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The article considers merchandising as a form of visual communication in retail space. It examines how product display, zoning, navigation, promotional messages and store design shape consumer perception and influence purchase decisions. The article shows that merchandising has both commercial and communicative functions, as it structures the interaction between the product, the brand and the consumer. The findings may be useful for studies in communication theory and marketing.

Keywords: visual communication; merchandising; communicative function; consumer behavior; advertising; marketing.

The contemporary retail sector operates in an environment characterized by intense competition, digitalization and changing consumer expectations. In these conditions, retail enterprises need tools that not only present products, but also organize communication with consumers at the point of purchase. Merchandising is one of such tools, since it uses product display, store layout, navigation and promotional messages to guide consumer attention and influence purchase decisions.

Within a company's marketing strategy, merchandising performs a communicative function. The retail space becomes a system of signs in which products, shelves, colours, price tags, advertising materials and spatial organization transmit information to the consumer. In this sense, merchandising should be considered not only as a method of sales stimulation, but also as a form of visual communication between the product, the brand and the customer.

The relevance of this study is determined by the transformation of merchandising from a simple tool of product presentation into a complex system of communication in retail space. Modern merchandising is based on consumer behavior analysis, visual perception, spatial organization and digital technologies. Its effectiveness depends on how clearly and convincingly the retail environment communicates with the consumer.

The purpose of this article is to examine merchandising as a form of visual communication in retail space. To achieve this purpose, the article considers the communicative role of merchandising, analyses its main visual tools and proposes indicators for assessing its effectiveness.

Merchandising as a Form of Retail Communication

Merchandising as a management practice emerged in the United States in the mid-twentieth century, when self-service retail formats became widespread. As the role of sales personnel in influencing consumer choice decreased, the organization of retail space and the visual presentation of goods became increasingly important [1, p. 733].

Contemporary research does not provide a single universal definition of merchandising. From a marketing perspective, it is viewed as a tool for product promotion at the point of sale. From a managerial perspective, it is understood as a system for organizing retail space and monitoring sales performance. From a psychological perspective, merchandising is associated with the influence of visual stimuli on consumer perception and behavior.

Philip Kotler defined merchandising as the art and science of presenting goods in a way that facilitates consumer choice and increases sales volume. According to E. Golubkov, merchandising serves as a linking element between the manufacturer, intermediary and consumer [1, p. 735-736]. In the context of communication theory, this linking function is especially important, because merchandising creates a channel through which the product and brand address the consumer without direct verbal contact.

Merchandising can therefore be defined as a system of organizational, visual and communicative measures aimed at structuring retail space, guiding consumer attention and supporting purchase decisions. It combines economic and communicative goals. On the one hand, it helps increase sales efficiency and on the other hand, it shapes the customer's interpretation of the product range and the store environment. The core functions of merchandising are presented in fig. 1.

