

Exploring the Key Potentials of Power BI: Analyzing the Sales Data

Seminar Report

In the context of the Module: Data Science Project Seminar: Driving Corporate Performance

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Topic Creator: Prof. Dr. André Coners

Supervisor: Jannis Koch (Research associate)

Submitted by: Saurab Barua (30348215)

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1. Project Objective

The objective of this project is to explore and demonstrate the key features and capabilities of **Microsoft Power BI** by analyzing a comprehensive sales dataset from an automotive company. This project aims to:

- Transform raw sales, product, customer, return, and calendar data into meaningful insights.
- Build an efficient data model using Power BI's relationship and modeling tools.
- Create dynamic and interactive dashboards to visualize key performance indicators such as total sales, revenue, profit, return rate, and customer trends.
- Apply DAX (Data Analysis Expressions) to calculate custom measures that support strategic decision-making.
- Highlight Power BI features like slicers, drill-throughs, filters, tooltips, and bookmarks to enhance user interactivity and reporting experience.
- Provide business insights that can guide operational improvements and marketing strategies.

2. Theoretical Background

In today's data-driven business environment, organizations generate massive volumes of data across various domains such as sales, marketing, finance, and operations. However, raw data alone holds limited value unless it is properly processed, analyzed, and transformed into actionable insights. Business Intelligence (BI) tools like Microsoft Power BI play a crucial role in bridging this gap by providing intuitive platforms for data visualization, analysis, and decision-making.

Power BI is a cloud-based BI service developed by Microsoft that allows users to connect to a wide range of data sources, clean and transform data using Power Query, model data using relationships and DAX (Data Analysis Expressions), and create interactive reports and dashboards. It supports self-service BI, enabling business users to make data-driven decisions without needing advanced technical skills.

This project utilizes Power BI to analyze a simulated dataset for an automotive company, which includes sales transactions from 2020 to 2022, customer demographics, product categories, territories, and return information. The theoretical foundation lies in:

- Data Modeling: Applying dimensional modeling techniques (star schema) to build relationships between fact and dimension tables for efficient querying and reporting.
- Data Transformation: Cleaning and shaping data using Power Query Editor to ensure consistency and readiness for analysis.
- DAX Calculations: Creating custom measures and calculated columns using DAX to derive business metrics such as revenue, profit margin, and return rates.

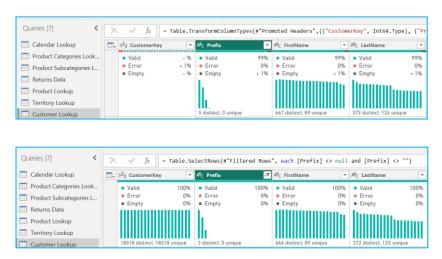
Visualization Theory: Leveraging best practices in data visualization to communicate insights clearly, including the use of KPI indicators, bar charts, line graphs, maps, and slicers.

Data Source: Kaggle, Click here

- Sales Data 2020.csv, Sales Data 2021.csv, Sales Data 2022.csv
- Returns Data.csv
- Customer Lookup.csv
- Product Lookup.csv
- Product Categories Lookup.csv
- Product Subcategories Lookup.csv
- Territory Lookup.csv
- Calendar Lookup.csv

3. Data Preparation

Effective data preparation is crucial for building a reliable and insightful Power BI dashboard. In this project, we performed systematic cleaning and transformation steps using **Power Query** for each source file:



For each data file, we performed the following cleaning steps in **Power Query**:

3.1 Data Cleaning Steps

1. Column Data Type Conversion:

All columns were converted to appropriate data types (e.g., IDs to numbers, dates to date/time format, names to text) to ensure consistency and compatibility across tables.

2. Removal of Nulls and Blanks:

Rows containing null or blank values in key fields (such as IDs, dates, or product names) were filtered out. This helped maintain high data quality and avoided calculation errors in later analysis.

3. Validation and Error Checking:

The data was reviewed for integrity, ensuring all mandatory fields contained valid values. Any detected errors were corrected or removed.

These steps helped us create a clean and reliable dataset, ready for modeling and analysis in Power BI.

3.2 Data Transformation Steps

For Sales Data we connect the **file path**, so if the new file is uploaded for next year, the data will automatically update.

