Visual Merchandising Approaches:
A Comparative Study of High-End and Fast-Fashion Window Dressing Design

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Abstract

In this comparative study, the design elements and visual merchandising approaches employed in window displays by high-end and fast-fashion retailers are investigated. The study utilizes a visual content analysis method with standardized evaluation criteria to analyze the window displays of six high-end and six fast-fashion stores located in Paris. By adopting an analytical framework adapted mainly from Morgan (2015) and Diamond and Diamond (2007), the research aims to uncover shared patterns and distinguishing factors in the approaches of these two sectors. The findings reveal clear differences in purpose, layout, visual weight, focal points, color schemes, and prop usage between high-end and fast-fashion retailers. These insights offer valuable practical implications for enhancing the visual appeal of window displays in the highly competitive retail landscape.

Keywords

Visual Merchandising, Window Displays, High-End and Fast Fashion Apparel Retailers, Marketing Strategies, Branding, Design Elements, Comparative study, Visual Content Analysis, Retail Industry
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1 Introduction

The introduction of the thesis provides an overview of the topics to be covered, including background information on the subject's significance and relevance to researchers and managers. The authors also present the research gap and outline the research questions, purpose, and delimitations.

1.1 Background

Marketing is a critical aspect of any business, as it helps to create brand awareness and drive sales (Ataman, Heerde, and Mela, 2010). In today's competitive fashion industry, brands are constantly seeking ways to attract and engage customers while putting emphasis on newness of products (Gazzola, Pavione, Pezzetti and Grechi, 2020). To cope with the continuous changing trends and styles, visual merchandising has become an integral part of many retailers’ marketing strategy to make brand stands out and appeals to consumers (Barrelet, Chapman, Eklöw, Huang, Rölkens and Yankelevich, 2023). This visual technique involves showcasing and exhibiting merchandise in a way that would draw customers' attention towards the products and increase the visual appeal and sales (Aguileta, 2020). In essence, it is “the selling of a store's goods through visual means, incorporating advertising, window display, interior sales floor design and display (Costume and Strege, 1999, p.2)”. Other than attracting customers and helping brand stands out, visually appealing environment and products displays also helps increasing brand recognition and interaction (Aguileta, 2020). As shown by much research, customers’ responses and behaviors are influenced by environmental factors they perceive (Mower, Kim, and Childs, 2012). Therefore, it is suggested that visual merchandising plays a significant role in shaping customers' attitudes towards a brand and their purchasing intention should be aligned with the overall retail brand strategy (Park, Jeon, and Sullivan, 2015). Hence, a comprehensive study of visual merchandising strategy is crucial, considering its potential to help businesses differentiate themselves from competitors, create a lasting brand image, and effectively communicate the brand's values and message to the target audience (Othman, 2021a; Park et al., 2015).

Showcase window or Window display is a specific type of visual merchandising that acts as a “front cover” or a first cue for customers (Morgan, 2015; Sen, Block and Chandran, 2002). It is the window displays that offer a glimpse into the store's offerings such the store's price range, product type and quality at glance (Cornelius, Natter and Faure, 2010). It is therefore often referred to as the "eye in the store" and "silent salesperson” (Parsons and Kennedy, 2015), and has been recognized as a powerful tool in attracting potential customers and strengthening brand identity (Guimarães, 2011). A well-designed window displays, therefore, can promote the products, in-store exploration, and purchasing decisions through highlighting the
product’s features and store offers, resulting in store preference (Park et al., 2015; Sen, Block and Chandran, 2002; Oh and Petrie, 2012).

Window display is not only an efficient and effective way to promote a store's products and brand, but also free of cost, as they are integrated into the store's architecture (Morgan, 2015). As emphasized by Strickland (2020) that ‘There is no medium for advertising so direct, so economical, and so certainly effective as a good shopwindow in a busy thoroughfare (p.156)’. Sen et al. (2002) also suggest that the role of window displays in communicating the store brand and highlighting specific products are unarguably significant in conveying messages to potential customers and creating a lasting impression of the store. As such, window displays are a prevalent tool in the fashion industry to reflect the store's identity, capture shoppers' attention, and ultimately increase foot traffic and sales (Othman, 2021b).

