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## Visual merchandising: A bibliometric analysis and future research proposals

*Visual merchandising: Uma análise bibliométrica e proposta de pesquisas futuras*

*Visual merchandising: Un análisis bibliométrico y una propuesta de investigación futura*

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### Karen Batista

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4918-6219>

Master of Business Administration from  
Federal University of Sergipe  
[karen.batista@hotmail.com](mailto:karen.batista@hotmail.com)

### Ingrid de Matos Martins

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7708-4087>

Master of Business Administration from  
Federal University of Sergipe  
[iingridmartins@hotmail.com](mailto:iingridmartins@hotmail.com)

### Ricardo Limongi

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3231-7515>

Professor at Federal University of Goiás  
PhD in Business Administration from Getulio  
Vargas Foundation (FGV/EAESP)  
[ricardolimongi@ufg.br](mailto:ricardolimongi@ufg.br)

### ABSTRACT

This work aimed to investigate the studies on visual merchandising in theoretical, methodological and empirical aspects. Bibliometric research was carried out based on 35 articles published in journals. The analyzes present the number of articles per year, main journals, most cited references, most used keywords, in addition to the methodology, considering the approach, research method, data collection and analysis technique. It was possible to conclude that the theme is relatively new, justifying an opportunity for future research. In this sense, a research agenda is proposed with three possible paths to be followed by future studies, namely: studies with a qualitative approach, comparison between different countries and comparison between sectors and intersector.

**Keywords:** visual merchandising; bibliometric; agenda; store atmosphere; retail.

### RESUMO

Este trabalho teve como objetivo investigar os estudos sobre visual merchandising em aspectos teóricos, metodológicos e empíricos. Foi realizada uma pesquisa bibliométrica a partir de 35 artigos publicados em periódicos. As análises apresentam o número de artigos por ano, principais periódicos, referências mais citadas, palavras-chave mais utilizadas, além da metodologia considerando abordagem, método de pesquisa, técnica de coleta e análise de dados. Foi possível concluir que o tema é relativamente novo justificando oportunidade para futuras pesquisas. Neste sentido, é proposta uma agenda de pesquisa com três possíveis caminhos a serem seguidos por estudos futuros, sendo: estudos com abordagem qualitativa, comparação entre diferentes países e comparação entre setores e intersector.

**Palavras-chave:** visual merchandising; bibliometria; agenda; atmosfera de loja; varejo.

### RESUMEN

Este trabajo tuvo como objetivo investigar los estudios sobre merchandising visual en aspectos teóricos, metodológicos y empíricos. La investigación bibliométrica se realizó en base a 35 artículos publicados en revistas. Los análisis presentan el número de artículos por año, las principales revistas, las referencias más citadas, las palabras clave más utilizadas, además de la metodología, teniendo en cuenta el enfoque, el método de investigación, la recopilación de datos y la técnica de análisis. Fue posible concluir que el tema es relativamente nuevo, lo que justifica una oportunidad para futuras investigaciones. En este sentido, se propone una agenda de investigación con tres posibles caminos a seguir para futuros estudios, a saber: estudios con un enfoque cualitativo, comparación entre diferentes países y comparación entre sectores e intersectores.

**Palabras clave:** comercialización visual; bibliometría; calendario; ambiente de la tienda; Al por menor.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

When communicating with the target audience, a company can use several marketing tools, such as advertising, to encourage potential customers to visit the point of sale in search of products advertised by the communication tools. The moment the consumer enters the store, a set of strategic and tactical actions play the role of complementing the task of advertising aiming to achieve the sale. This set of actions is known as merchandising (Zamberlan, Sparemberger, Daronco & Blume, 2010).

Merchandising represents any technique, action, or promotional material used at the point of sale that aims to provide information and better visibility to products, brands, or services to influence consumers' purchase decisions. It can also be conceptualized as a set of marketing and communication activities that aim to establish and promote brands, products, and services (POS). The POS is the place where products and services for sale to the consumer are exposed. Therefore, merchandising is responsible for the outstanding presentation of products in the store (Blessa, 2011).

Going beyond merchandising, visual merchandising provides the retailer with a set of POS setting techniques. Blessa (2011, p. 37) states that it is essential for the retailer to offer "a store with great lighting, well-exposed products with easy-to-find sections, a mix of products suitable for the public attending the POS, ambient sound, aromatization," and also, services that meet the needs of consumers so that they have a positive shopping experience and leave the store satisfied. In this way, visual merchandising is a set of techniques that retailers use "to compose a presentation and a store atmosphere, using lighting, colors, layout, sound, aroma, design, visual communication, and showcases, exploring the five human senses" (Batista & Escobar, 2020, p. 94). It is up to the retailer to harmoniously combine visual merchandising elements to create a pleasant store atmosphere that induces consumers to buy and positively influences the perception that customers have about the store's image.