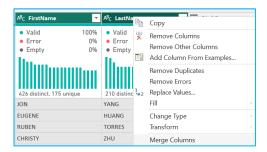
1. Dynamic Data Loading:

For the **Sales Data** file, we connected the Power Query to a folder path. This means that if a new sales file (e.g., for a new year) is added to the folder, the dataset will automatically update in Power BI—enabling seamless, future-proof reporting.



2. Merging Names:

The First Name and Last Name columns were merged into a single Full Name column in the Customer table, improving readability and reporting clarity.



3. Conditional Columns:

We added new columns to capture *Parental Status* and *Marital Status* using conditional logic, making customer segmentation easier and more insightful.



4. Date Hierarchy Enhancement:

Additional date columns were added and formatted (such as *Year*, *Month*, *Day Name*) to enable flexible time-based analysis and support Power BI's date hierarchy features.



3.3 Data Analysis Expressions (DAX)

DAX is a powerful formula language used in Power BI, Excel, and other Microsoft analytics tools. DAX enables users to create custom calculations and measures, going far beyond the basic built-in aggregations such as SUM, AVERAGE, or COUNT. In this project, DAX was essential for building dynamic measures, calculated columns, and advanced KPIs that drive meaningful analysis.

In my project I used the following Dax Measure for further analysis.

1. Calculated Columns for Price and Sales Amount

To make the **Sales Data** table more informative, I created a calculated column to bring in the product price from the product lookup table:

```
Product Price =
RELATED('product Lookup'[Product Price])
```

Next, the total **Sales Amount** for each transaction was calculated:

```
Sales Amount =
'Sales Data'[OrderQuantity] *
'Sales Data'[Product Price]
```

These calculated columns help in downstream analytics, such as computing revenue per product or category.

- 2. Revenue, Cost, and Profitability
- Total Revenue:

To calculate total revenue efficiently across the data model, I used the SUMX function, which iterates over each row of the table:

```
Total Revenue = SUMX('Sales Data', 'Sales
Data'[OrderQuantity] *
RELATED('Product Lookup'[ProductPrice]))
```

This measure dynamically updates according to filters (like time, product, or customer segment) applied to the dashboard.

• Total Cost:

Calculates total cost of goods sold.

```
Total Cost = SUMX('Sales Data', 'Sales
Data'[OrderQuantity]*
RELATED('Product Lookup'[ProductCost]))
```

Gross Profit:

```
Gross Profit = [Total Revenue] - [Total Cost]
```

• Gross Margin (%):

Profit as a percentage of revenue.

```
Gross Margin (%) = DIVIDE([Gross Profit], [Total
Revenue])
```

3. Customer Metrics

To track the customer base, I calculated the total number of customers in two ways:

• Total Customers:

```
Total Customers = COUNTROWS('customer lookup')
```

• Distinct Customers Who Purchased:

We used **Distinct count** Function to get unique Customer key for more accuracy. As we know, a customer can buy several times.

```
Total distinct customer =
DISTINCTCOUNT('Sales 20,21,22'[Customer Key])
```

This reveals the difference between all customers in the database and those who have actually made a purchase, highlighting active vs. inactive customers.

4. Customer Demographics

To understand gender distribution in our customer base, the following measures were created:

```
Male = CALCULATE([Total Customer], 'Customer
Lookup'[Gender] = "M")
Female = CALCULATE([Total Customer], 'Customer
Lookup'[Gender] = "F")
```

To express these as percentages of the total:

```
% Female = DIVIDE([Female], [Total Customer])
% Male = DIVIDE([Male], [Total Customer])
```

These show the proportion of female and male customers, respectively, making demographic analysis more meaningful.

5. Return Analysis:

Understanding returns is critical for operational excellence:

• Total Returned Quantity

```
Total returned Quantity=
SUM('Returns Data' [RrturnQuantity]
```

• Total Order Quantity:

```
Total order quantity = SUM('Sales Data'[OrderQuantity])
```

• Return Rate:

```
Return rate = DIVIDE([Total returned quantity], [Total
order quantity])
```

• Previous Month Return (PM Return):

Allows comparison of current vs. previous period returns.

```
PM Return = CALCULATE([Total returned quantity],
DATEADD('Calendar Lookup'[Date], -1, MONTH))
```

With these measures, managers can monitor return trends, investigate spikes, and address underlying issues with specific products or periods.