However, decorating or dressing a window involves several factors, and for it to be effective, it must possess specific qualities such as attractiveness, memorability, appropriateness, timeliness, and tidiness (Othman, 2021b). These qualities require a thoughtful blend of elements such as color, texture, shape, and lighting, which must be balanced and synchronized to create an attractive display. Therefore, each element of the display must be properly arranged and ensured that the materials, props, and message align with the needs and preferences of the target audience. Furthermore, a window display should serve an educational purpose by showing consumers how to use the products (Sen et al., 2002). Hence, to positively impact the brand perception and influence customer behavior, it is crucial to consider how products and brands are visually presented to customers and how they interpret these messages (Kerfoot, Davies, and Ward, 2003).

Subsequently, visual merchandising strategies can vary greatly depending on the type of retailer. According to Nobbs et al. (2015), there is a correlation between a retailer's market positioning and its visual merchandising strategy. As Morgan (2015) points out, the driving force behind window displays, such as the type of window and the desired outcome, determines how it is decorated. Kerfoot et al. (2003) also support this idea, stating that differences in products and services sold by retailers account for the variety in visual merchandising methods. Hence, given the notable differences in target markets, products, pricing, and business strategies between high-end and fast-fashion retailers, it is likely that their marketing strategies and visual merchandising techniques differ considerably. Although it can be sure that both types of retailers aim to increase sales and brand awareness, their approach may not be the same. Therefore, it is intriguing to delve into the unique approaches they adopted in their window dressing design, which effectively conveyed their brand identity and values to their specific target markets.

High-end retailers, also known as luxury or premium brands, offer high-quality products that are typically priced at a premium level. The characteristics of High-end
or Luxury brand are usually defined by the best high-quality material and craftsmanship, authenticity, premium price, and emotional connection with target customers (Bai, Mcccholl, and Moore, 2021). According to Quelch (2006) ‘A luxury product is a work of art designed for an exclusive market (p.100)’. A “luxury” word subsequently often appears with “lifestyle” referring to “a way of living”, “a set of attitudes and values” or a way of being, dressing and living that set a person apart from the rest (Dauriz and Tochtermann, 2013). Hence, high-end fashion retailers emphasize a strong brand identity with aesthetically oriented strategy, leveraging upon an identity that consumer will enjoy upon consumption (Joy, Wang, Chan, Sherry, and Cui, 2014). Thus, the product of luxury brands also incorporates the brand signature, culture, and heritage within (Gorp, Hoffmann and Coste-Maniere, 2012). Examples of high-end retailers include Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Prada, and Chanel.

Fast-fashion, on the other hand, is a business model that is built upon the perception of offering fashionable clothes at affordable prices (Caro and Martínez-de-Albéniz, 2015). This market is driven by consumer demand for celebrity inspire trends, fashion shows, and the need for newness by media (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2010). The concept of fast-fashion is therefore centered around ‘quick fashion’, responding quickly to changing style, trends and demands with business strategy to reduce buying cycle process and lead time for new products to arrive in stores (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006). Since fast-fashion emphasizes newness and uniqueness, their products also have short product-life cycle and less complex design although have a greater variety (Aftab, Yuanjian, Kabir, & Barua, 2018). Examples of fast-fashion retailers include Zara, H&M, GAP, Mango, and Uniqlo.