Given the importance of this strategy for retailers, this work sought to investigate how visual merchandising studies are characterized, in theoretical, methodological, and empirical aspects. For that, a bibliometric review was carried out in national and international journals in the Web of Science database. From the articles found and analyzed, it was possible to obtain an overview of publications on the topic and propose a research agenda based on the identified gaps.

This article is divided into five parts. In addition to this introduction, a literature review on visual merchandising and store atmosphere concepts is presented. Subsequently, the adopted bibliometric procedures are presented. Following the analysis, discussion of the findings, and research proposal are presented. Finally, the fifth and last part

presents the final considerations of the article.

## 2 VISUAL MERCHANDISING AND THE STORE ATMOSPHERE

Before talking directly about visual merchandising, it is necessary to clarify a confusion made in Brazil with the term. Merchandising in English means merchandise and can be translated as merchandise operation. In Brazil, merchandising is popularly known as the inclusion of products and brands in soap operas, films, and television programs. This action has nothing to do with how it is known in other countries as product placement or tie-in (Blessa, 2011). Therefore, for this work, the notions of merchandising and visual merchandising are restricted to the retail outlet.

Visual merchandising consists of a technique that allows creating a store environment through various elements, such as design, architecture, decoration, and visual communication, among others, to involve the consumer in an atmosphere conducive to shopping (Blessa, 2011). For Bernardino (2004), there is a combination of stimuli such as touch, smell, hearing, and taste, present in the store environment, covering human senses and the consumer's perception of the environment. According to the same authors, although the term includes the word "visual," it is not just about vision, as it seeks to stimulate the five senses: colors and lights stimulate vision, textures of the products can be felt when touching them, the smell is stimulated by aromas, hearing through music, and the palate by tasting products. These stimuli aim to create a pleasant environment so that the consumer experience is pleasant, and the feelings about the store or brand are positive (Bernardino, 2004).

Sackrider, Guidé and Hervé (2009) state that visual merchandising has two main objectives: facilitating the consumer's purchase process and affirming the company's identity. The first of these objectives, facilitating the purchase, is more analytical and related to factors such as the POS's location and architecture and the services offered. The ultimate goal is to sell better and optimize profits by limiting costs to favor the consumer's purchase process; it is necessary to accompany them throughout their journey through the POS. Therefore, a store layout should be created that suggests a journey for the consumer, allowing him to move around quickly, favoring the discovery and visualization of products. During their passage through the POS and after, the company must offer the consumer a unique experience.

The second, more qualitative objective, aims to affirm the company's identity with this objective, visual merchandising aims to provide the company with differentiation elements concerning its competitors, reinforcing its image. The elements that favor the purchase also contribute to differentiate the company, such as the store's location, the shop windows, the atmosphere of the

store, the presentation of the products and the services provided, which will form the distinctive features of the company. Other elements also contribute to the company's image, such as its identity and visual communication (Sackrider et al., 2009).

In the same sense, Bernardino (2004, p. 130) agrees that visual merchandising can be used to help retailers "build their image and offer a shopping experience that meets consumer expectations," in particular, by involving the elements combined in the atmosphere of the store. The atmosphere is a concept derived from retail marketing, which refers to the design of an environment. It uses visual communication, lighting, colors, music, aromas, to stimulate the emotional responses and the perception of consumers, who can act on their buying behavior. The characteristics of the store, layout of products, floor, walls, ceiling, air conditioning, and even the very public that travels through the environment contribute so that the consumer is tempted to buy in the movement of the store (Blessa, 2011).

To develop the atmosphere, retailers use resources that influence consumers' senses, such as colors, shapes, size of the sales area, decoration, display equipment, product availability, visual communication, and signage. Sounds, aromas, and appeals to taste and touch are also used, which are elements perceived by consumers and help build their feelings and emotions with the store (Parente, 2009). The various elements that make up the atmosphere can have an unexpected effect on people's moods (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003). It is recommended that managers take into account what sells more to motivated and good-humored consumers.

For Parente (2009), the image that customers have of the store is closely linked to the retailer's atmosphere. The same author points out that "the atmosphere must be understood as the psychological feeling that the retailer develops in the consumer when visits the store" (p. 294). The atmosphere represents the store's own identity, that is, how the retailer wants its consumers to perceive it. Therefore, the atmosphere of the store must be compatible with its image and its overall strategy. The elements that make up the store's atmosphere must be worked together, combining each other, to form a harmonious environment.

Consumers evaluate the point of sale and the products together; that is, one interferes with the other (Blessa, 2011). In this sense, Roux, Mahlangu, and Manetje (2020) identified that favorable perceptions in the shopping center environment result in more robust approach behaviors than in other environments. If the product is right, but the environment does not please the consumer, it will affect the perceived image, and vice versa (Kpossa & Lick, 2020). The same thing happens with services: the environment interferes with the consumer's perception of the service, since they are intangible, and the environment

is the most substantial part of the service. This is due to the extreme importance of making the consumer feel comfortable inside the store.