6. Time Intelligence

DAX makes it easy to perform time-based calculations, such as tracking change over time:

• Previous Month Revenue:

```
PM Revenue = CALCULATE([Total Revenue],
DATEADD('Calendar Lookup'[Date], -1, MONTH))
```

• Revenue % Change:

```
Revenue % Change = DIVIDE([Total Revenue] -
[PM Revenue], [PM Revenue])
```

These time intelligence measures support trend analysis and help detect growth or emerging challenges quickly.

7. Other Calculations

Weekday/Weekend Slicer:

```
Weekday = IF('Calendar Lookup'[Day Name] IN
{"Saturday", "Sunday"}, "Weekend", "Weekday")
```

4. Data Modeling

Data Modeling is the process of organizing and structuring data to create logical relationships between different datasets. In Power BI, this helps in building a meaningful data model that supports accurate analysis and efficient reporting. A well-structured model often follows the star schema, where a central fact table (e.g., Sales Data) is connected to multiple dimension tables (e.g., Products, Customers, Time).

4.1 Primary key vs foreign key

a. Primary Key

A Primary Key is a unique identifier for each row in a table. It ensures that each record is distinct. Examples from this project include:

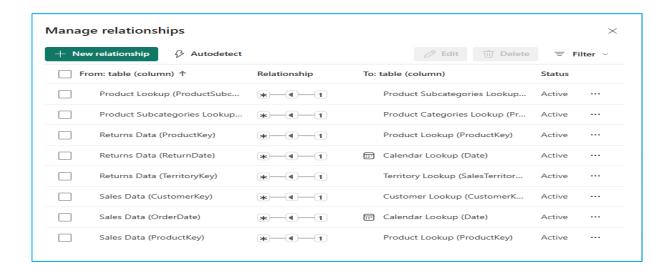
- Customer Key in the Customer Lookup table
- Product Key in the Product Lookup table

These keys help identify records without duplication.

b. Foreign Key

A Foreign Key is a column in one table that refers to the primary key of another table. It is used to establish relationships between tables. For example:

- The Customer Key in the Sales Data table is a foreign key that links to the Customer Lookup table.
- The Product Key in the Returns Data table links to the Product Lookup table.



4.2 Fact Table and Dimension Table

In Power BI and data warehousing, data is typically structured using a star schema, which consists of fact tables and dimension tables.

a. Fact Table

A Fact Table contains measurable, quantitative data about business processes. It stores transactional data and is often very large. In this project, the fact tables include:

- Sales Data (2020, 2021, 2022) contains metrics like order quantity, order date, product key, customer key, etc.
- Returns Data contains return quantity, return date, product key, etc.

Fact tables usually have foreign keys that link to dimension tables and include numeric values for analysis, such as sales volume, cost, and profit.

b. Dimension Table

A Dimension Table contains descriptive attributes related to the fact data. These are used to filter, group, and label facts. Examples from this project include:

- Product Lookup: product names, sizes, prices
- Customer Lookup: customer names, gender, income
- Territory Lookup: region, country
- Calendar Lookup: date, month, year

Dimension tables provide context for facts and allow for more insightful and readable reports.

4.3 Two Most Common Data Modeling Schemas

a. Star Schema

The Star Schema is a simple and widely used data modeling approach. In this structure:

- A central Fact Table contains numerical data (e.g., sales, returns).
- It connects directly to multiple Dimension Tables (e.g., customers, products, dates) using foreign keys.
- Each dimension table is denormalized (i.e., contains all related attributes in one table).

Advantages:

Faster query performance

Simple and easy to understand

Ideal for reporting and dashboards

b. Snowflake Schema

The Snowflake Schema is a more complex model where dimension tables are normalized into multiple related tables.

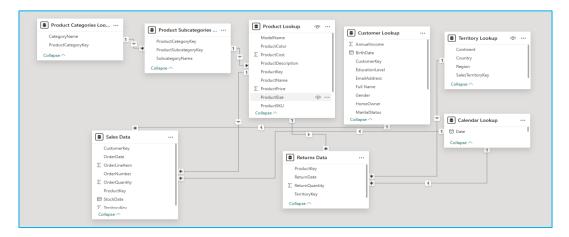
- A dimension table may connect to other sub-dimensions.
- This leads to a branching structure that resembles a snowflake.

Advantages:

Reduces data redundancy

Better for data consistency

Useful for large, complex data models



In my project I applied a Snowflake Schema to build relationships.