Based on the characteristics and strategies of high-end and fast-fashion retailers discussed above, it is evident that these two categories target consumers with different values and priorities. Studying their visual merchandising approaches can therefore provide valuable insights into how they communicate their brand identity and attract customers. Window displays, as an important aspect and first cue of visual merchandising, are then interesting to be examined and gain insights of how these retailers capture attention and engage customers through their use of different design elements. This analysis offers insights into how retailers use window displays to attract customers, differentiate themselves, and succeed in the competitive fashion industry. Comparing these fashion retailers enhances our understanding of industry dynamics and practical strategies. It is also important to note that the intention of using window displays may differ not only between consumer segments but also among individual retailers. Thus, studying their window displays can help us gain a better understanding of how different retailers utilize this marketing tool to attract customers, promote their brand, showcase products, and boost sales.

Through this section, the notion of high-end and fast-fashion retailers and their differences have been introduced, including the importance of visual merchandising and importance of investigating window dressing as competitive advantages. Given
the importance of window displays in the visual merchandising strategies of high-end and fast-fashion retailers, the purpose of this study is to analyze and understand how the design elements are used in window displays of high-end and fast-fashion retailers differ and how they resonate with target markets and brand values. Specifically visual content analysis was used, to analyze the image of window displays of 6 high-end stores and 6 fast-fashion stores. By doing so, contributions can be made to the theoretical and practical knowledge of visual merchandising in the fashion industry and provide insights into the marketing strategies and brand positioning of high-end and fast-fashion brands.

1.2 Problem Discussion

1.2.1 Theoretical Problematization

In recent years, there has been a significant amount of research on the use of window displays as a marketing tool and their impact on consumer behavior. These studies have explored how window displays can increase store traffic and influence purchase decisions (Surjit, 2021; Cardoso Scussel et al., 2020; Lecointre-Erickson, Daucé, and Legohérel, 2018; Lange, Rosengren and Blom, 2016; Sen et al., 2002). These findings highlight the potential of window displays as a powerful tool for retailers to attract and engage consumers.

Despite the significant impact of window displays on attracting consumers and driving sales in the fashion retail industry, there is a scarcity of literature on the topic. This is described by Lick (2022) that historically research in the field had predominantly focused on the impact of interior design cues such as sound, color, scent, and design features on consumer behavior. It was not until the late twentieth century that there was a shift in focus as scholars started to recognize the essential role of window displays as a visual communication tool in retail. This shift was largely credited to Lea-Greenwood's (1998) influential article, which argued that window displays should be considered a vital component of the retail mix and should receive equal attention and resources as other elements such as advertising and store layout. A study by Edwards and Shackley's (1992) on the effectiveness of retail window displays has similar influence after found that new products placed in window displays had a positive impact on sales and the retailer's image. This study also suggests that larger window displays are associated with higher consumer approach behavior. Since then, there has been an increasing interest in the role of window design in fashion storefronts, with scholars exploring its effects on consumer perception, attention, emotions, and purchase behavior (Sen et al., 2002; Fliess, Hogreve, and Nonnenmacher, 2004; Oh and Petrie, 2012; Mower et al., 2012).

However, the study of window displays requires a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on fields such as visual merchandising, design, psychology, and consumer behavior which can be a limiting factor that contributes to the still scarcity of research in this area. Sen et al.'s (2002) research, which examined the impact of store and product
information communicated through window displays on consumer shopping decisions, has been a major reference point for subsequent studies on window displays. For example, Oh and Petrie (2012) that study the shoppers’ perceptions of window displays with situational variables and found that in low cognitive load conditions the odds of entering the store with the merchandise-focused and artistic window displays are equal. This means that in situations where the amount of mental effort or processing required is relatively low, the type of window displays has no different influence. However, in high cognitive load conditions, artistic shop windows are likely to negatively influence shop entry decisions. These studies suggest that retailers have two main concerns: what items to display and how to display them. Inspired by this, Lange et al. (2015) compare more creative versus less creative store windows designs in generating store visits and found that window displays that are more creative are more successful in attracting store visitors and this effect is mediated by store window attitude, product beliefs, and perceptions of retailer effort. To strengthen this findings, Roozen (2019) research the influence of external design elements on store entry intention and found that complex (creative) window designs create a higher store entry propensity than ‘simple’ (less creative) designs.

