting point for the next group.

3.2. Instrument and Variables

The second part of the questionnaire was divided into seven distinct groups, which in turn were divided into three to five statements. For the measurement of these variables, existing scales previously studied by other authors were used.

The statements relating the store layout, the lights and colors, the in-store promotions, as well as the store ambience and salesperson interaction, were included in the set of independent variables. The dependent variable under study is the impulse buying tendency (Appendix A - Variables under analysis - the items and respective authors).

The relationship between the conceptual model variables and the corresponding items that made up the conceptual model of the current inquiry is shown in Appendix A below. Additionally, for each variable, between three and five statements were gathered. And to form this measurable model, a five-point Likert scale was used, in which 1 was considered as "I totally disagree" and 5 "I totally agree". Although the questionnaire was developed in Portuguese, due to the target population, all the statements analyzed came from literature written in English, so they had to be translated into the language in which the survey was carried out. This translation was made with due care, so that the statements fully correspond to what the authors sought to convey.

4. Results

4.1 Data analysis

In order to evaluate the conceptual model presented above, the partial least squares regression (PLS) method was used using the SmartPLS 3 software (Ringle et al., 2015). Afterwards, the analysis and understanding of the results was divided into two parts, in which the first focused on analyzing the reliability and validity of the model, and the second part on evaluating the results of the structural model.

In order to test the quality of the model, indicators of reliability, convergent validity, reliability of internal consistency and discriminant validity were used. The results obtained indicate a standardized factor loading of all elements, since all were above 0.6 (the minimum value being 0.69). Since $p < 0.001$, it is concluded that the reliability of the individual indicator is proven (Hair et al., 2017).

Next, it was observed that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (α) and the composite reliability (CR) presented values above the threshold value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017). Thus, the reliability of internal consistency was confirmed (Table 1).

Convergent validity was also validated, since all elements had positive and significant loads, composite reliability (CR) values were greater than 0.7, and all variables obtained average variance extracted (AVE) values above 0.5 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1998), as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (α), Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variables	α	CR	AVE
(1) Colors	0.882	0.914	0.682
(2) Impulse Buying Tendency	0.713	0.803	0.576
(3) Layout	0.840	0.879	0.593
(4) Lighting	0.840	0.902	0.756
(5) In Store Promotions	0.878	0.925	0.804
(6) Salesperson Interactions	0.840	0.901	0.752
(7) Store Ambience	0.772	0.898	0.814

Subsequently, two different approaches were used in order to assess discriminant validity. In a first instance, a criterion proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981) was used, which argues that the square root of the extracted mean variance (AVE), identified in bold in Table 2, must be greater than the highest value of the correlation between the variables and, as can be seen, this principle is fulfilled by all constructs (Table 2). Afterwards, the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) was applied (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2015), which determines that all HTMT values must be less than 0.85. Analyzing the values presented in Table 2, this criterion is also confirmed, so there is evidence of discriminant validity.

Table 2. Correlations and support for discriminant validity

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(1) Colors	**0.826**	0.348	0.417	0.519	0.258	0.438	0.391
(2) Impulse Buying Tendency	0.269	**0.759**	0.351	0.114	0.779	0.319	0.684
(3) Layout	0.375	0.284	**0.770**	0.452	0.394	0.411	0.408
(4) Lighting	0.440	0.032	0.373	**0.869**	0.160	0.288	0.227
(5) In Store Promotions	0.228	0.593	0.357	0.134	**0.897**	0.339	0.639
(6) Salesperson Interactions	0.368	0.249	0.365	0.233	0.305	**0.867**	0.440
(7) Store Ambience	0.327	0.481	0.377	0.188	0.532	0.365	**0.902**

Note: Diagonal numbers shown in bold are the square roots of AVE. Below the diagonal are the correlations between the variables. Above the diagonal are the HTMT values.

In order to assess the model's collinearity, the variance inflation factor (VIF) was used. According to the results obtained, where the minimum VIF is 1.24 and the maximum is 1.57, therefore both below the critical value of 5.0 (Hair et al., 2017), it is concluded that there is no collinearity.

