Retail Demand & Merchandising Insight Analysis

Field Study | Pune, Maharashtra | December
Role Lens: Business Analyst (Retail / Consumer)
Objective: Translate store-level observations into data questions, hypotheses, and system-level insights.

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1. Problem Statement (BA-style)
Retail teams often respond to sales drops only after dashboards reveal the impact.
This project explores how store-level signals (product placement, pricing, customer interaction) can help predict demand trends earlier, and how a BA would turn those signals into actionable analytics questions.

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2. Scope & Methodology
Scope

- Brands: Zara, H&M, Westside
- Category: Women's wear
- Geography: Pune (urban, mild winter climate)
- Time: December (festive + winter)

Methodology

- Field observation (store walkthroughs)
- Comparative analysis across brands
- Hypothesis generation (no internal data assumed)
- Translation into data requirements

Think of this as an *offline exploratory analysis*.

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3. Key Observations → Business Interpretation
Observation A: Bestselling Categories (Inferred)

- Zara: Knitwear, tailored trousers, statement tops
- H&M: Basics, hoodies, casual denim
- Westside: Fusion kurtas, workwear tops, co-ord sets

Signals Used

- Size breaks
- Rack density
- Customer handling
- Replenishment frequency

BA Interpretation
Demand in Pune during December favours:

- Layered but lightweight products
- Everyday wearable categories over heavy winterwear

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4. Data Questions a BA Would Raise
If I had access to sales data, I would ask:

- What is the sell-through % by category and city?
- Are knitwear and basics outperforming seasonal forecasts?
- Is there a mismatch between assortment planning and local climate?

This demonstrates business curiosity and analytical thinking, rather than guessing.

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5. Pricing & Demand Elasticity Analysis (Conceptual)

Observed Price Bands (Women's Tops)

- Zara: ₹2,590–₹3,990
- H&M: ₹799–₹1,999
- Westside: ₹999–₹1,799

BA Insight

Each brand optimises a different metric:

- Zara → margin per unit
- H&M → volume per SKU
- Westside → repeat purchase likelihood

Data Metrics Needed

- Units sold vs price band
- Markdown rate by category
- Gross margin return on inventory (GMROI)

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6. Display Strategy → Conversion Hypothesis

Observed

- Zara pushes aspirational looks
- H&M pushes offers and essentials
- Westside pushes complete outfits

Hypothesis

Display strategy directly influences:

- Basket size
- Conversion rate
- Time spent in zone

BA Follow-up

I would request:

- Heatmap or footfall data by store zone
- Conversion % by display type
- A/B test results (if available)

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7. Trend Signals → Forecasting Inputs

Common Trends

- Neutral tones
- Relaxed fits
- Co-ordinated sets

BA Interpretation

These trends can act as **early indicators** for:

- Reorder prioritisation
- SKU depth planning
- Inventory allocation

Data I'd Want

- Colour-wise sell-through
- Size-wise demand distribution
- Trend adoption lag across cities

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8. Product Gaps → System-Level Thinking

Identified Gaps

- Zara: Limited affordable core basics
- H&M: Fashion SKUs lack perceived quality
- Westside: Weak western wear for younger customers

BA Angle

These gaps highlight:

- Assortment planning constraints
- Pricing strategy trade-offs
- Potential segmentation blind spots

System Questions

- Are SKU performance rules uniform across regions?
- How are local insights fed back into central planning systems?
- Is there city-level assortment optimisation?

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9. How This Connects to the Retail Tech Stack

This analysis touches multiple systems:

- POS data (sales, returns)
- Inventory management systems
- Merchandising & planning tools
- BI dashboards (Power BI / Tableau)
- Forecasting and replenishment logic

As a BA, my role is to:

Translate business observations into data requirements, metrics, and decision logic.

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10. What This Project Demonstrates (BA Perspective)

- Business problem framing
- Hypothesis-driven thinking
- Retail domain understanding
- Ability to convert real-world signals into analytics questions
- Readiness to work with merch, planning, and tech teams