5. Year-wise Sales Analysis (2020–2022)

Overview

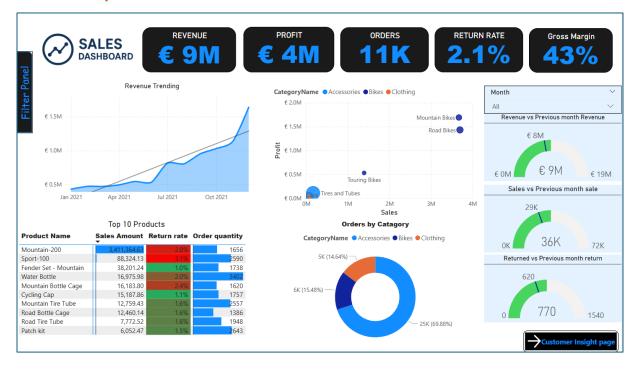
This Dashboard provides a detailed analysis of the company's sales performance from 2020 to 2022, based on key dashboard metrics. The data covers revenue, profit, order volume, product trends, return rates, and category insights, allowing us to understand business growth, operational efficiency, and areas of improvement.

5.1 2020 - The Baseline Year



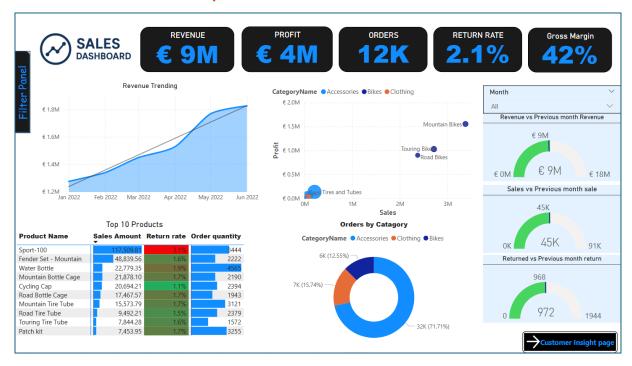
- Revenue & Profit: Achieved €6M in revenue and €3M in profit with 3,000 orders.
- **Revenue Trend**: The revenue fluctuated throughout the year, peaking in the first half, dipping mid-year, and recovering at the end (see "Revenue Trending 2020" chart).
- **Product Focus**: Sales were solely from the Bikes category.
- **Top Products**: Road-150 and Road-250 were top-selling products, with higher return rates (over 3%).
- Return Rate: Return rate was 3.3%, indicating some product or delivery issues.
- Gross Margin: Maintained at 41%, showing decent cost control.
- Order Distribution: All orders (100%) were from Bikes (see "Orders by Category" chart).
- Action Point: Focus needed on reducing return rates and diversifying the product portfolio.

5.2 2021 - Rapid Growth and Diversification



- **Revenue & Profit**: Revenue increased to €9M, profit to €4M, and orders jumped to 11,000.
- **Revenue Trend**: Strong upward trend throughout the year (see "Revenue Trending 2021").
- **Product Diversification**: Expanded into Accessories and Clothing categories.
- Order Distribution: Orders split across Bikes (approx. 70%), Accessories, and Clothing (see "Orders by Category").
- **Top Products**: Mountain-200 Bike remained a bestseller, but Accessories like Cycling Caps and Bottle Cages entered the top 10.
- **Return Rate**: Dropped sharply to 2.1%, showing improvements in quality and customer satisfaction.
- Gross Margin: Improved to 43%.
- Action Point: Continue product diversification and quality improvement to maintain momentum.

5.3 2022 - Stabilization and Operational Excellence

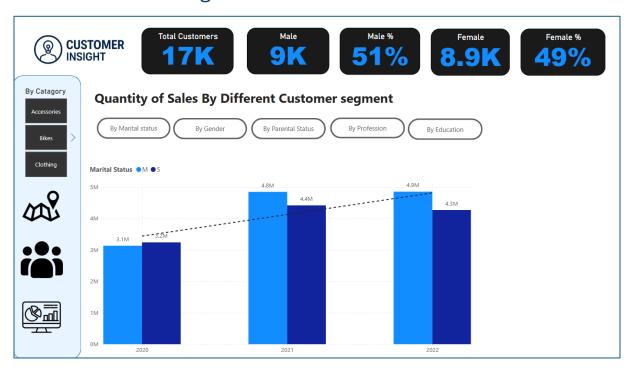


- **Revenue & Profit**: Maintained high revenue (\notin 9M) and profit (\notin 4M), with orders rising to 12,000.
- **Revenue Trend**: Consistent, steady growth visible in the "Revenue Trending 2022" chart.
- Order Distribution: Accessories took the largest share (72%), followed by Clothing and Bikes.
- **Top Products**: Mostly Accessories in the top 10, with low return rates (1-2%).
- **Return Rate**: Stable at 2.1%, indicating strong quality control.
- **Gross Margin**: Held steady at 42%.
- **Action Point**: Focus on sustaining low return rates and operational efficiency as order volume grows.