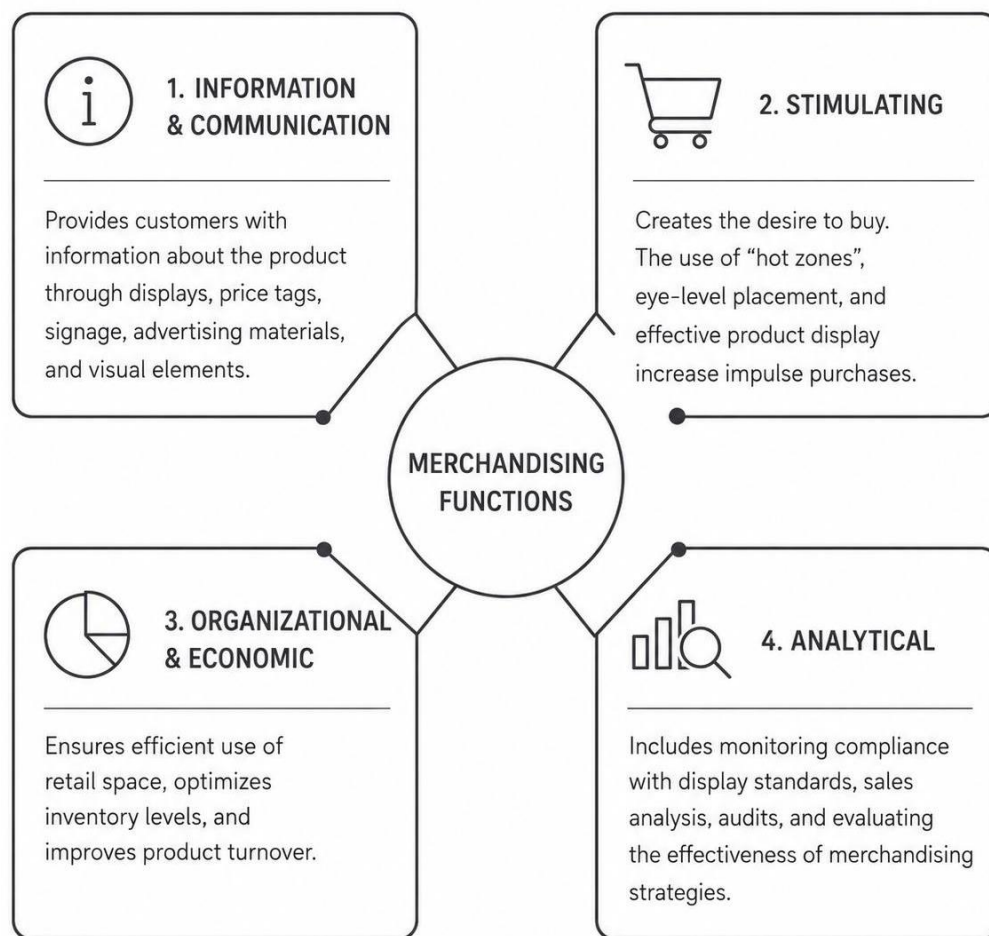


Fig. 1. – Core Functions of Merchandising

The diagram shows that merchandising informs, motivates, organizes and analyses. The informative function is connected with product presentation, price communication and navigation. The motivational function is related to visual stimuli that encourage purchase. The organizational function structures the movement of customers through the retail space. The analytical function makes it possible to evaluate how consumers respond to different visual and spatial solutions.

Thus, merchandising may be interpreted as an important element of retail communication. It helps the customer understand the product offer, navigate the store and make a purchase decision. At the same time, it allows the retailer to manage the meaning and attractiveness of the retail environment.

Visual Tools of Merchandising

The merchandising system includes a set of tools that make the retail space more functional, readable and attractive for consumers. These tools organize the customer's route, highlight product categories and create conditions for interaction with goods. From the communicative point of view, the store layout functions as a visual text that the consumer reads while moving through the sales floor.

One of the central elements of this system is the layout of the sales floor. The way the space is organized influences the movement of customers, their involvement in the selection process and their perception of the product range. Modern stores usually include main aisles, promotional zones, seasonal product areas and checkout zones. Placing high-demand products along the main customer pathways increases their visibility and supports more effective communication with the buyer.

Product display also plays a significant role. The arrangement of goods on shelves and racks creates the first impression of the assortment and influences which products receive the greatest attention. Studies of consumer behavior show that a properly organized display can increase sales of certain product categories without reducing prices [4]. The main methods of product display are shown in fig. 2.