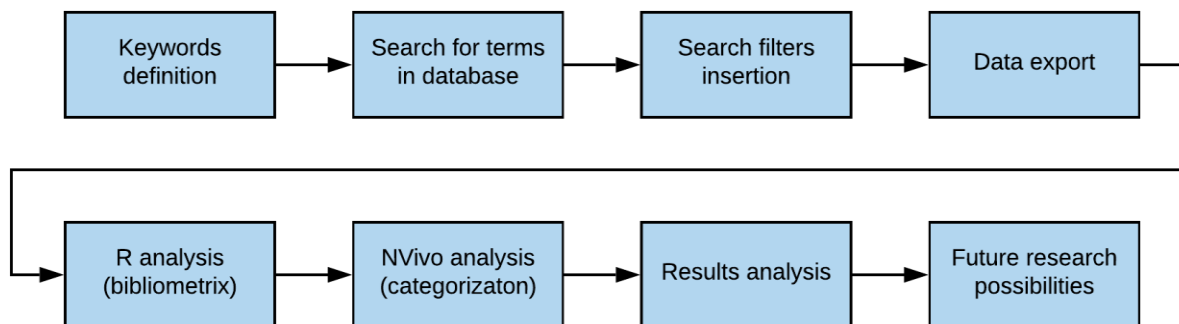
To create a pleasant atmosphere, the marketer should consider the following elements of visual merchandising: external presentation of the store, which includes the facade, accessibility of the architectural project, location and the showcase; the design, which includes factors such as the physical structure of the environment, organization, decoration, temperature and dressing rooms (in clothing stores especially); layout, considering the size of the store, the space between the aisles and for rest; visual communication, including product display and price display; and elements of the store atmosphere, such as lighting, colors, aromas, and music, to stimulate the senses (Batista & Escobar, 2020).

In this way, the elements of visual merchandising that make up the store's atmosphere offer incentives to consumers and have implications for the company. Based on perceptions, consumers are expected to form the image of the store. Therefore, the retailer must use the consumer's perception to his advantage, offering the right stimuli, in the right quantities, at the right time, through an appropriate environment to influence the consumer's perception so that the perceived image is positive.

In this sense, this study's motivating question would be: how has the academy viewed the theme? Barros, Ribeiro, Petroll & Rocha (2018) analyzed the scientific production on the visual merchandising theme in fashion retail associated with the consumer experience. However, articles published in the period from 2010 to 2016 were delimited. Thus, the present study complements that of Barros et al. (2018) and using other bibliometric techniques to expand the understanding of the topic. The next topic presents the methodological procedures used in conducting the work.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted using the literature review method used by Coda and Castro (2019). Similarly, the present work sought to answer the following question: how are studies on visual merchandising characterized, in theoretical, methodological, and empirical aspects? However, we sought not only to investigate the national literature as did Coda and Castro (2019) but also articles published in international journals. Bibliometrics consists of a statistical technique whose main objective is to measure scientific production indices in a given area or theme (Araújo, 2006). Figure 1 shows the steps taken by bibliometrics.

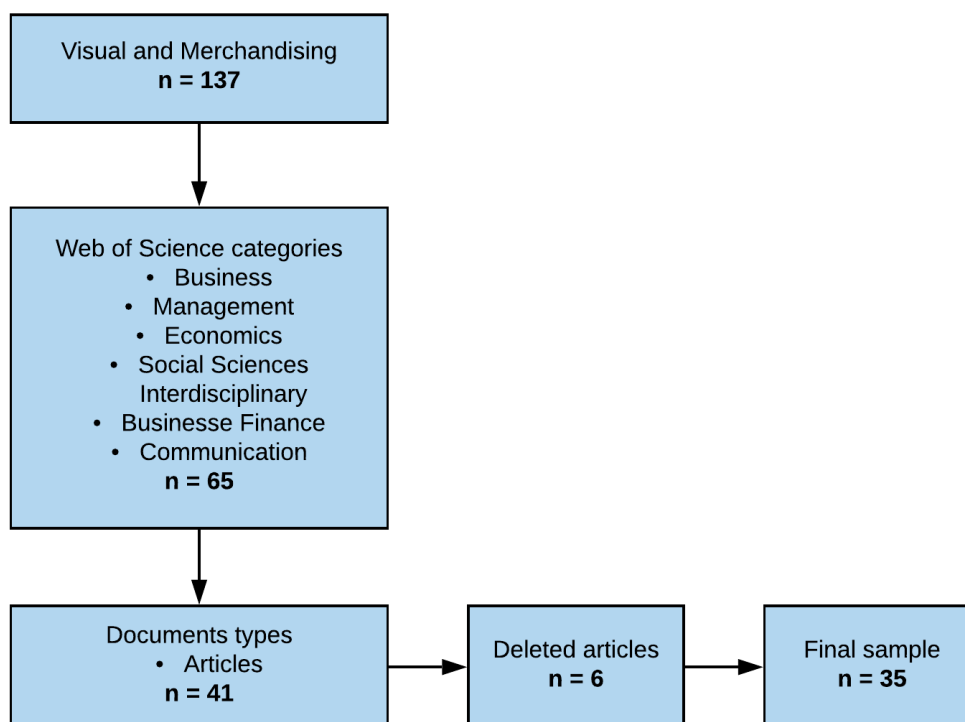


**Figure 1.** Bibliometrics steps.

Source: Self elaboration.