Through these continuous and subsequent studies on window displays it can be seen that store windows play a crucial role in attracting customers and driving sales in fashion retail. It is also valid that a more creative and artistic window display is more effective in attracting customers. In fact, a recent study by Othman (2021b), also shows that displays that are highly relevant tend to capture shoppers’ attention more, as individuals are more likely to notice stimuli that relate to their current needs. As previously described by Sen et al. (2002), shoppers who actively seek inferred information are more likely to enter a store, and those who collect product category-related information are more inclined to make purchases influenced by store windows. Therefore, it is crucial for retailers to create window displays that cater to their target consumers' needs while being creative, with characteristics such as visual appeal, relevance, and interest value (Sullivan and Adcock, 2002). Hence, window display design should aim to create displays that are not only eye-catching but also memorable and emotionally engaging to leave a lasting impression on potential customers.

As these studies emphasize the importance of relevance and goals (merchandise-focused or artistic) in window displays, they contribute to the important and interesting aspect of comparing high-end and fast-fashion window display design in several ways. First, the studies suggest that window displays can influence consumer behavior, such as store entry and product purchase decisions, and that a more creative and relevant window display can be more effective in attracting customers. This insight is particularly relevant for the fashion industry, where competition for customers' attention and purchasing is high. Second, the studies highlight the importance of catering to target consumers' needs and interests, which can differ between high-end and fast-fashion shoppers. Third, the offering and target group of high-end and fast
fashion are differed even though they are in the same industry. Lastly, as has been addressed earlier in background that high-end retailers often emphasize a strong brand identity, while fast-fashion messages are often built around affordability and fashionable clothes, which could be interesting to investigate whether this emphasize is also portray in their window decoration. Therefore, with these different target audiences, products offering and approaches, it is important and intriguing to study and compare how high-end and fast fashion retailers utilize and design their window display.

Given the increasing of online shopping, the importance of window displays as the first point of contact with customers and in attracting customers are higher than before. To remain competitive in the marketplace, retailers must continuously evaluate and enhance their display strategies, especially in the fashion industry where the effective use of window displays is crucial for retailers to establish and maintain their competitiveness. Therefore, it is important to understand the different applications of window displays and how they can be better used to attract and retain and convey messages to customers. As the literature has suggested that window displays allow retailers to portray a specific image to potential consumers by displaying merchandise with their design aesthetic, taste, or brand personality elements, and to create and maintain an overall store image for the target consumer group (Kalantari, Xu, Govani, and Mostafavi, 2022). While high-end and fast-fashion retailers both use window displays as a means of communicating their brand identity and values, it is unclear how their different business strategies, operations, target markets and products influence their visual merchandising strategies, particularly in the area of window dressing. Hence, there is a limitation of existing research to understand the traits of visual merchandising strategies utilized by high-end and fast-fashion retailers to help smaller retailers compete more effectively in a highly competitive fashion industry.

1.2.2 Managerial Problematization
In recent years, due to consumers' increasing preference for shopping online, the retail industry has faced significant challenges raising concerns for brick-and-mortar stores in attracting customers and maintaining sales to remain competitive (Cardoso Scussel et al., 2020). Visual merchandising is an essential component of retail marketing strategies, as it allows retailers to attract and retain customers through effective communication of their brand identity and values. One of the most critical tools in visual merchandising is window displays, which have been shown to be an effective way of gaining consumers' attention and conveying information about the store's offerings. According to Bell, Corsten, and Knox (2011), retailers face the challenge of transforming consumers into shoppers, and window displays have been shown to be an effective way of achieving this goal (Sen et al., 2002). This also has been suggested by Lange et al. (2016) study that store windows can benefit retailers in terms of increasing store traffic by helping to convert potential consumers into shoppers.
Window displays are therefore becoming increasingly important to retailers as the first step in engaging and generating communication with potential consumers and have a strong influence on whether consumers enter a store and make a purchase (Mower et al., 2012). Help to increase brand awareness and consumer loyalty to the brand, providing more attractive and possible options for possible future sales opportunities (Sen et al., 2002).