Overall Trends & Insights

- Revenue and order volume showed strong growth from 2020 to 2021, then stabilized at high levels in 2022.
- Product diversification (into Accessories and Clothing) was key for sustaining growth and reducing risk.
- Return rates and gross margins improved year over year, reflecting successful quality and cost management.
- Visual charts ("Revenue Trending," "Orders by Category," and "Top Products") support these findings and should be included for clarity.

6. Customer Insight Dashboard.



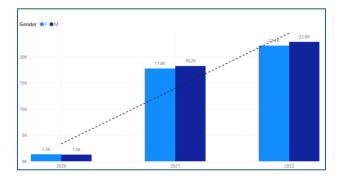
a. Overall Customer Overview

- **Total Customers:** 17,000 customers analyzed in the dataset.
- Gender Split: 9,000 males (51%) and 8,900 females (49%), showing a balanced customer base.
- Category Preference: The dashboard allows filtering by Accessories, Bikes, and Clothing.

b. Sales by Marital Status

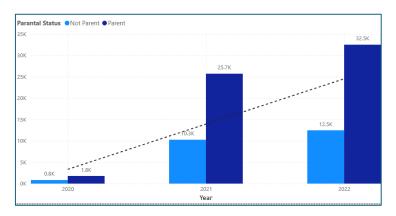
- 2020: Sales were balanced between married (3.1M) and single customers (3.2M).
- 2021: Both segments increased, with married (4.8M) and single (4.4M).
- 2022: Sales reached 4.9M (married) and 4.3M (single).
- **Insight:** Sales to married customers slightly outpaced singles, but both groups showed consistent growth over time.

c. Sales by Gender



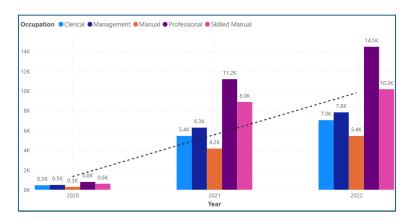
- 2020: Almost identical sales for male and female customers (1.3K each).
- 2021: Sales grew to 17.8K (female) and 18.2K (male).
- **2022:** Continued rise to 22.1K (female) and 22.9K (male).
- **Insight:** The gender split remained very close, indicating marketing efforts effectively reached both genders.

d. Sales by Parental Status



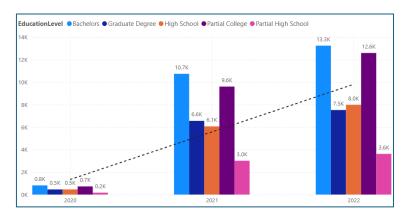
- **2020:** Parents (1.8K) bought more than non-parents (0.8K).
- **2021:** Sharp rise: parents (25.7K), non-parents (10.3K).
- 2022: Parents (32.5K) continued to lead, with non-parents at 12.5K.
- **Insight:** Parent customers are a high-growth, high-value segment and drive most of the sales growth.

e. Sales by Profession



- 2020: Highest sales in the Professional (0.8K) and Skilled Manual (0.6K) segments.
- 2021: Professional (11.2K) and Skilled Manual (8.9K) saw the largest increases.
- 2022: Professionals (14.5K) and Skilled Manual (10.2K) remained top contributors.
- **Insight:** Professional and Skilled Manual workers are the main buyers, suggesting targeted marketing here could be effective.

f. Sales by Education Level



- 2020: Sales were highest among customers with a Bachelor's degree (0.8K).
- **2021:** Bachelors (10.7K) and Partial College (9.6K) segments grew strongly.
- 2022: Bachelors (13.3K) and Partial College (12.6K) led in sales.
- **Insight:** Higher education levels (Bachelors and Partial College) correspond with higher sales, highlighting the importance of targeting educated customers.