To conduct the study, we selected one of the most used bibliometric research bases, the Web of Science (Clarivate Analytics) (Quevedo-Silva, Santos, Brandão & Vils, 2016). We search for articles by topic, summary, keywords, and keywords plus. After testing various combinations of the terms visual and merchandising, the keywords “Visual AND Merchandising” were used since the objective was to select only works, which contained the two terms together in the title or summary. This search resulted in 137 works. This quantity resulted from the Web of Science

category filters, in which studies in the following areas were selected: Business, Management, Economics, Social Sciences Interdisciplinary, Business Finance, and Communication. After this refinement, 65 works remained. Finally, the document type filter was applied, including articles and excluding conference articles and books, leaving 41 articles. When analyzing the articles in detail, six articles were excluded because they did not fit the theme, resulting in a final sample of 35 articles. Figure 2 shows the selection process of the articles in a schematic way.



**Figure 2.** Article selection process in the Web of Science base.

Source: Self elaboration.

The articles selected in the database, a list was created, and content of the records in the list was selected to export the articles' data as a text file. The file was analyzed with the aid of the bibliometrix package in the R language. Data such as the number of articles per year, the leading journals, references most cited by the authors, most used keywords, among others, were selected for analysis. The selected articles were analyzed with NVivo

12 Pro software, which a categorization was performed for the content of the articles, about the methodology adopted in the studies analyzed. After, an adaptation of the categorization developed by Coda and Castro (2019) was made, whose categories and subcategories are shown in Table 1. Such adaptation is justified considering that the subcategories were identified during the analysis of the 35 articles.

**Table 1**

Analysis categories and subcategories of articles

Category	Subcategories
Approach	Quantitative, Qualitative or Mixed
Research method	Experiment, Quasi Experiment, Survey, Delphi, Case Study, Ethnography, Co-design, Grounded Theory and Bibliometry
Data Collection Technique	Questionnaire, Interview, Expert Panel, Observation, Focus group, Documents, Eye tracking and Cocreation
Data Analysis Technique	Inferential Statistics, Descriptive Statistics, Structural Equation Modeling, Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis

Source: Prepared based on Coda and Castro (2019).

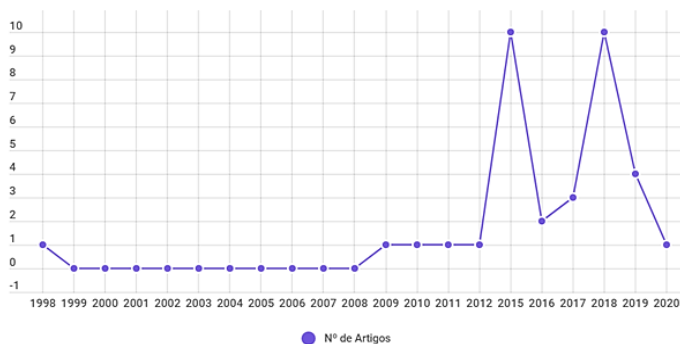
Regarding the categories Approach, Research Method, Data Collection Technique, and Data analysis Technique, we use the count analysis technique to identify the number of studies adopted in each subcategory. The results and discussion of the 35 visual merchandising articles analyzed are presented below.

#### 4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This topic presents the analysis and discussion of the results divided into three parts: the first, the analysis of the results carried out with the bibliometrix; the second, the analysis of methodological aspects; and, lastly, a research agenda for the topic.

##### 4.1 Article Analysis

The articles selected for this work were not limited to the temporal space to better understand the theme. The first publication identified with the theme is from the year 1998 and can be considered the theme's seminal work (Janiszewski, 1998). After this publication, only in 2009 did other studies on Visual Merchandising appear. As shown in Figure 3, in 2015, there is an increase in the number of publications, reaching ten articles; however, it decreases in the following year, with only two. It is observed that the sample of selected articles breaks in 2016, with new publications only in 2018, with ten articles again, and in 2019 with four articles. An article published in the current year until the time of collection (June 2020) was found.

**Figure 3.** Number of articles published per year.

Source: Self elaboration.

