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Factors determining window display conveying merchandise's Positioning and style: a case of shopping mall clothing display targeting undergraduate students

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Abstract

Window displays, as a part of selling strategies, not only convey the type and positioning of mechanize, but also the promotional strategies and corporate images. The study uses window displays for clothing to examine patterns, selling strategies, merchandize types, and target groups. It investigates the effects of design elements on the customers' perceptual responding to configurations. The theoretical framework bases on marketing concepts, visual perception principles, Gestalt psychology, and design's principle and elements. Sixty undergraduates, ages 18-23, participated as research subjects. Results derive a design guideline for window displays towards the designated type of intended perception for the particular group.
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Keywords: Window displays, clothing display, corporate strategies, corporate images, design guildline.

1. Introduction

Window displays serve not only the purpose of conveying the type and positioning of merchandize to customers, but it can also be used to promote the strategies and images of the corporation itself. The store environment can affect the different types and levels of consumers' behaviors (Kotler, 1973). In this light, a window display is also considered as a connection between the inside store environment and customers' perspectives from the outside and at the same time promoting the store's selling strategies. Kim (2003) observed the customer behaviors of students, and found that their behaviors on buying clothes are significantly related to the promotional campaign and window displays of clothing stores.

This study is, therefore, aims to study patterns, selling strategies, merchandize types and target groups of clothing market by using window displays for clothing in shopping mall as case studies. It endeavors to investigate the effects of design elements to be used in accordance with the selling strategies and the differentiations of perceptual responding to the configuration of them. Finally, the research generalizes from the case study to derive a design

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guideline for window display design towards the designated type of intended perception for the particular target group.

2. Theorectical Background and Research Framework

Based on an extensive literature review, this study bases its theoretical framework on the following lines of thoughts: merchandize marketing and target groups, principles of visual perception—i.e., figure and ground, Gestalt psychology, and principle and elements of design. The following review aims to establish theoretical basis, on which the conceptual framework of relevant variables and their relationships are developed (Figure 1).
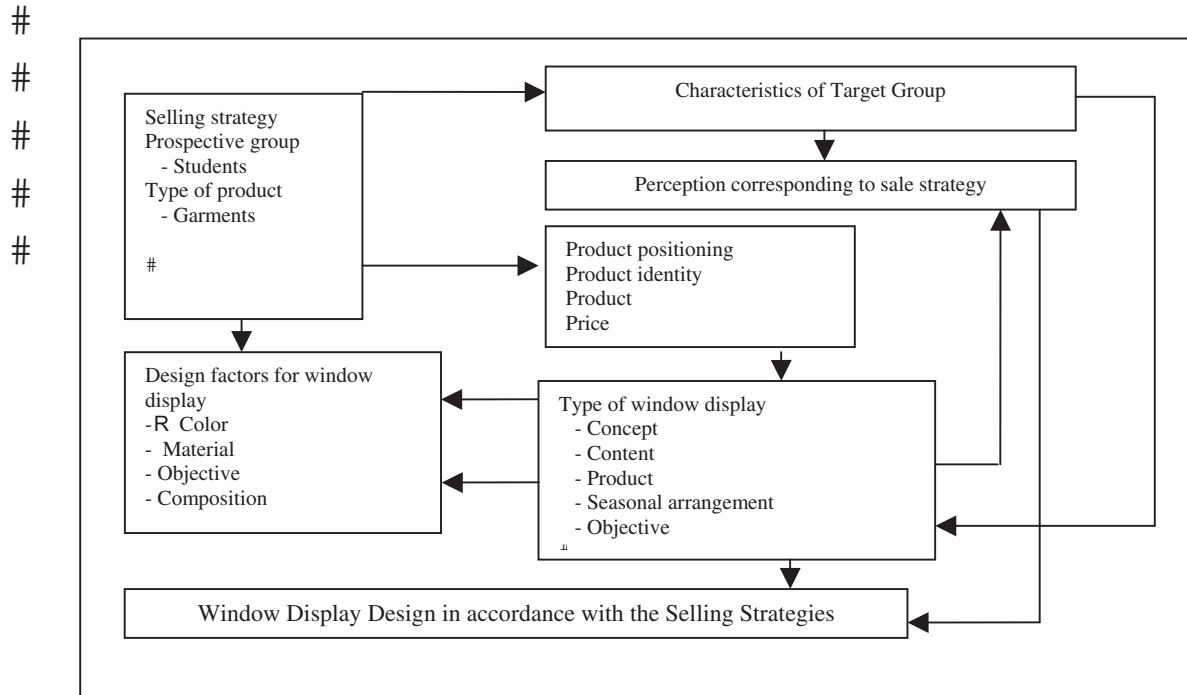