Window displays communicate store information to customers with the ultimate goal of promoting sales (Edwards and Shackley, 1992). It therefore is an important and crucial tool for retailers in a competitive retail industry to effectively communicate the value of their goods to potential customers and to set them apart from their rivals (Opris and Bratucu, 2013). In addition, store window displays should be strategically planned to encourage store entry behavior and purchase motivation because, as Oh and Petrie (2012) note, the impact of window displays is subject to changes in customer psychology and their motivation to shop. Retailers hence must communicate product category information, like product fit and fashion, as well as store-specific information, such as promotions, merchandise, and store image, effectively at glance to influence the consumer behavior and decision of entering, exploring, and shopping at the store. Because the decision to enter a store may also be indirectly influenced by the customer's perception of the store (Sen et al., 2002).

The role of window displays in retail should not be underestimated, and the growing number of successful window display cases has built confidence in retailers to invest in this area. For example, ZARA, Wang (2018) points out that one of the keys to ZARA's success is their exceptional window design. Their store windows are a powerful communication tool, designed by a team of professionals to highlight the most outstanding pieces in the ZARA collection. In line with ZARA's fast fashion philosophy, the windows are constantly updated, and famous for their monochromatic displays. Masè and Cedrola (2017) mention that Louis Vuitton expresses well the brand's art-based strategy through its window displays, conveying exclusivity and prestige. Although it is impossible to precisely quantify the impact of window displays on retailer revenue, it is clear from consumer research and the amount of money and resources brands invest that window displays are a critical tool in the fashion industry (Kernsom and Sahachaisaeree, 2016; Morgan, 2015).

Given the importance of window displays for retailers to communicate store information, promote sales, differentiate themselves from competitors, and influence consumer behavior and perceptions. It is crucial for retailers to know how to strategically plan for their window displays design and usage to fully realize the potential of this tool in achieving their business goal. Especially since brand icons and visual design can reinforce retailers’ brand identity (Park et al., 2015), it is even more of a value for retailers to know which element would suit and support their intended image and goal.
1.2.3 Research Gap

Based on the problem discussion, a knowledge gap has been identified in the literature regarding how elements in window displays can portray and convey the intended message and image. While some research has examined the effectiveness of visual merchandising in general, there is a lack of understanding about how the strategy behind visual merchandising can influence the retailer's window dressing. Although Nobbs et al. (2015) research suggests some of the traits and differences of window display techniques employ by high street retailers and luxury fashion retailers, it is in color and lightning aspect only. Therefore, further research is needed to fully understand why a particular brand dress window in a certain way. Specifically, how design elements, such as props, product placement and type of windows can be strategically used to convey the intended message and image of the brand, and how this differs between high-end and fast-fashion retailers.

1.3 Research Question

RQ1: What are the key design elements commonly used in window displays by high-end and fast-fashion retailers?

RQ2: What visual merchandising approaches that differ between high-end and fast-fashion retailers in their window displays?

1.4 Purpose

This research aims to investigate the design elements and visual merchandising approaches used in window displays by high-end and fast-fashion retailers. By identifying the key design elements commonly used in window displays and comparing the visual merchandising approaches between high-end and fast-fashion retailers, this study seeks to uncover both the shared patterns and the distinguishing factors in their approaches. The research goal is to provide valuable insights into the prevailing practices and potential trends in window dressing, offering practical implications that can enhance the overall visual appeal of window displays in the competitive retail landscape.

1.5 Delimitation

This thesis is primarily focused on analyzing window displays within the fashion industry and does not encompass other types of visual merchandising, such as in-store layouts, in-store displays, or online displays. The intention is to specifically examine the window display design in a specific place at a specific time to get a snapshot of the current practice within the industry. Therefore, this study is limited to a specific geographic city and cannot represent the global practice other than suggesting the likelihood of their practice. In addition, the findings and conclusions derived from this
research cannot be generalized beyond cultural differences specific to that particular city, since the factors such as regional preferences, cultural norms, and local aesthetics may influence the design and presentation of window displays in different locations.