Finally, the structural model was analyzed by the magnitude and significance of its structural coefficients, taking into account the evaluation of two metrics: (1) the predictive precision through values of R^2, and (2) the appreciation of the predictive relevance through values of Q^2 (Hair et al., 2017). The R^2 values of the model-dependent variables: impulsive buying tendency and store ambience were 42% and 18%, respectively. These values are greater than 10% (Falk & Miller, 1992), so the predictive accuracy of the model can be confirmed. With regard to the Q^2 records for the same variables mentioned above, they were 0.222 and

0.132 respectively, thus indicating the predictive relevance of the model due to the fact that they are values greater than zero. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning the use of bootstrapping with 5000 repetitions, a non-parametric procedure that allowed us to assess the significance of the estimates of these parameters.

4.2 Direct effects

The Table 3 identified below, shows that the variables with the highest correlation between them are in-store promotions and impulsive buying tendency ($\beta = 0.457$). On the other hand, with colors and impulse buying tendency, the opposite is observed, since they are the variables that present a lower relationship ($\beta = 0.148$).

Analyzing the direct effects between the different variables, colors have a significantly positive effect on the impulsive buying tendency ($\beta = 0.148$, $p > 0.001$), which provides support for H3.

Contrary to the previous variables, store layout does not have a significantly positive effect on impulse buying tendency ($\beta = 0.046$, n.s.), which means that H1 is not supported.

Lighting, in turn, when related to impulse buying, show a significantly negative relationship ($\beta = -0.149$, $p < 0.05$), which corroborates H2.

In store promotions are highly correlated with impulsive buying tendency ($\beta = 0.457$, $p < 0.001$), thus supporting H4.

Salesperson interactions do not have a significant effect on impulse buying tendency ($\beta = 0.000$, n.s), and therefore H5 is not supported.

Finally, the store ambience has a significantly positive effect on the impulsive buying tendency ($\beta = 0.200$, $p < 0.01$), supporting H6.

Table 3. Structural model assessment

Direct Effects	Path Coefficient	Standard Errors	t Statistics	p Values
Colors -> Impulse Buying Tendency	0,148	0,063	2,353	0,019
Colors -> Store Ambience	0,224	0,088	2,548	0,011
Layout -> Impulse Buying Tendency	0,046	0,075	0,610	0,542

Layout -> Store Ambience	0,301	0,076	3,938	0,000
Lighting -> Impulse Buying Tendency	-0,149	0,060	2,471	0,014
Lighting -> Store Ambience	-0,023	0,074	0,309	0,757
In Store Promotions -> Impulse Buying Tendency	0,457	0,069	6,574	0,000
Salesperson Interactions -> Impulse Buying Tendency	0,000	0,056	0,006	0,995
Store Ambience -> Impulse Buying Tendency	0,200	0,073	2,738	0,006

4.3 Mediating effects

In order to test the mediating hypotheses, the recommendations of Hair, et al. (2017, p.232). To test the significance of indirect effects through mediators, the bootstrapping procedure was used (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). In this sense, Table 4 reflects the results of the mediating effects analyzed.

The indirect effect of lighting on impulsive buying tendency through the mediating effect of store ambience is not significant (β = -0.005, n.s.), and therefore does not support H8.

Likewise, the indirect effect of colors on the impulsive buying tendency through the mediated store ambience effect is also not significant (β = 0.045, n.s.), meaning that H9 is not supported either.

In the opposite direction, and to support H7, it was found that the indirect effect of store layout on impulsive buying tendency through the mediating effect of store ambience is significant (β = 0.060, p < 0.05).

