



Compositional Design as Sale Strategy: Shopping mall window display

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Abstract

This research was undertaken applying the "stimulus-organism-response" theory with two objectives: to ascertain determinants of window display intertwined with product messages and strategies; to study perceptions on window display conveying positioning, value, and quality of products creating customer's desire to visit and purchase. Significant findings are for fashionable products to employ a single merchandising approach with large window size; accessories to utilize warm background color and not showing in-store; eyewear, jewelry, and watch products to showcase through images of presenters wearing them; luggage to use accent-lighting to brighten itself. Additionally, the effects of visual stimuli affected consumers' cognitive and affective reactions.

Keywords: Window display, Design elements, Compositional settings

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1.0 Introduction

Window display resembling product wrapping performs an important role in product selling strategies. Such design elements as lighting, color, material, and art compositions are crucial elements attracting products' target groups and stimulating their purchasing decisions pursuant to the theory of "stimulus-organism-response". Delving into determinants of design elements, compositional settings of window display on merchandising could expand the perspectives within these matters to a certain extent. Such rationale led to this research with the following objectives: firstly, to ascertain determinants of window display settings intertwined with product messages and strategies responding to its target groups; secondly, to study perceptions and their differences towards window display in conveying positioning, value, and quality of a product which create customer's desire to visit a shop and purchase a product. Findings of this research would be of significance for effective window display designs in order to create a favorable impact towards viewers, to convey designated merchandising strategic messages effectively to a product's target group, to optimally respond to a mission of products and hopefully to provide further impetus for visual merchandizing development

2.0 Literature Review

In terms of visual stimuli used in the development of 3D photographic instruments, there were eight components influencing the perception of target groups. Firstly, color does not only create an impact towards customers' perception but also influence their moods and attitudes. Diamond and Diamond (2007) ascribed different background colors and using appropriate colors caught the eyes of viewers which could directly create a favorable impact towards their purchasing decisions. However, previous experience and personal preference influenced a person's liking for a color. In the visual arts, color theory "is a body of practical guidance to color mixing and the visual impacts of specific color combinations." Colors are grouped into two categories: warm and cool. Warm colors are hues from red through yellow, browns, and tans included; cool colors are hues from blue green through blue violet, most grays included. Referring to color psychology, which is the study of color as a factor in human behavior and perception, warm colors are to arouse or stimulate a viewer while cool colors calm and relax. As Chebat and Morrin (2007) discovered from their study, warm and cool tones used for shopping mall decoration generated different results. The use of colors and lighting had an effect on consumer's reaction, used in separation and/or combination (Babin et al., 2003). Secondly, lighting is the part of retail environment creating attractiveness, generating interests, providing comfortable ambience, compatibility with its identity, flexibility (Diamond and Diamond, 2007), attracting and retaining consumer patronage by adjusted lighting (Summers and Hebert, 2001). Using the direction of a light source and changing its intensity can also alter the perceptual mood of a space. Adding different lighting effects change the impression and volume of space (Turner, 1994). The use of lighting (accent or diffused light), illumination, and intensity affects the perception of each individual.

Moreover, the type of material used creates a certain impact towards the perception of window viewers as material is to beautify window displays. Composition should also be taken into consideration as the arrangement of lines, forms, shapes, and colors into a pleasing whole attracts the viewer's eyes and relays a particular message whilst props visually support other displayed items. From the research results undertaken by Ti (2009) with a group of college students, they illustrated the fact that "the context setting of a window display had a significant effect on consumer's mental imagery and arousal response." Textual style (signage and graphic) does not only convey a message but also enhances window display's sophistication. Furthermore, as all windows are stages, mannequins are mere players to unveil products. Having clothing display in full size mannequins had a higher aesthetic response than the flat hanging display (Fister, 2009). Despite having other factors, merchandising display, last but not least, is to create harmony among other players within a display window. In order to probe into the perception of the subjects, the application of Gestalt theory in developing an instrument was to shed light on the capability of a human being's senses in the visual recognition of figures. Two major motives of consumer behaviors: rational and emotional motivation, were also taken into account in the development of an instrument as well as data analysis of this research. The conceptual framework and variables of this research are developed from four theoretical realms encompassing S-O-R paradigm, visual perception, display design, and consumer motivation.

2.1 S-O-R Paradigms

According to Mehrabian and Russell (1974), environmental psychology focused on the interplay between physical stimuli on human emotion and physical stimuli on a variety of behaviors. This interdisciplinary field was used in some studies concerning retail context (Thang and Tan, 2003; Fister, 2009), visual merchandising (Ha, 2006), and window display (Fister, 2009; Ti, 2009) to examine consumer behaviors. From these studies based on the S-O-R model, they highlighted that customers would likely react when they are faced with different stimuli. Therefore, the S-O-R model is used in this research as the basic grounds in exploring customer perception. An instrument to be developed for this research is one set of photographic images as it is based upon a visual perception theory emphasizing that the ability of a viewer to consume information or react to multiple stimuli at a time is to some extent, limited.