6.1 Key Takeaways & Recommendations

- **Balanced Gender Base:** Marketing campaigns should continue to address both male and female customers equally.
- Focus on Parents: Parent customers show the highest growth—consider family-oriented product bundles or promotions.
- Target Professionals & Skilled Manual Workers: These occupations drive the most sales, so tailor offerings and communications accordingly.
- Leverage Education Data: Educated customers (especially with Bachelor's or some college) are most engaged—content and campaigns can be designed to resonate with this group.

6.2 Geographical Sales Distribution Map



Global Sales Presence:

The map shows sales data distributed across several key regions: North America, Europe, and Australia.

Bubble Size Interpretation:

Each bubble's size represents the **sum of sales amount** for that country or region. Larger bubbles indicate higher total sales.

Key Observations:

• North America:

The largest bubble is located in North America, indicating this region contributes the **highest sales volume** among all countries displayed.

• Europe:

Multiple bubbles appear in Western and Central Europe, showing that this region also has strong sales, but these are split across several countries. No single European country matches North America's total, but the region as a whole is significant.

• Australia:

There is a notable bubble in Australia, suggesting strong market presence and sales performance in this country.

• Other Regions:

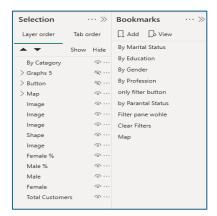
• There are no significant sales bubbles in South America, Africa, or Asia (other than Australia), indicating limited or no sales activity in these regions.

Business Insights:

- The business has a **diversified international footprint**, with especially strong performance in North America and Europe.
- Potential for Growth:
- Emerging markets such as Asia, Africa, and South America represent opportunities for future expansion since there is little or no sales activity there yet.
- Regional Focus:
- Current sales and marketing strategies appear effective in the most developed markets. Continuing to leverage these strengths while exploring new markets could drive future growth.

7. Key Features

a. Bookmark Used in the Dashboard: Bookmarks allow users to quickly jump between different customer analysis views, such as by Marital Status, Education, Gender, Profession, and Parental Status, navigate to Customer insight page.



Customized Analysis:

Each bookmark is linked to a specific visual or filter, enabling users to focus on one customer segment at a time for deeper insights.

• Filter Management:

Special bookmarks like Clear Filters instantly remove all applied filters, resetting the dashboard to its default state.

• Interactive Filter Pane:

Bookmarks such as **only filter button** and **Filter pane whole** help users show or hide the filter pane as needed, making the dashboard interface cleaner and more user-friendly.

• Geographical View:

The **Map** bookmark switches the view to geographical data, enabling users to analyze sales and customer distribution by location.

• User Experience:

By using bookmarks, the dashboard becomes interactive and user-friendly, allowing users to seamlessly switch between different analytical perspectives with just one click.

Θ Sum of OrderQuantity Sum of Sales Amount CategoryName Sum of OrderQuantity SubcategoryName Sum of OrderQuantity Total 7132 Jerseys 1786 2022 April 1179 35.851.08 Gloves 1539 2022 May 1227 35 703.91 580 2022 March 33.818.59 Socks 1153 516 32,884.92 Shorts 2022 January 1112 317 2022 February 1100 31,214.25 7132 209,263.93 7132 CategoryName ProductName SubcategoryNa... Classic Vest, L € 4,571.37 € 22,607.87 Gross Profit Clothing € 92.660.11 € 21.291.30 € 92.660.11 € 4.412.36 Vests € 12,601.07 Classic Vest, S € 3,617.34

b. Drill Through Feature

We used dill through by Category to see the detailed sales amount and quantity by subcategory, year and month.

• Detailed Data Exploration:

The Drill Through feature allows users to right-click on a data point (such as a category, subcategory, or specific product) and navigate to a page with more detailed information specific to that selection.

• Category Breakdown:

In your example, selecting the "Clothing" category provides a detailed breakdown:

- o **By Subcategory:** See how total clothing orders (12,436) are distributed across Caps, Jerseys, Gloves, Socks, Shorts, and Vests.
- **By Time:** View the sum of order quantity and sales amount for each month and year, revealing trends and seasonality.

• Enhanced Insights:

Users can quickly analyze which subcategories are most popular (e.g., Caps and Jerseys lead in clothing orders) and identify peak sales periods (e.g., June 2022 had the highest monthly orders and sales amount).

• Aggregated to Granular:

Drill Through helps move from high-level summaries (total orders for Clothing) to granular views (individual subcategories and monthly sales), supporting better decision-making.