Regarding the journals in which the articles were published, Table 2 presents the leading journals regarding the number of articles. The International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, and Journal of Global Fashion Marketing correspond to one-third of the sample (12 articles). The articles appeared in 20 different journals, of which only one is national (Navus - Revista de Gestão e Tecnologia). The leading journals that publish on the subject are in the area of retail marketing and fashion, and the Psychology & Marketing, one of the leading journals in the area of consumer behavior, also stands out.

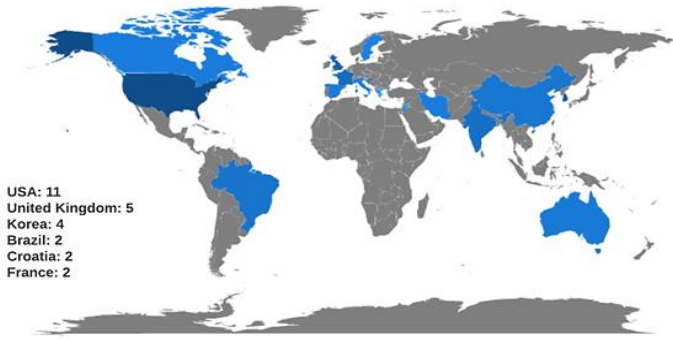
**Table 2**

Main journals

Journals	Number of Articles Published
International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management	5
Journal of Retailing and Consumer Service	4
Journal of Global Fashion Marketing	3
Journal of Retailing	3
Psychology & Marketing	3
European Journal of Marketing	2
Journal of Marketing	2

Source: Self elaboration.

When looking at the number of articles per country, the majority are from the United States (11 articles), the United Kingdom appears in second place with five articles, and Korea (the bibliometrix package does not specify whether it is the northern or southern part of Korea), with four articles. In all, 14 countries appeared in the sample, Brazil being one of them, with two articles. Figure 4 shows, in a map form, the countries that present productions and those that have a dark blue color are the ones that represent the most massive amount of publications. It is noteworthy in the figure that in South America only Brazil has production on the subject.

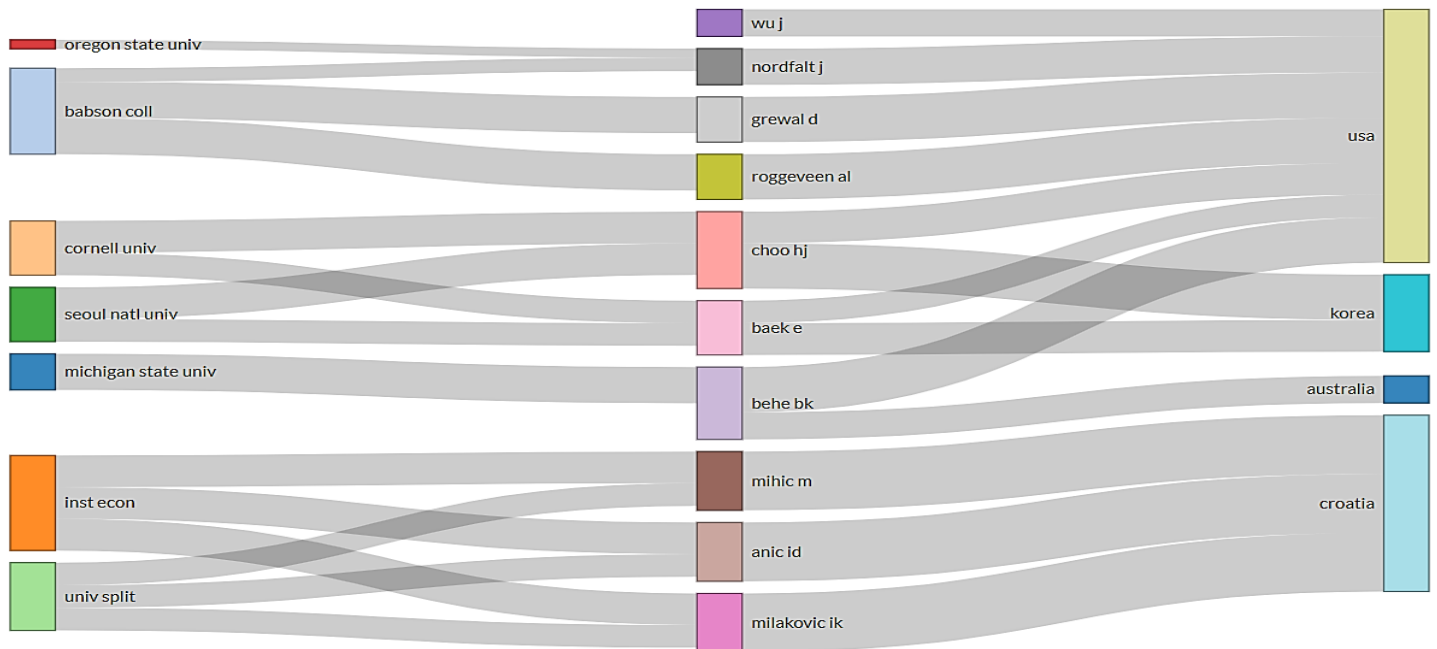


**Figure 4.** Scientific production on the theme by country.  
 Source: Self elaboration.

Regarding the collaboration between different countries, it was possible to observe a few countries with authors collaborating. There is collaboration grouped between the United States, Korea, Australia, and Sweden. According to Palacios-Callender and Roberts (2018), collaboration networks are led by developed countries, which may explain this conglomerate's appearance. The