2.2 Visual Perception

With respect to the visual perception theory, the Gestalt effect exemplifies the operation of mind and brain as holistic, parallel, and analog with self-organizing tendencies. As a widely-quoted phase of "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts", it refers to the capability of a human being's senses in the visual recognition of figures and whole forms rather than just simple lines and curves (Hothersall, 2004). Having applied Gestalt theory in this research, an instrument is derived in order to devise a dummy model of window display used in data collection.

2.3 Components of Window Display Design

Within a defined scope of this study, window display is of the essence as it is a crucial ingredient

of visual merchandising that performs an eye-catching attraction akin to a magazine cover. A comparison was made to underscore the function of a window display that “if Selfridges were a magazine, the windows would be the front cover (Morgan, 2008).” Following design components is of vital importance to window display (Diamond and Diamond, 2007; Morgan, 2008; Pegler, 1983): 1) Color is the element to capture immediate attention of a viewer; 2) Lighting creates moods and minimizes unimportant areas while emphasizing others; 3) Material is to beautify window display; 4) Composition is the arrangement of lines, forms, shapes, and color into a pleasing whole which directs the viewer’s eye to the various bits and pieces of the setting and relays a particular message; 5) Prop visually supports other displayed items; 6) Textual style (signage and graphic) does not only convey a message but also enhances window display’s sophistication; 7) Mannequins are mere players and all windows are stages; 8) Merchandize is to create harmony in a window display; and 9) other components to be developed from this research. These eight design components are integrated with a theory of consumer motivation in the development of 3D photographic images.

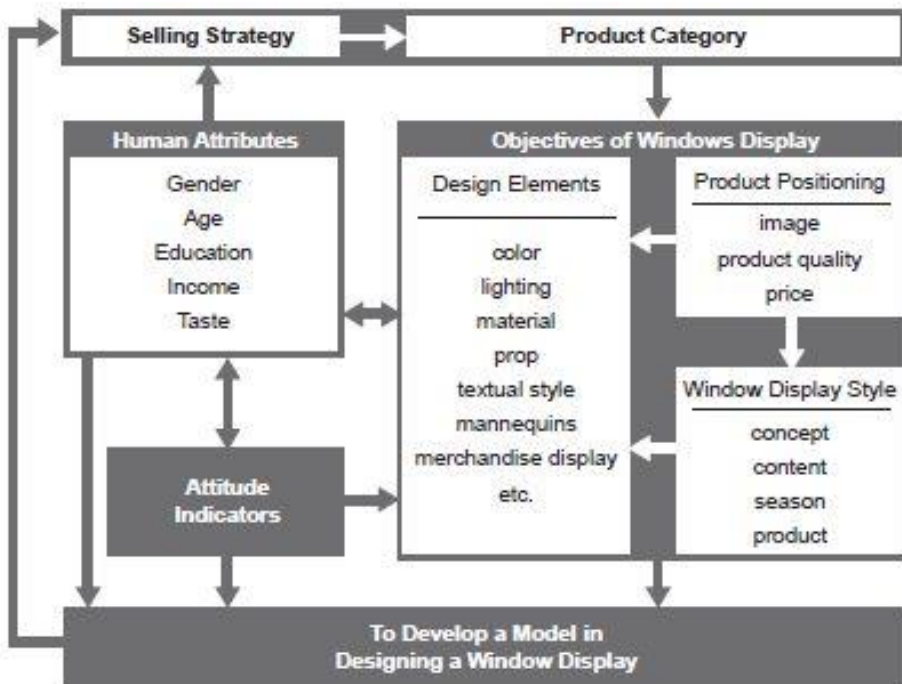


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

2.4 Consumer Motivation

An item arranged in a display window stimulates both rational and emotional motivation. Schiffman and Kanuk (2000) posited that the term “rational motivation” is used to define a traditional economic sense as a consumer makes a careful decision to choose what provides him/her with the greatest utility, while “emotional motivation” is indicative of a selection of goals in accordance with personal or subject criteria such as pride, fear, affection, or status. On the other hand, it creates arousal motives persisting in an environment. As long as people reside in a complex and highly varied environment, they are apt to be exposed to a number of arousal needs. Providing they experience a deprived environment, their needs activated tend to be fewer. Thereby, consumer motivation is to be managed in congruence with product positioning. Gaining insights into consumer perception and behavior necessitate tri components of affective, cognitive, and co native factors. The elucidation on the tri components was made by Noel (2009) that the affective factor involved consumer’s emotion towards an attitude object and cognitive factor interpreted cognitions, thoughts, and beliefs consumers have on an attitude object while co native factor detailing the likelihood that a consumer performed a certain action, formed and influenced their perceptions. These mechanisms were also effectively used in the study conducted by Chebat and Morrin (2007) and Babin et al. (2003) to investigate consumers’ attitudes. With the abovementioned theories, this research which endeavors into the aspects of window display and its factors affecting consumer perception could draw clearer overall pictures of consumers’ minds.