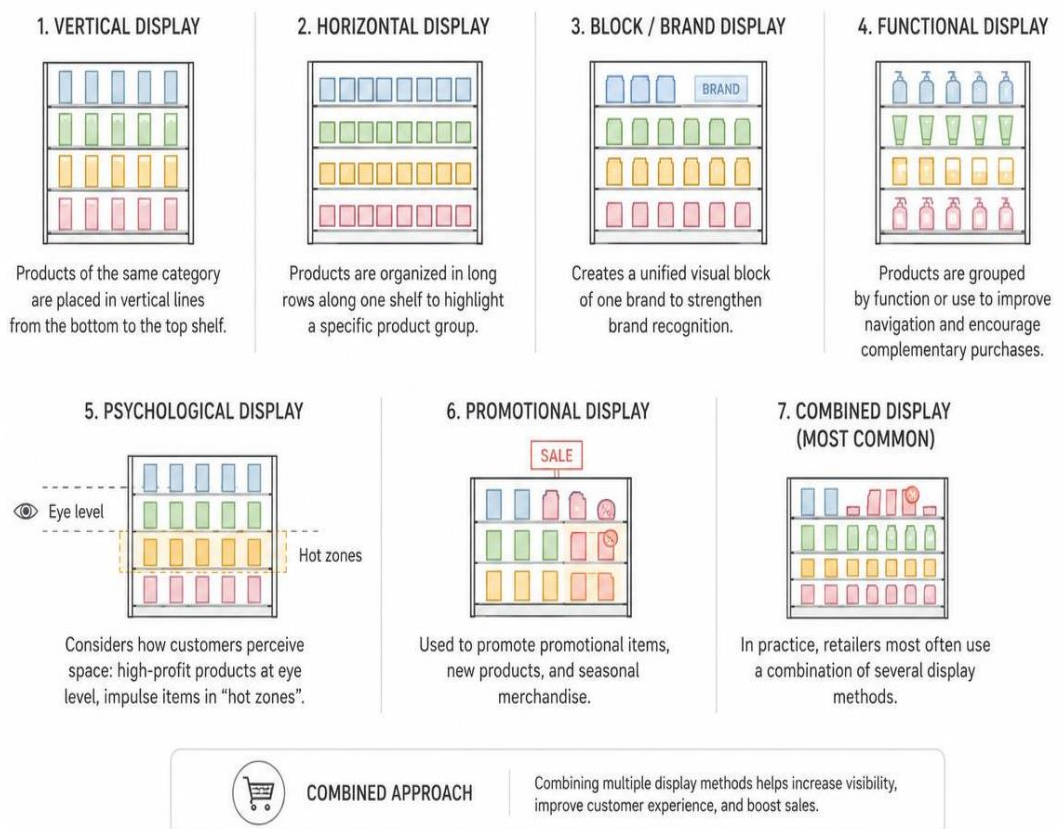


Fig. 2. – Basic Methods of Merchandising

The figure presents several display strategies used in retail communication [4]. Vertical display arranges products of the same category from the bottom to the top

shelf. This creates a clear structure and makes product search more intuitive. Horizontal display places products in long rows on one shelf and helps emphasize a particular product group. Block display forms a unified space for one brand and strengthens brand recognition. Functional display groups goods according to their use and supports bundled purchases. Psychological layout is based on the logic of visual perception: more profitable products are usually placed at eye level, while impulse purchases are stimulated in so-called hot zones. Accent display draws attention to promotional goods, new arrivals and seasonal offers.

In practice, retail enterprises often combine several display methods. Their communicative effect depends on how easily the customer understands the logic of the space and how clearly the store directs attention to priority products.

Planograms are another important tool of merchandising. A planogram is a detailed product placement scheme that standardizes display, optimizes shelf space and helps monitor product turnover [2, p. 281]. From the point of view of visual communication, planograms make the retail environment more structured and predictable. They allow the retailer to create a stable system of product presentation across different stores.

Modern merchandising increasingly uses digital technologies and analytics. Video surveillance systems, heat maps and traffic analysis help identify the most attractive zones of the store and adapt product placement to consumer behavior. These tools make it possible to study not only what customers buy, but also how they move, where they stop and which visual elements attract their attention.

Consequently, merchandising should be understood as a system that combines spatial organization, visual presentation and consumer behavior analysis. Its task is not limited to the attractive arrangement of goods. It also creates a communicative environment that helps the customer interpret the product offer and make a decision.

Communicative Effectiveness of Merchandising

The effectiveness of merchandising can be assessed not only through sales results, but also through the quality of communication between the retail environment and the consumer. A successful merchandising strategy should make the store space clear, visually coherent and easy to interpret. In this sense, merchandising effectiveness depends on whether the customer understands the product offer, can easily navigate the sales floor and receives a persuasive visual message at the point of purchase.

The assessment of merchandising may include economic, behavioral and spatial indicators. Economic indicators show whether visual and spatial decisions contribute to commercial results. These include product turnover rate, average transaction value and sales growth. Product turnover rate indicates how quickly products are sold and replenished. Average transaction value shows whether product placement, promotional zones and complementary displays encourage customers to buy additional items.

Behavioral indicators are particularly important for evaluating merchandising as a communicative system. They reflect how customers respond to the store environment. These indicators include the share of impulse purchases, average time spent in-store and customer satisfaction. If customers spend more time in the store, respond to promotional displays and evaluate the shopping experience positively, this may indicate that the retail space communicates effectively with them.

Spatial indicators reflect the clarity and logic of the sales floor organization. They help evaluate whether product categories are placed consistently, whether navigation is understandable and whether visual accents guide customer attention. In this respect, merchandising can be evaluated as a system of visual signs that structures the

customer's movement and supports purchase decision-making. The key indicators for assessing merchandising effectiveness are presented in table 1 [5].