Figure 1 Research Framework

Merchandize marketing concept: The main objectives of selling strategies for fashion and clothing merchandize are two folds: 1) promotional displaying objective and 2) institutional displaying objective. The selling strategies to meet the first objective, such as sale/discount campaigns, focus on creating the enticing media to get customer attention. For the second objective, the selling strategies are aimed to maintain and promote corporate images and credibility as well as its products. With well-designed displays, organizational images can be promoted by the simply word-of-mouth advertising, which is the unpaid spread of a positive marketing message from person to person. A good image could build success corporate and easily gain loyalty from their customers. With well-designed and high quality products, customers could feel very proud on what products they are purchasing and using. In addition, the product displays also provide an opportunity for their customers to have up-closed glimpses of the products and hand-on experience which could create an impression at the individual level. With all these benefits, the corporate owners have taken product displays into account and try to create modern and interesting display to induce their customers.

Window display composition: The composition of window display comprises a number of relevant aspects including the design elements (i.e. an overall design, display types, surface, background, and design concept) and the merchandize information (i.e. display goal and content, and product information). Attracting strategies for window displays can be enhanced by various design elements and principles for example using an appealing clothing

mannequin, arranging appropriate light, illustrating unique features of a product, and using product-focused design. Emphasizing some interesting features of the product could be done by enlarging images, decorating background with an appropriate scheme of light and color, and applying a striking set of lighting directly to the product (WorachatUdompong, 1992).

Visual perception principles: The perception related theory, "Visual Perception", saying that perception is initially generated from the integrated stimuli by viewing the things as a whole, and then what the mind has learnt would be taken into analysis on step by step basis to perceive figure and ground. It is the fact that, human can selectively perceive what stimuli are of interest to them and perceive incomplete detail by integrating the missing pictures into perfect one. However, with limited capacity of human, we can not perceive several pictures at the same time.

Simulation Concept is derived from attempting to simulate a design. The design simulation aims to provoke people's perception towards design work. Since one can perceive image better than text, the simulation can be used as a tool to imitate scenarios or future situations and used to collect responding data from target groups (Grote and Wang, 1954).

3. Research Methodology

The previous literature review aims to establish relevant factors and to derive approach of methods and instrumental development for the research. Subjects of the study are 60 undergraduate students, ages 18-23 years old, which are sampled from universities in Bangkok. Table 1 summarizes all relevant variables to be examined in the study.

Table 1. Designing Factors for Window Displays

Item	Variables	References
1	Color tone	Morgan, 2008
2	Diffused/Spotted lighting	Morgan, 2008
3	With Graphical illustration/Non-graphical illustration	Morgan, 2008
4	Text/ Non-text	Diamond,2007
5	Existence of Prop/ Non-Prop	Morgan, 2008
6	Number of Prop	Diamond,2007
7	Level of Complexity	WorachatUdompong 1992
8	Existence of Mannequin/ Non- Mannequin	Diamond,2007
9	Abstract/ Realistic Mannequins	Diamond,2007
10	Whole/Partial perception	WorachatUdompong 1992
11	Ordered/ Disordered displays	WorachatUdompong 1992

The study develops questionnaire as analyzing tool, basing on the concept of *semantic differential* measurement. The questionnaire is designed to inquire the target group's perception vis-à-vis image stimuli from 60 undergrads drawn from the selected shopping mall customers. The questionnaire comprised 2 major parts--personal attributes and display preferences. The preference part is measured in terms of lighting, color, display arrangement, and other factors showed in Table 1. Eleven pairs of photographs with contradictory design elements are utilized as stimuli to measure using the *relative preference scaling* of an 11-point relative scale. Figure 2-4 show examples of image stimuli used in the questionnaire. The respondents are asked to compare two photographs and express their relative preference on the aspects of complexity, interesting, arousal, attractiveness, merchandize uniqueness, value, purchasability, and shop attractiveness.

Figure 2 Diffused and spotted lights

Figure 3 Warm color and cool color

Figure 4 Existence of Prop/ Non-Prop

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4. Results and Discussion

Data obtained from the questionnaire are analyzed to derive the target group's design preferences and their personal attributes. Figure 5 shows that the target group responds differently to distinctive display design elements and principles. Displays with spotted light focusing on the product and warm color could bring about arousal, the interest in merchandize, and its attractiveness. Design with props and showing the whole display seems to induce all range of perceptions. Displays with a small number of props shows more favorable. The study also finds that design with spotted light and props are the most important factors inducing the aspects of complexity, purchasibility, and shop attractiveness. On the other hand, design factors including the level of design's complexity and the existence of mannequin show no impact on a wide range of customers' perceptions. The realness of mannequin, however, shows slightly impact on all aspects, except for the complexity. The design with disordered display shows slightly effect on many perceptions, besides the merchandize value and uniqueness.

