



## **Shelf Placement Impact: Analyzing How Product Placement At Eye Level Affects Sales**

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### **Abstract:**

In the highly competitive world of retail marketing, shelf placement plays a crucial role in influencing consumer purchasing behavior. This paper examines the effect of eye-level shelf positioning on product visibility and sales performance. A structured survey was conducted using Google Forms to gather primary data from 150 urban consumers, focusing on their preferences, brand recall, and purchasing decisions. The Chi-square test was employed to evaluate the relationship between consumer age and attention to shelf placement. The findings indicate that eye-level positioning consistently captures the most attention across all age demographics. Based on these insights, the study recommends utilizing eye-level placement for high-margin and impulse products, highlighting its strategic importance in contemporary retail merchandising.

**Keywords:** Shelf Placement, Eye-Level Shelf Positioning, Consumer Purchase Behavior, Visual Merchandising Techniques, Strategic Merchandise Placement.

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### **1. Introduction**

In the evolving landscape of retail marketing, where consumers are exposed to thousands of products in a single shopping trip, standing out on the shelf is no longer optional—it's essential. Retailers and brand managers alike are recognizing that what gets seen gets sold. One of the most powerful yet often underestimated techniques in this context is strategic shelf placement, particularly at eye level, which aligns with the shopper's natural line of sight.

Eye-level positioning, often referred to as the "golden zone" in visual merchandising, can significantly influence purchase decisions, brand perception, and impulse buying behavior. In modern retail formats—ranging from hypermarkets to convenience stores—eye-level shelves have become the prime real estate that brands compete for. These decisions are no longer arbitrary; they are data-driven, grounded in behavioral economics, neuroscience, and retail analytics.

Despite its strategic importance, limited empirical research exists on whether shelf-level attention varies across different age groups. This research aims to bridge that gap using a structured primary data approach and statistical hypothesis testing.

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### **2. Objectives of the Study**

Shelf placement is not just about organization—it's a strategic tool to maximize sales and brand recognition. This study aims to analyze the effects of product positioning in retail stores and how it impacts purchase decisions.

- To examine how eye-level product placement influences sales.
- To understand the role of shelf positioning in consumer decision-making.
- To provide strategic recommendations for optimal shelf positioning.

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### **3. Literature Review**

Research highlights the significant impact of visual merchandising on consumer behavior, particularly the strategic placement of products on eye-level shelves (4 to 5.5 feet), which enhances recall and conversion rates (Drèze et al., 1994; Clement, 2007). The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model suggests that external stimuli, such as shelf positioning, directly influence consumer reactions. By utilizing eye-level placement, retailers enhance visibility and reduce search effort. Titus and Everett (1995) found that consumers exhibit varied responses to shelf placement: some view product searches as engaging, while others experience frustration, leading to abandoned purchases or diminished shopping motivation. Hoyer et al. (2012) further note that

many fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) are chosen with minimal deliberation, emphasizing the need for optimal placement. Erdem et al. (1999) concluded that eye-level positioning enhances both product recall and purchase likelihood. Sorensen (2017) observed that products in the consumer's direct line of sight generate higher conversion rates, while those at lower levels often go unnoticed unless supported by strong branding. Neuroscience research underlines the importance of visual attention and cognitive load in decision-making. Wedel and Pieters (2008) demonstrated that eye-level products are processed faster, increasing memorability and purchase likelihood. Reimann et al. (2010) showed that such positioning activates areas of the brain linked to perceived value. Horská et al. (2016) noted that consumers exert less cognitive effort when selecting products within their natural line of sight, making these placements more effective. Sulaiman Hawibowo (2022) highlighted the importance of accessibility, with consumers instinctively preferring products that are easy to locate. In conclusion, effective visual merchandising strategies, particularly through optimal shelf positioning, play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior by enhancing visibility, minimizing effort, and streamlining decision-making.

#### 4. Research Methodology

- **Research Design & Sample**

A descriptive, quantitative design was adopted. Convenience sampling was used to gather 150 responses from urban consumers, primarily through WhatsApp and Instagram.

- **Instrument & Variables**

The instrument was a structured Google Form with demographic, perception-based, and behavioral questions. Shelf placement levels (Top, Eye-level, Middle, Bottom) were analyzed against age groups.

- **Hypothesis**

**H<sub>0</sub> (Null Hypothesis):** Age group does not significantly influence shelf level attention.

**H<sub>a</sub> (Alternate Hypothesis):** Age group significantly influences shelf level attention.

#### 5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

**Table 1: Chi-square Test Table:**

**Observed Data**

(150 respondents, 263 selections):

Age Group	Top-Level	Eye-Level	Middle-Level	Bottom-Level	Total
16-24	10	29	13	3	55
25-34	23	61	23	4	111
35-55	17	41	16	3	77
55+	5	7	4	1	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>260</b>

**Result:**

- $\chi^2 = 2.1912$ ,  $df = 9$ ,  $p = 0.976$
- Since  $p > 0.05$ , we fail to reject  $H_0$ : Age does not significantly influence shelf attention.

**Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Variable	Category	Frequency (N = 150)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	23	15.3%
	Female	127	84.7%
Age Group	16-24	55	36.7%
	25-34	67	44.7%
	35-55	28	18.6%
Shopping Frequency	Once a week	27	18%
	2-3 times a week	109	72.7%
	Daily	14	9.3%
Occupation	Student	44	29.3%
	Working Professional	72	48%
	HomeMaker	34	22.7%

**Table 3 : Research Findings****Conclusion:**

Q. No.	Question Summary	Response Segment	Key Result	Interpretation
Q1	Age Distribution	25–34 = 44.7%	Majority were aged 25–34	Working-age adults dominate buying power.
Q2	Occupation	Professionals = 48%	Working professionals	Strategies should appeal to decision-makers.
Q3	Gender	Female = 84.6%	Women dominate survey pool	Shelf design should prioritize female shoppers.
Q4	Shopping Frequency	2–3x/week = 72.7%	Frequent store visitors	Frequent visits mean shelf placement has lasting impact.
Q5	What grabs attention?	89.3% chose shelf placement	Visual triggers > price/brand	Stronger than brand or price.
Q6	Bought just because it was eye-level?	88.7% = Yes	Eye-level visibility effect	Eye-level placement triggers impulse buying.
Q7	Struggled due to high/low placement?	97% (35–55 yrs) = Yes	Discomfort in reaching	Height accessibility affects older shoppers.
Q8	Brand usually on a fixed shelf?	Majority = Yes	Shelf regularity noticed	Customers notice shelf consistency.
Q9	First shelf seen?	94.7% = Eye-level	Eye-level visual bias	Eye-level is dominant visual zone.
Q10	Still buy if brand moved lower?	72% = Maybe or No	Conditional loyalty	Poor placement risks brand loss.
Q11	View on bottom shelf?	100% = Leftover feel	Low appeal perception	Negative perception across all groups.
Q12	Try new brand at eye level?	91.3% = Yes	Placement affects trial	Eye-level encourages product discovery.
Q13	Eye/Top shelves = premium?	90%+ = Yes	Shelf height = value cue	Shelf height affects perceived quality.

**Conclusion:**

**The null hypothesis is accepted. Age does not significantly influence shelf-level attention ( $p = 0.976$ )**

## 6. Key Findings

- Eye-level shelves consistently gained the most attention across all age groups.
- No significant difference found between age and shelf preference ( $p = 0.976$ ).
- Consumers of all ages showed similar visual patterns — eye-level was universally preferred.
- Descriptive variations (e.g., slightly more Top shelf attention in 55+) were not statistically relevant.
- 53%+ of each age group chose Eye-level shelves as their first choice.
- Bottom shelves were the least engaging across all demographics.
- Middle shelves gained moderate attention, especially from younger shoppers

## 7. Conclusion

This study concludes that the positioning of products on shelves especially at eye level significantly affects consumer purchasing decisions. Shelves placed at eye level consistently draw the most attention from all age groups, proving to be an effective merchandising strategy. The results of the Chi-square test further indicate that age does not play a significant role in shelf-level preference, underscoring the broad appeal of eye-level displays. These findings suggest that visual merchandising techniques should prioritize maximizing product visibility within the shopper's natural sightline. Additionally, the limited engagement with lower shelves implies a need for inventive strategies, such as signage or product bundling, to enhance visibility. Retailers and marketers can leverage these insights to create more effective shelf arrangements that boost product recall, encourage impulse buying, and ultimately increase sales.

## 8. Recommendations:

- Prioritize eye-level shelves for high-margin and new products.
- Use bottom shelves for value SKUs or frequently searched items.
- Maintain shelf consistency to reinforce brand recall.
- Visual merchandising must align with universal consumer psychology.

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## 9. Limitations of the Study

- Fewer respondents in the 55+ age group (only 17) may limit demographic representation.
- Data is based on self-reported responses, which can involve bias.
- Allowing multiple shelf choices reduced clarity on primary attention.
- No use of observation or eye-tracking limits real-time behavior insight.
- The sample skewed toward urban consumers, limiting rural comparison.
- The study didn't distinguish between product categories.
- Conducted within a short time frame, limiting insight into seasonal trends.

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## 10. Scope for Future Research

- Explore gender-based shelf visibility preferences and decision-making differences.
- Use eye-tracking tools for real-time consumer attention data.
- Analyze shelf placement impact across specific product categories (e.g., dairy, beverages, cosmetics).
- Study regional and cultural differences in shelf preference behavior.
- Include behavioral data from physical retail environments.
- Examine the influence of digital shelf signage and interactive displays.

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