Table – Indicators for Assessing Merchandising Effectiveness

Indicator	Description	Method	Purpose
Product turnover rate	The speed at which products are sold and replenished.	Analysis of sales records and inventory data.	To determine how quickly merchandise moves through the retail space and how efficiently inventory is managed.
Average transaction value	The average amount spent by a customer in one purchase.	Calculation of total sales revenue divided by the number of transactions.	To assess how effectively merchandising influences the size of each purchase.
Share of impulse purchases	The proportion of purchases made without prior intention and influenced by product display or promotional placement.	Analysis of purchase data, customer surveys or comparison with control groups.	To evaluate the effectiveness of visual stimuli, hot zones and promotional displays.
Average time spent in-store	The average amount of time a customer spends in the retail space.	Tracking customer movement through observation, sensors or digital analytics.	To assess the attractiveness of the retail environment and the convenience of navigation.
Customer satisfaction level	The customer's overall evaluation of the store visit and purchasing process.	Surveys, feedback forms and customer satisfaction scores.	To identify how merchandising affects customer experience, loyalty and repeat visits.

The indicators presented in table 1 make it possible to assess merchandising as both a commercial and communicative system. Each indicator reflects a particular aspect of customer interaction with the retail space and shows how visual and spatial decisions influence perception, orientation and purchase behavior.

Product turnover rate is connected with the visibility and accessibility of goods. If products are quickly sold and regularly replenished, this may indicate that their placement corresponds to customer needs and supports effective communication between the product and the buyer.

Average transaction value shows how merchandising influences the structure of the purchase. Clear product grouping, promotional zones and complementary displays may encourage customers to notice related goods and include them in the purchase.

Impulse purchases are especially important for evaluating the persuasive power of merchandising. An increase in unplanned purchases may indicate that visual accents, hot zones and promotional displays successfully attract attention and stimulate immediate response [3].

Average time spent in-store reflects the convenience of navigation and the attractiveness of the retail environment. If customers stay longer in the sales floor, this may suggest that the space is comfortable, readable and engaging.

Customer satisfaction reflects the overall communicative quality of the store environment. A high level of satisfaction shows that customers understand the store layout, perceive the product offer positively and experience fewer difficulties during the purchasing process.

The analysis of these indicators demonstrates that merchandising effectiveness cannot be reduced only to sales growth. It should also be evaluated through the clarity of visual messages, the convenience of navigation and the extent to which the retail space supports communication between the brand, the product and the consumer.

Conclusion. The study has shown that merchandising is an important form of visual communication in retail space. It organizes the interaction between the product, the brand and the consumer through store layout, product display, navigation, promotional materials and spatial design.

Merchandising performs several communicative functions. It informs the customer about the product offer, directs attention to priority goods, supports orientation in the store and influences purchase decisions. Therefore, it should be considered not only as a marketing tool, but also as a communicative system that structures consumer perception.

The main tools of merchandising include sales floor planning, display methods, zoning, planograms and digital analytics. Their combined use makes retail space more understandable, visually coherent and commercially effective. In modern retail, these tools help create a customer experience in which communication takes place not only through words, but also through visual and spatial signs.

The effectiveness of this system should be assessed through economic, behavioral and spatial indicators, since they show how successfully the retail environment communicates with consumers.

Further research may focus on the intercultural aspects of visual communication in merchandising, including the perception of colour, promotional messages, spatial organization and product display in different cultural contexts. This direction is especially relevant for international retail companies that need to adapt their communicative strategies to diverse consumer audiences.

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ВИЗУАЛЬНАЯ КОММУНИКАЦИЯ В МЕРЧАНДАЙЗИНГЕ

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В статье рассматривается мерчандайзинг как форма визуальной коммуникации в торговом пространстве. Анализируется влияние выкладки товаров, зонирования, навигации, рекламных сообщений и оформления торгового зала на восприятие покупателя и принятие решения о покупке. Показано, что мерчандайзинг выполняет не только коммерческую, но и коммуникативную функцию, поскольку организует взаимодействие между товаром, брендом и потребителем. Результаты исследования могут быть использованы при изучении теории коммуникации и маркетинга.

Ключевые слова: визуальная коммуникация; мерчандайзинг; коммуникативная функция; покупательское поведение; реклама; маркетинг.