rest of the countries without collaboration appear scattered. This suggests a limitation in developing the theme since it would be interesting for there to be greater collaboration between different countries to compare the different practices of visual merchandising used in different cultures. Therefore, a collaboration between authors from different countries is necessary to develop the theme (Baker, Pandey, Kumar & Haldar, 2020).

When observing the affiliations of the primary authors of the sample, some have affiliations in universities in different countries, as shown in Figure 5, which presents the relationships between authors, the universities to which they are affiliated, and the respective countries universities. It is noteworthy that perhaps the collaboration between countries is not a collaboration between scientists from other countries, but a change in the authors' affiliation. For example, authors Choo and Yoon (2015) appear affiliated with universities in the United States and Korea and Behe with universities in the United States and Australia.



**Figure 5.** Relationship between authors by affiliations and countries.  
 Source: Self elaboration.

The keywords used in the articles it was decided to present the co-occurrence network. Co-occurrence occurs "when two keywords appear together in an article, indicating a relationship between the two concepts" (Baker et al., 2020, p. 236). The objective is to create a conceptual structure through the co-occurrence of keywords, where they are mapped and grouped, forming a network (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). The circles' size indicates that keywords occur more frequently than, in this case, is the term "visual merchandising." This term is related to the word's "store" and "retail". Other words that also present a higher frequency of co-occurrence in articles are "consumer behavior", "shopper marketing," "me," "handing," "retail atmospherics," "promotional flyers," "place marketing,"

"flagship store" and "luxury brands." They also appear related to the words "retailing" and "strategy," since visual merchandising is a retail strategy. For Comerio and Strozzi (2019), the co-occurrence of keywords indicates the articles' main themes, considering that the keywords used represent the content of the articles.

As for the articles that make up the sample and their citations, Table 3 presents the ten most cited documents. Global citations correspond to the number of times the article is cited in the database, regardless of area or discipline. Local citations correspond to the number of times the article is cited by other articles from the sample itself (Baker et al., 2020). As can be seen, the most cited article is Chandon et al. (2009), with 288 citations. However, only

Janiszewski (1998) mentioned three times (among the ten most cited documents) when it comes to local citations. For Baker et al. (2020), the greater the number of local citations for an article, the greater the influence on the development

of the area. Janiszewski (1998) 's work, as previously said, is the seminal of visual merchandising, at least in the researched database is where the term appears for the first time.

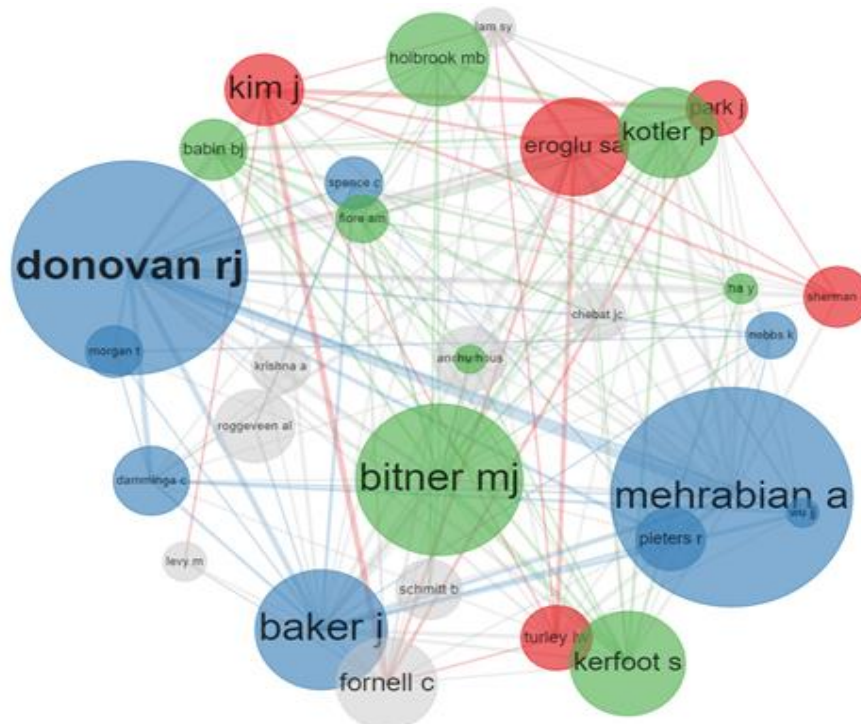
**Table 3**  
The 10 most cited articles