5. Conclusions

With respect to the specific group of potential customers for clothing merchandize, the research utilizes the group of undergrads as a case study to examine the effects of design elements to be used in accordance with the selling strategies and the differentiations of perceptual responding to the configuration of them. The target customers distinctively expressed their perceptions—complexity, interesting, arousal, attractiveness, merchandize uniqueness, value, purchasability, and shop attractiveness—with regard to different elements and principles of design. Findings from the research will be used to derive a design guideline for window display design towards the designated type of intended perception for the particular target group.

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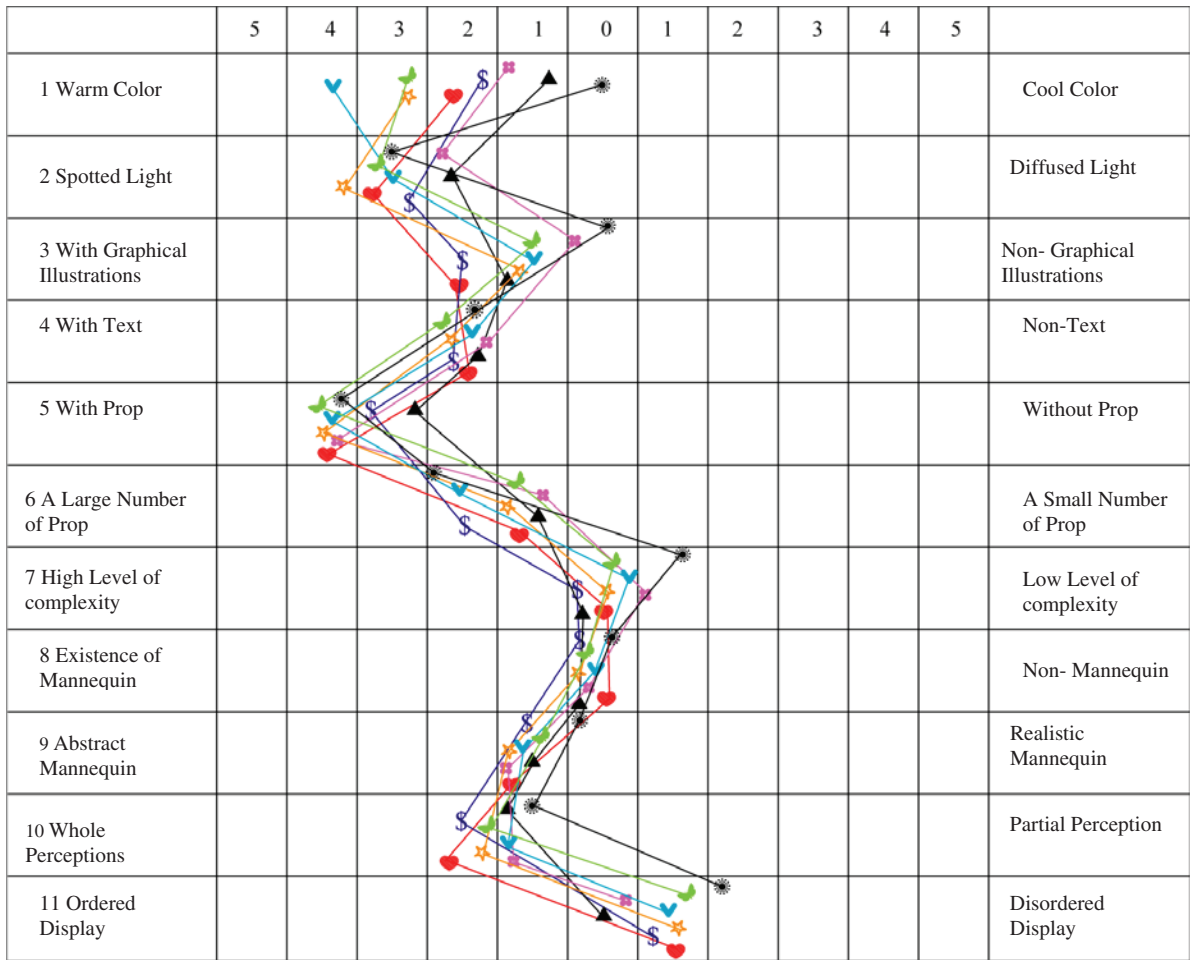
= Complexity =Interesting = Arousal =Attractiveness = Merchandize Uniqueness =Value $=Purchasability = shop attractiveness

Figure 5 Target group's responses to distinctive display design elements and principles.

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