Additionally, it is worth noting that this thesis does not differentiate between luxury brands with a heritage and those without. Hence, regardless of their historical background, if a brand positions and characterizes itself as a luxury brand, it will be considered as such within the scope of this study. The focus is primarily on how these brands market themselves, whether as fast-fashion or high-end brands.

Moreover, it is important to mention that this study does not extensively cover certain visual merchandising elements, such as graphics, photography, signage, electronic screens, or high-tech technologies. This is because these elements are vast and complex subjects in their own right and deserve separate and in-depth analyses. Thus, this study will primarily concentrate on other visual merchandising aspects, such as lighting, color, and overall design, within the context of window displays.

2 Literature Review

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature related to visual merchandising and window dressing. The first section focuses on the objectives, elements, and effective techniques of visual merchandising, providing a foundation for the discussion on window dressing. The second section discusses the concept of window dressing, including its purpose, elements, and the role of consumer behavior and brand messaging. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the literature review and a conceptual framework that visually represents the relationships between the key concepts explored in this thesis.

2.1 Visual merchandising

Practitioners and scholars have long recognized the significant role of visual stimulation and communication in the field of retailing (Goworek and McGoldrick, 2015). Over time, this interest in visuals has evolved into a cohesive concept known as "visual merchandising" within the retail industry (Kerfoot et al., 2003; Morgan, 2015). Gudonavičienė and Alijošienė (2015) provided a concise definition of visual merchandising, describing it as a marketing tool that enables companies to effectively communicate their brand and products to customers. Expanding on this, Ebster (2015) stated that visual merchandising is the combination of art and science in presenting products in the most visually appealing way to create an attractive impression and communicate the store's fashion, value, and quality attributes to potential customers, to ultimately influencing them to purchase the product.

This is further noted by Matthysz (2003) that visual merchandising is about all what customers see when they approach and enter a store. It covers a wide areas of visual
resources and factors, including layout, graphic signage, window displays, lighting, props, architecture, etc. In addition to visual stimuli, retail activities that appeal to the customer's senses beyond sight, such as music or perfume, also play a significant role in influencing customer perceptions and experiences (Matthysz, 2003), including customer service (Astrid and Mustika, 2013; Oh, Fiorito, Cho, and Hofacker, 2008). Therefore, in response to growing competition, retailers are actively seeking to develop visually captivating and impactful displays that leave a lasting impression on customers (Wanniachchi and Kumara, 2016). Since, the application of visual merchandising is to enhance the image of the store, to attract customers and encourage impulse or unplanned purchases that will result in increasing sales (Iberahim, Zulkurnain, Shah, and Rosli, 2019).

However, visual merchandising is not limited to a specific retail industry and could find its application across various sectors, including fashion, home decoration, pharmaceuticals, and groceries, among others. Nonetheless, it is particularly prominent in the fashion industry, where the visual presentation of products plays a crucial role in the retail communication of fashion brands (Barrelet et al., 2023). Because, retailers in the fashion industry face the challenge of adapting to the ever-changing landscape characterized by the introduction of new styles, trends, and products on a regular basis (Gazzola et al., 2020). Within the dynamic and competitive fashion retail environment, a crucial factor for success lies in the ability to consistently introduce new products and fashion trends to the market at the right time (Lakanen, 2016). In such a saturated marketplace, retailers then face the challenge of distinguishing themselves from their competitors. To address this, many retailers are adopting visual merchandising techniques that aim to blend the store's appearance and identity with its core brand values, thereby transforming the store into a distinct brand entity (Kent, 2007). Nobbs et al. (2015) also point out that one of the most important decisions fashion brands need to make is the decision about how to communicate the brand visually in the marketplace and how to maintain visual coherence in all communications with customers. Hence, to create a total compelling brand image, it is essential for visual communication within a retail space to align consistently with all elements, inside and outside including layout, quality, and product selection (Lea-Greenwood, 2013).