Articles	Global Citations	Citations per year	Local Citations
Chandon et al. (2009)	288	24	0
Janiszewski (1998)	193	8.4	3
Grewal, Roggeveen and Nordfalt (2017)	154	38.5	0
Há and Lennon (2010)	54	4.9	0
Roggeveen et al. (2015)	38	6.3	0
Law, Wong and Yip (2012)	37	4.1	0
Huddleston et al. (2015)	24	4	0
Park, Jeon and Sullivan (2015)	20	3.3	0
Reynolds-McInay, Morrin and Nordfalt (2017)	17	4.25	0
Yu, Tullio-Pow and Akhtar (2015)	16	2.67	0

Source: Self elaboration.

Observing the references used by the sample articles, it was decided to present a co-citation network of authors. For Small (1973), co-citation corresponds to the number of times that two articles are cited together by another article. In Figure 6, the authors Donovan, Mehrabian, and Baker, among others, are highlighted and interconnected, indicating that they are the authors who appear most co-cited. Donovan et al. (1994) and Mehrabian and Russell (1974) are classics of the store atmosphere and “SOR” theory, respectively, dealing with consumer behavior

in the store environment, also appearing together, in another group, the authors Bitner, Kerfoot's and Kotler, among others. Bitner (1992) is a classic work that deals with the physical evidence and service environment, and Kerfoots, Davies, and Ward (2003) deal directly with visual merchandising, relating retail brands' creation. According to Rossetto, Bernardes, Borini & Gattaz (2018), the co-citation analysis reveals the visual merchandising theme's intellectual structure.



**Figure 6.** Co-citation network of authors.  
Source: Self elaboration.

After presenting the general overview of publications on visual merchandising, analyzing its social and intellectual structure, the following topic presents the analysis of the methodological aspects of the articles selected for the study.

#### 4.2 Analysis of Methodological Aspects

In order to carry out the analysis of the methodological aspects, the quantitative regarding the approach, the method, the data collection instrument, the data collection technique, and the data analysis technique of the 31 articles characterized as theoretical-empirical, was taken into account, as can be seen in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
Methodological typing

Category	Subcategory	Quantity
Approach	Qualitative	3
	Quantitative	22
	Mixed	6
Research Method	Experiment	16
	Quasi-Experiment	1
	Survey	11
	Delphi	1
	Case Study	2
	Ethnography	1
	Co-design	1
	Grounded-Theory	2
	Bibliometry	1
Data Collection	Questionnaire	24
	Interview	4
	Expert Panel	1
	Note	1
	Document	2
	Eye Tracking	4
	Focus Group	3
	Co-creation	1
Data Analysis Technique	Inferential Statistics	23
	Descriptive Statistics	2
	Structural Equation Modeling	4
	Content Analysis	2
	Thematic Analysis	1

Source: Self elaboration.

Regarding the approach, the studies were mostly quantitative (22 out of 31 theoretical-empirical)—quantitative studies used mainly the methods of the experiment (12) and survey (8). The quantitative studies that experimented had their data collected from questionnaires and were analyzed using the inferential statistics technique.

It is also noteworthy with experimental studies using the eye-tracking technology in studies to collect data (see Chandon et al., 2009; Huddleston, Behe, Minahan & Fernandez (2015); Janiszewski, 1998; Marchini, Diotallevi, Paffarini, Stasi & Baselice, 2015). The studies that used surveys as a method were analyzed using inferential statistics, except the study by Marchini et al. (2015), who performed descriptive statistics. Also, structural equation modeling was used in the studies by Marchini et al. (2015), Lam, Fu and Li (2017), Lombart, Labbé-Pinlon, Filser, Anteblian and Louis (2018), and Anić, Mihić and Kursan Milaković (2018). Wu, Kim and Koo (2015) stand out, which used the codesign method, the collection was co-creation, and the analysis was performed using descriptive statistics. Only Reynolds-McInay, Morrin and Nordfält (2017) carried out a survey and experiment.

Regarding the three qualitative studies identified, the methods were Grounded Theory (Law, Wong & Yip, 2012) and case study (Nobbs, Foong & Baker, 2015). The studies used interviews for data collection (Law et al., 2012; Nobbs et al., 2015) and focus group (Yu, Tullio-Pow & Akhtar, 2015). Nobbs et al. (2015) adopted the observation collection technique and the interviews above. For data analysis, studies adopted different techniques, namely: Grounded Theory (Law et al., 2012), thematic analysis (Nobbs et al., 2015) and content analysis (Yu, Tullio-Pow & Akhtar, 2015).