3. Methodology

Having window displays at the Central World Shopping Mall in Bangkok as a case study, this research aims to determine to what extent different design settings attract display viewers and deliver accurate merchandizing messages to a product’s target group. A set of design guidelines for window displays was thus developed in accordance with the findings from the literature review. Navigable 3D photographic stimuli with various design elements were created as an instrument to test a group of 200 graduate students with different educational and social backgrounds at King Mongkut’s Institute of Technology Ladkrabang. Three controlled dimensions of subjects’ attributes are 1) gender and age, 2) art ability, and 3) income and taste aspects. The sample size of 200 students who were taking graduate programs at the King Mongkut’s Institute of Technology Ladkrabang and the sampling method was simple random sampling. Having reviewed the related literature, questionnaires and visual stimuli images were developed accordingly. This research utilized visual stimuli as shown in figure 2, 3.



Figure 2: Product / presenter as background



Figure 3: graphic / presenter as background

Composite measures were used to measure affective and cognitive components leading to co native components. Derived from the theories of S-O-R and visual perception, there were altogether 11 indicating factors comprising complexity, interest, arousal, attractiveness, differentiation, taste, pricing level, product value, product worth, purchasing desire, and visiting desire. 3D simulation was used to demonstrate the visual stimuli images of window display and there were altogether 32 images designed by including different design components, which were background color (warm/cool), lighting (accent/diffused), composition (complex/simple), in-store visibility (seen/unseen), material (unnatural/natural-like), props (with/without), graphic (textual style), mannequins (with/without), merchandise (single/varied), and images (product/presenter) and etc. The 32 visual stimuli images were paired and presented simultaneously to the subjects for their comparison based on given indicating factors through the use of semantic differential scale and 5-point Likert Scale. The five scales were interpreted as follows: (5) represents the most perceivable element, (1) the least perceivable element and (0) represents non-perceivable. Upon presentation of these images, the subjects were inquired to express their opinions towards the abovementioned 11 indicating factors as shown in figure 4.

The analysis of collected data was undertaken by Statistical Package for Sciences (SPSS) version 11.5. The data was analyzed by using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean was used to calculate the average opinion scores towards the 11 indicating factors through the conversion of scores. Standard deviation was a measure used to analyze variation or dispersion of the scores around the mean.



Qualification	Left Picture					0	Right Picture					Unable to explain
	5	4	3	2	1		1	2	3	4	5	
Affective Measurement												
Cognitive Measurement												
Conative Measurement												

Figure 4: Rating scale and example images of photographic visual stimuli

4.0 Results and Discussions

From the research objective to determine factors affecting the subjects' perception towards the positioning, value, and quality of each product category based on the S-O-R theory and visual perception having towards affective, cognitive and conative components, it showed that the factors *not affecting* the subjects' perception were found in the three product categories.

Firstly, in the lingerie category, the use of lighting and composition did not create any impact on the subjects' perception towards the positioning, value, and quality of products. Secondly, for jewelry, having a presenter image wearing products appeared in window display did not affect the perception of the subjects. Lastly, for the clothing product category, the findings illustrated that product composition; types of materials used, having mannequin figures, and using textual styles did not have any influence on the perceptions of the subjects towards the products.

Further analysis cast light on the findings that the use of colorful lighting, complex composition, and having presenters had an affective impact in terms of complexity, interest, arousal, and attractiveness; but yet not cognitive impact as people generally were rational rather than emotional when making a purchasing decision. Moreover, the use of natural-like materials created an affective impact.

From the research objective to determine factors affecting the subjects' perception towards the positioning, value, and quality of each product category based on the S-O-R theory and visual perception having towards affective, cognitive and conative components, it showed that the factors affecting the subjects' perception were found in various product categories at different impact levels ranging from the least, neutral, slightly to most.

For accessories and luggage product categories, composition, in-store visibility, and background color had the least affective and cognitive impact towards the subjects' perception on the positioning, value and quality of products. Another four product categories were affected by

different design components at a neutral level, which were, firstly, the use of lighting affecting the subjects' perception on the luggage category; secondly, similar or varied product display affecting the subjects' perception on the clothing products while having a presenter image wearing products affecting the subjects' perception on accessories and eyewear. In addition, it was found that the use of accent-lighting, single merchandizing display, and having presenters created affective and cognitive impacts at a neutral level. The products affected by design components at slightly to most levels were watches and clothing products. Having presenter image wearing products had quite a strong impact towards the subjects' perception on watch category while for clothing products, window size and having props were crucial design components influencing the perception of the subjects. From the analysis, it reflected that having a presenter, using large window size, and decorating with props created affective, cognitive, and conative impacts to quite an extent on the perception of the subjects.

5.0 Conclusion

The significant findings from this study were conclusive as following: fashionable products should brighten themselves by exploiting props in dressing their window display showing single merchandizing through a large window size to showcase their products; accessories should utilize warm background colors and composition not showing through their in-store; eyewear, jewelry, and watch products could demonstrate themselves effectively through having presenters; and luggage should use accent-lighting to showcase itself effectively.

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