Table 4. Result of specific mediating effects

Direct Effects	Path Coefficient	Standard Errors	t Statistics	p Values
Lighting -> Store Ambience -> Impulse Buying Tendency	-0,005	0,015	0,306	0,760

Colors -> Store Ambience -> Impulse Buying Tendency	0,045	0,023	1,937	0,053
Layout -> Store Ambience -> Impulse Buying Tendency	0,060	0,028	2,133	0,033

5. Discussion

Consumer behavior in a retail store, and in turn, impulse buying behavior, is closely related to the set of factors internal and external to the consumer. From the store environment, involving layouts, colors, employees, promotions, among other factors, there is a set of techniques that can help the supermarket to achieve more sales and even unplanned sales. However, these factors impact generations in different ways, and what impacted a consumer 20 years ago, may not impact them anymore. Generation Z has revolutionized several aspects, and brought with it new needs and trends. With this study, it was possible to understand how visual merchandising still impacts this generation.

5.1 Direct effects

According to the study conducted, store layout did not have a direct and significant impact on the impulsive buying behavior of Generation Z. The store layout provides the consumer with a better shopping experience, which, by feeling comfortable and confident, may lead to a greater desire to buy. However, acting alone this factor may not be strong enough to lead Generation Z, a generation increasingly conscious of their spending and more knowledgeable about what they are looking for, to make unplanned purchases (Özkan, 2017). Moreover, one could say that this effect is hard to be perceived by consumers when evaluating their in-store behavior. Thus, contrary to what several authors argue, H1 was not validated, and the variable store layout does not have a direct impact on the impulsive buying behavior of Generation Z. Nonetheless, as we will see later, this variable will have a strong relationship with the impulsive buying tendency variable through a mediating variable.

Lighting, analyzed in H2, showed a negative correlation with Generation Z's impulsive buying tendency. Although these results were not presented by the authors present in the literature review, this relationship may be related to the fact that the impulse buying moments of Generation Z come from situations where stores have weaker lighting. That is, it is in large supermarket chains, where lighting is well planned and contributes to their comfort, that consumers usually make their planned and regular purchases. However, it may be in supermarkets with poor lighting, such as corner grocery stores, that the consumer will be more inclined to buy something unplanned.

Contrarily to what results shown, several authors have classified the colors of the point of sale, which usually transmit pleasant sensations to the consumer, and can also be used as a

way to highlight other in-store aspects (e.g. promotion labels), as a strategy that contributes to impulsive buying tendency (Yildirim et al., 2007). H3 confirms that colors at the point of sale continue to have a significantly positive effect on the impulsive buying tendency of Generation Z. This relationship is certainly strengthened by the fact that this generation has so much information at their disposal, that they depend more and more on strong information, attractive colors and images that can grab their attention, and hold it long enough to lead them to impulsive buying.

In-store promotions pointed out by numerous authors in the literature as one of the biggest triggers for impulse buying, are also in this study the variable that presented the highest correlation when related to the impulsive buying tendency (Atulkar & Kesari, 2017). The consumer in his purchase process is quite moved by prices, or by the discounts and offers associated with it, which often leads him to unplanned purchases. Generation Z maintains the same trend, and as the relationship analyzed in H4 shows, in-store promotions continue to have a significantly positive impact on this generation's impulsive buying behavior.

Although some authors claim that salesperson interactions can impact consumer buying behavior and consecutively the impulse buying tendency, this is not supported by the results of H5 when it comes to Generation Z. Generation Z tends to do deeper research throughout their buying process in order to find the best prices, in the best stores, and that the final decision brings them the most added value possible (Özkan, 2017). In this way they become less vulnerable to suggestions or opinions that may come from third parties, and are therefore less influenced in this way. In this sense, the fact that salesperson interactions do not have a significant effect on impulsive buying tendency may be related to this behavior of Generation Z.

Finally, and in line with what the authors state about this variable, store ambiance proved to have a positively significant effect on the impulsive buying tendency of Generation Z analyzed through H6. The store ambiance, which aggregates a set of techniques and tools used at the point of sale, such as layout, music, colors, promotion signs, among others, continues to be relevant even in the buying process of this new and distinct generation (Foster & McLelland, 2015). If, through store ambiance, the retail store manages to emphasize the brands and the messages they have for the consumer, if they present good prices, interesting deals, and if they manage to highlight those products in a creative way, they will continue to be able to capture attention of these young consumers even in this traditional channel.