Finally, six studies used differentiated mixed approaches. Park, Jeon, and Sullivan (2015) adopted experimentation and ethnography methods with the data collected through questionnaires and interviews analyzed from the Grounded Theory and inferential statistics. Trigoni (2016) carried out case studies in magazines based on content analysis and quantified the details of the texts. Jimenez Maín and Elías Zambrano (2018) used the quasi-experimental method based on the application of questionnaires and document analysis based on descriptive statistics. Krasnikolakis, Vrechopoulos, Pouloudi & Dimitriadis (2018) adopted the Delphi method and experiment based on applying a questionnaire and panel of experts and with the data analyzed using inferential statistics.

Barros et al. (2018) developed bibliometric research based on the studies' analysis through content analysis and descriptive statistics. Tung, Burns, and Koenig (2019), in turn, experimented, through focus groups and application of questionnaires analyzed with inferential statistics. Also highlighted is the use of the Stimulus-Organism-Response Structure model, the S-O-R (Há & Lennon, 2010; Baek et al., 2015; Krasnikolakis et al., 2018; Sina & Wu, 2019) by the studies analyzed. A justification for this choice would be that most of the studies analyzed used the experimental method in which stimuli are necessary for the study's development.



### 4.3 Proposed Research Agenda

The citations analysis suggests that the articles most used as references are classic marketing articles and not the works developed on visual merchandising, such as Law et al. (2012). Most articles (30) are from the last five years (since 2015), which may be a factor that influences the low number of citations in these articles. The absence of national journals in the sample should also be noted since not all are indexed in the researched base (Web of Science). However, a search in the Brazilian Spell database returns only two works: Barros et al. (2018) and Costa and Castro (2014).

When looking at retail practices, visual merchandising appears to be a consolidated technique, mainly in fashion retail. However, this result does not happen with research on the topic that is still incipient. It is hoped that, as well as the recent studies identified in international journals, researchers will investigate the topic. It is essential to assess whether visual merchandising techniques have the expected effect, since investing in environmental design can be costly, and it is necessary to evaluate the return by increasing sales and building a positive store image. That is why future studies are essential to assess the effectiveness of these techniques.

Therefore, some guidelines are proposed for future research on the theme of visual merchandising:

1. Studies with a qualitative approach: despite the contribution of quantitative articles, in the sense of relating variables and analyzing their effects mainly on purchasing behavior. It is suggested that more qualitative studies be carried out exploring the consumer's perception, emotions, and journey on visual merchandising techniques;
2. Comparison between different countries: according to Barros et al. (2018), the study by Park, Li, and Jeon (2011) carried out a cultural comparison and identified different results in consumer behavior to the stimuli of the store atmosphere, which demonstrates that cultural difference is an important variable to be investigated. In this sense, it is suggested that researchers seek collaboration from researchers from other regions, since there is little collaboration between countries, and yet, multicultural studies;
3. Sectoral and intersectoral comparison: the studies analyzed in this article mostly focus on researching fashion retail. However, it is possible to expand these surveys to other retail sectors, such as beauty products stores, pharmacies, stationery stores, in addition to making comparisons between stores in the same sector with different audiences.

### 5 CONCLUSIONS

This work aimed to investigate how studies on visual merchandising are characterized in theoretical, methodological, and empirical aspects. A bibliometric survey was carried out on the Web of Science database, where the terms "Visual AND Merchandising" were searched. The sample selected for analysis included 35 articles published in journals. Studies on the visual merchandising theme were analyzed in terms of the number of articles per year, leading journals, references most cited by the authors, keywords most used through R Studio and the bibliometrix package, in addition to the methodology used, considering the approach, method research, data collection technique, and data analysis technique, with the aid of NVivo 12 Pro.

The analyzes carried out allowed us to conclude that the visual merchandising theme is still a relatively new field of research because although the first article identified that addresses the theme was from 1998, most of the analyzed articles were published five years ago or less. As a development field, there are few national citations, that is, few articles cited the works selected for analysis. This suggests that there are several opportunities for future research on the topic. In this sense, a research agenda was proposed with three possible paths to be followed by future studies: studies with a qualitative approach, comparison between different countries, and comparison between sectors and intersectoral.

It is expected that this study will contribute to the literature based on the analysis carried out on the visual merchandising theme. It is also expected that this work will be used as a reference for future bibliometric studies that use the R language and the bibliometrix package. When performing analysis of the articles' content, as to the methods and theories, the limitation of the bibliometrix package, which does not carry out the analysis of the techniques and theories used, was overcome. As limitations of the article, we highlight the use of only one database. Other recommended analyzes, such as the evolution of the theme and the authors' impact, were excluded because they did not present actual results for the discussion. Finally, it is expected that with the suggestions presented, researchers in the marketing and retail area will be motivated to carry out studies on visual merchandising and contribute significantly to the development of the theme.

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