• User Interactivity:

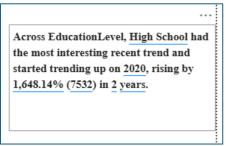
This feature empowers users to answer specific business questions on-the-fly without building new reports, making the dashboard much more interactive and user-friendly.

• Business Value:

By using Drill Through, stakeholders can easily investigate patterns, outliers, or anomalies in the data, which is critical for tasks like inventory planning, targeted marketing, and sales performance analysis.

c. AI Features

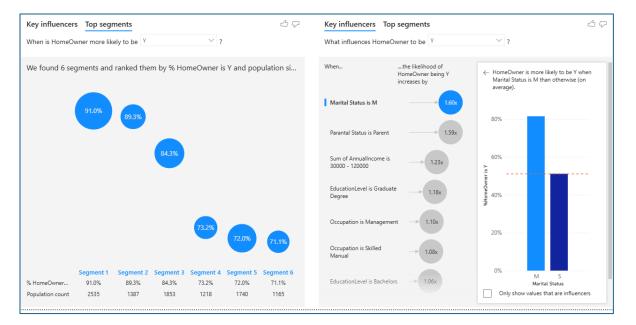
 Smart Narrative automatically generates summaries, explanations, and key takeaways based on your data and visuals



 Q&A allows users to ask questions about their data in natural language (e.g., "What were sales last month?"), and Power BI responds with relevant charts and answers.

d. AI Visuals

- **Decomposition Tree:** Breaks down a metric (like sales) by different factors to quickly see what's driving changes.
- **Key Influencers:** Uses machine learning to analyze and highlight factors that most influence a selected outcome.



- **e.** Automated Machine Learning (AutoML): In Power BI Premium, users can train and apply machine learning models (such as classification and regression) directly within Power BI Dataflows, with no code required. Due to the restriction of not using the Premier account we did not show AutoML.
- **f.** Forecasting: Built-in forecasting tools use AI to project future trends directly on line charts, helping users visualize likely outcomes and seasonality.

8. Conclusion

This project successfully demonstrates the power and versatility of Microsoft Power BI in transforming raw sales, customer, and product data into actionable business insights. Through systematic data preparation, effective data modeling using star and snowflake schemas, and advanced DAX calculations, we were able to create dynamic dashboards that visualize key metrics such as revenue, profit, return rates, and customer demographics.

The interactive features of Power BI—including bookmarks, slicers, drill-through, and dynamic filters—not only enhanced the user experience but also allowed for in-depth, self-service exploration of data. Our analysis revealed clear trends in sales growth, product diversification, and customer segmentation from 2020 to 2022. The company experienced rapid revenue and order volume growth, successfully diversified into new product categories, and improved both gross margin and return rates. Customer insights highlighted the importance of targeting parents, professionals, and educated customers, while the geographical analysis pointed to strong sales performance in North America and Europe, with opportunities for future expansion in untapped markets.

Overall, this project highlights how Power BI can empower organizations to make data-driven decisions, identify growth opportunities, and optimize operational performance through intuitive, interactive dashboards and robust analytical capabilities.

9. Recommendations

Based on the analysis and insights derived from the Power BI dashboards, the following recommendations are suggested to drive further business growth and operational efficiency:

1. Expand into Emerging Markets:

Sales are currently concentrated in North America and Europe. The company should explore strategies to enter new regions, particularly Asia, South America, and Africa, to unlock additional growth opportunities.

2. Focus on High-Value Customer Segments:

Parents, professionals, and customers with higher education levels represent the most valuable segments. Tailored marketing campaigns and personalized product bundles for these groups can boost engagement and sales.

3. Sustain Product Diversification:

The shift towards accessories and clothing has reduced business risk and contributed to growth. Continued innovation and expansion into related product categories are recommended to maintain momentum.

4. Enhance Quality Management:

5. The steady decline in return rates reflects effective quality control. The company should maintain and further strengthen quality assurance processes to ensure continued customer satisfaction and operational excellence.

6. Leverage Advanced Power BI Features:

Incorporating more AI-driven analytics (such as AutoML and predictive forecasting) in future dashboards can provide deeper insights and support proactive decision-making.

7. Promote Data-Driven Culture:

Encourage business users across departments to utilize self-service Power BI dashboards for real-time decision-making, fostering a culture of data-driven management.

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