5.2 Mediating effects

Based on the results obtained, the store ambiance does not have a mediating effect between lighting and colors, but it has a mediating effect between the store layout and the impulsive buying trend. However, although these relationships may make sense in practice, they are still poorly developed from a theoretical point of view. In this way, this study also presents its theoretical contribution to the development of research related to the store ambiance mediator effect in the impulsive buying tendency.

The store ambience as a mediating effect had neither a positive nor a negative impact on the relationship between lighting and colors, and the impulsive buying tendency, according to the results of H8 and H9. In the direct analysis between the variables, lighting already showed a negative relationship with the impulsive buying tendency (H2). This negative relationship, despite not being previously explained by other articles and authors, may be related to the way in which poor lighting can act as an impetus for unplanned purchases through convenience stores. In this sense, and following the same reasoning, in these situations the store ambience will not impact the impulsive buying tendency, since this type of stores bet little on this aspect. Colors, in turn, have the ability to produce the most diverse emotions in the consumer, and when well used, they can contribute positively to the way they feel in the store. According to the results obtained in H9, this variable may act individually in the impulsive buying tendency without necessarily depending on the other elements of the ambience store. Colors, regardless of the situation, can always contribute to Generation Z's impulsive buying tendency, regardless of the environment around them.

The store layout, in turn, did not show any direct relationship with the impulsive buying tendency, however, through the mediating effect of the ambience store, there is some effect. The store ambience includes a set of variables that help consumers feel comfortable and motivated in the store. Although the store layout does not have this direct impact, when combined with other physical and non-physical factors, the store layout contributes to making the consumer more susceptible to unplanned purchases.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Theoretical conclusions

This study sought to understand how visual merchandising influences the buying behavior of Generation Z, more specifically the impulse buying tendency, in a retail store. To study this topic, several variables were defined, including store layout, lighting, colors, in-store promotions, salesperson interactions and store ambience, taking into account insights from other studies related to the same topic.

The various threads in the literature pointed to a strong relationship between these elements and the tendency for unplanned purchases, although there is still no literature and studies that analyze these relationships for Generation Z. However, through a questionnaire and the analysis of results using SmartPLS3 software it was possible to confirm some relationships between variables. The findings point to the existence of positive effects between in-store promotions, store ambience, and impulsive buying tendency of Generation Z. Lighting has also shown to have an impact on the latter variable, but the effect is negative. These results allowed us to validate H2, H4 and H6.

Although the findings did not show a positive effect between store layout and the impulsive buying tendency of Generation Z, which did not support H1, this variable already showed a positive relationship through the mediating effect of store ambiance, thus supporting H7. Although store ambience is a mediating effect of store layout and impulsive buying tendency, the same is not true for colors and lighting, which led to the non-validation of H8 and H9.

Thus, by comparing the results of this study with other literatures' ones, this study shows that the impact that visual merchandising in retail stores has on the impulsive buying tendency, is not reflected in the same way in all generations. In turn, the results obtained with Generation Z are partly justified by the main traits of their buying habits.

6.2 Managerial Implications

From a business point of view, it is crucial to adopt a good merchandising strategy both on the part of retailers and the brands that sell their products through these stores. It is through point-of-sale materials, promotions, the correct location of products and organization of spaces that the visibility of products and brands is given. These variables are planned by both stakeholders

(supplier and retailer), and are adapted to each brand's target audience, in order to captivate their attention. This is the only way to guarantee product profitability for both.

Since consumers of different generations have different tendencies and needs, this study has given both brands and retailers insights into which elements have the most effect on unplanned purchases by this generation. While store layout and salesperson interactions were unrelated, in-store promotions, colors, and store ambience may lead Generation Z to make more unplanned purchases. Hence, they should be elements to bet and explore in the planning of merchandising strategies.

6.3 Limitations and further research

Throughout this study, some relevant limitations emerged, which in future research could be improved.

First, the sample used may be limited since it does not guarantee the inclusion of the various elements of the population in such a way that the results of the sample can be generalized to the population. Since this was a quantitative study, it would be interesting in future studies to approach the theme in a more qualitative way, also as a way to understand some of the results obtained through the questionnaire.

Since the results were also obtained through a survey, where respondents were asked to recall times when they shop and give feedback according to how they feel they react under certain circumstances, there may also be some bias in the responses. Ideally, a presential questionnaire should be done just as the consumer finishes shopping since the whole process is still fresh in the consumer's memory. Along with this method, in the future people can also do an in-store analysis of how the consumer reacts to certain situations, in order to understand what the real impact of the stimulus is without the consumer being forced to think about it.

In the future, it might also be interesting to deepen this analysis to each of the retail chains, since in this study the consumer was only asked to remember the retailer where he usually goes to do his shopping, but the truth is that the various retailers have very different merchandising strategies, which will lead to different behaviors.

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Annexes

Appendix A: Variables under analysis - the items and respective authors

Variables	Abbreviation	Statements in English	Authors
Layout	LY	LY1. The layout in the store helps me browse the products comfortably	Ong et al. (2017), Wakefield & Baker (1998).
		LY2. The layout in the store makes it easy for me to get to the shelves or products I want	
		LY3. The layout in the store assists me in making buying decision	
		LY4. I like the layout of the store	
		LY5. Overall, the layout in the store makes it easy for me to get around	
Lighting	LIG	LIG1. The store is well lit	Mohan et al. (2013)
		LIG2. The store is correctly lit (neither too bright nor dull)	
		LIG3. Lighting in the store is pleasant	
Colors	COL	COL1. I think the interior wall and floor colour schemes of this store were attractive	Ong et al. (2017), Wakefield & Baker (1998), Baker et al. (1994).
		COL2. I feel very calm with the colour scheme of the store	
		COL3. I think the colours used in the store appeared to be currently fashionable	
		COL4. I feel pleasant in this store because of its colour	
		COL5. Combinations of colour in the store make me feel refreshed	
In Store Promotions	PROM	PROM1. Store-level promotions make me buy products spontaneously	Katakam et al. (2021)
		PROM2. Store-level promotions increase my desire to buy the products	

		PROM3. Store-level promotions entice me to buy things on the spur of the moment	
Store Ambience	ST AMB	ST AMB1. Attractive product displays stimulate me to buy	Katakam et al. (2021)
		ST AMB2. The exclusive displays used in shops for certain products provoke me for buying spontaneously	
		ST AMB3. I prefer to shop at a store where it is easy to locate products/merchandise	
Salesperson Interactions	INT	INT1. Helpful employees in the store have an influence on my buying decision	Katakam et al. (2021)
		INT2. I tend to purchase more in the stores with friendly employees	
		INT3. The store employees influence my buying decision	
Impulse Buying Tendency	IBT	IBT1. I only buy things that are on my shopping list.	Mohan et al. (2013), Weun et al. (1998)
		IBT2. When I go shopping, I buy things that I had not intended buying	
		IBT3. I am a person who makes unplanned purchases	
		IBT4. When I see something that really interests me, I buy it without considering the consequences	
		IBT5. It is fun to buy spontaneously	

Appendix B: Online Questionnaire

Como é que o Visual Merchandising influencia o comportamento de compra da Geração Z numa loja de retalho?

No âmbito da minha dissertação de Mestrado em Gestão de Empresas no ISCTE Business School, solicito a sua colaboração para responder a um inquérito que procura analisar de que forma determinados fatores influenciam a tomada de decisão de compra da Geração Z.

Este questionário é confidencial e totalmente anónimo, sendo importante que responda com rigor e o máximo de sinceridade. Terá a duração máxima de 5 minutos.

Agradeço desde já o seu contributo para a conclusão deste estudo.

Perfil do Consumidor

1. Com que regularidade faz compras num supermercado?
    o   Diariamente
    o   2 a 4 vezes por semana
    o   1 vez por semana
    o   2 em 2 semanas
    o   1 vez por mês

2. As suas compras de supermercado são, na sua generalidade, feitas:
    o   100% em loja física
    o   70% em loja física e 30% em loja online
    o   50% em loja física e 50% em loja online
    o   30% em loja física e 70% em loja online
    o   100% em loja online

3. Quando vai ao supermercado costuma:
    o   Levar lista de compras e cingir-se ao que precisa
    o   Levar lista de compras, e perceber na loja se há algo mais que lhe possa fazer falta
    o   Analisar na loja o que precisa

4. Qual a importância dos seguintes aspetos na sua tomada de decisão:

	Nada Importante	Pouco Importante	Razoavelmente Importante	Importante	Muito Importante
Preço					

Promoção					
Inovação no mercado					
Recomendação de familiares e amigos					
Recomendação de specialistas					
Recomendação de influencers					

5. Qual a cadeia de supermercados em que costuma fazer compras:
   - o Continente
   - o Pingo-doce
   - o Intermaché
   - o Lidl
   - o Auchan (Jumbo)
   - o Mercadona

Visual Merchandising

Mantendo em mente a cadeia de supermercado selecionada na questão anterior, e recordando a área de Cosmética e Higiene Pessoal* dessa loja, identifique numa escala de 1 a 5**, qual o seu grau de concordância com as seguintes afirmações.

*Cosmética e Higiene Pessoal: Gel de Banho, Champô, Desodorizantes, Produtos de Styling, Produtos de Barbear, Maquilhagem, etc.

** 1 – Discordo totalmente, 2 – Discordo, 3 – Não Concordo nem discordo, 4 – Concordo, 5 – Concordo totalmente.

1. LAYOUT: O layout da loja é a organização e distribuição física dos espaços (corredores e prateleiras, gondolas, vitrines e caixas) no interior do supermercado.
   a. O layout da loja ajuda-me a encontrar confortavelmente os produtos que procuro.

b. O layout da loja ajuda-me a encontrar confortavelmente os produtos que procuro.

c. O layout da loja auxilia-me na tomada de decisão.

d. Gosto do layout da loja.

e. No geral, o layout da loja facilita-me a deslocação no seu interior.

2. Iluminação

a. A loja é iluminada.

b. A loja está iluminada corretamente (nem muito luz nem com pouca luz).

c. A iluminação na loja é agradável.

3. Cores

a. Os esquemas de cores do interior da loja são agradáveis.

b. Sinto-me muito calmo com o esquema de cores da loja.

c. Acho que as cores usadas na loja parecem estar na moda.

d. Sinto-me confortável nesta loja por causa das suas cores.

e. As combinações de cores na loja fazem-me sentir revigorado.

4. Promoções de loja

a. As promoções da loja fazem-me comprar produtos espontaneamente.

b. As promoções na loja aumentam o meu desejo de comprar os produtos.

c. As promoções da loja incentivam-me a comprar coisas no calor do momento.

5. Ambiente de loja

a. Expositores de produtos atraentes incentivam-me à compra de produtos.

b. Os expositores exclusivos utilizados nas lojas para determinados produtos provocam-me a compra espontânea.

c. Prefiro comprar numa loja onde seja fácil localizar os produtos.

6. Interação com empregados

a. Funcionários prestáveis na loja têm influência na minha decisão de compra.

b. Costumo comprar mais nas lojas com funcionários amigáveis.

c. Os funcionários da loja influenciam a minha decisão de compra.

7. Tendência de Compra por Impulso

   a. Só compro coisas que estão na minha lista de compras.

   b. Quando vou às compras, compro coisas que não pretendia comprar.

   c. Sou uma pessoa que faz compras não planeadas.

   d. Quando vejo algo que realmente me interessa, compro sem pensar nas consequências.

   e. É divertido fazer compras espontaneamente.

Caracterização Sociodemográfica

1. Tens entre 18 e 27 anos:
   o Sim
   o Não

2. Género:
   o Feminino
   o Masculino
   o Prefiro não dizer

3. Educação:
   o Outra:
   o 9º ano
   o 12º ano
   o Licenciatura
   o Mestrado
   o Outra:_____