2.1.1 The function of visual merchandising

In the retail industry, visual merchandising holds a significant role, as it encompasses a holistic approach that enhances merchandise, promotes brands, and effectively drives foot traffic and boosts purchases. (Mondol, Salman, Rahid, and Karim, 2021). In the fashion industry visual merchandising is often used to design welcoming window displays, attractive store layouts, compelling product placement, and interactive displays that evoke feelings, create aspirational lifestyles, and reflect the brand personality (Morgan, 2015). According to Nobbs et al. (2015) today's customers are
more sophisticated and less loyal compared to the past, as such, visual merchandising can and should be used as a tool to drive long-term profitability. This has been emphasized by Varley (2013) of the function of visual merchandising in product presentation in retail stores in presenting products effectively to maximize sales opportunities. This can be thought of as the culmination of combining commercial and design approaches within the retail environment. Therefore, the main objective of visual merchandising is to accentuate the best features of a product, thereby enhancing the store’s overall appeal and the customer's perception of it (Varley, 2013).

Visual merchandising has the power to pique consumers' curiosity and ignite their desire by creating captivating visual and auditory experiences both inside and outside the store (Mondol et al., 2021). This stimulation of interest not only attracts potential customers to visit the store but also encourages them to make in-store product purchases. According to Nobbs et al. (2015), visual stimuli strategically designed within retail stores can elicit emotions and serve as triggers for purchase behavior. Consequently, an effective visual marketing approach can provide brands with a competitive edge in the industry (Khaled, Ahmed, Tabash, Al-Homaidi, and Hossain, 2019).

In addition to attracting consumers to enter and purchase products, one of the most important functions of visual merchandising is to define the brand image and communicate its proposition to a comparable potential audience in all markets (Mondol et al., 2021). Because, the creation of product image in the consumer's mind, subsequently influencing their future support and overall perception of the product and the brand as a whole (Cant and Hefer, 2014). Therefore, visual merchandising have a role in differentiating the offer (Lea-Greenwood, 2013) and influence consumer behavior, including spending habits and perceptions of stores and merchandise (Law, Wong, and Yip, 2012). Hence, for retailer to succeed, it is vital to establish a distinctive and consistent image in the minds of customers that permeates all products and services (Rathee and Prakash, 2017). Nonetheless, the impact of visual merchandising outcomes may vary due to cultural differences in interpreting the symbolic messages conveyed (Kim, Park, and Jeong, 2004).

2.1.2 Elements of visual merchandising

Visual merchandising involves everything that is presented to consumers as they approach and enter a store, including a variety of visual resources and elements such as layout, graphic signage, window displays, lighting, and even customer service (Kim, 2013). Therefore, visual merchandising presents here is in two parts, the exterior and interior elements of the store.

According to Lea-Greenwood (2013), up to 70% of purchase decisions are made while consumers are in the store, therefore, the retail environment is an important factor that directly and significantly influences customer behavior. Visual merchandising
encompasses various factors inside the store include many, such as material use, walls, lighting, colors, music, smells, signage layout, etc. (Iberahim et al., 2019), and because of these many factors, scholars have often combined internal factors to study the overall internal atmosphere created within the store.

The store's appearance serves as a representation of the brand and is a crucial element of visual merchandising that can capture visitors' attention and entice them to enter the store (Mower et al., 2012). The facade, architectural style, external signs, and window displays are all examples of external features (Nistorescu and Barbu, 2008). The focus of this study primarily centers around window displays due to their widespread recognition as an effective marketing strategy employed by major fashion brands for brand identification purposes (Guimarães, 2011). Through the use of appealing windows, it now conveys the brand image and persuades customers to visit the business (Lick, 2021).

The following table clearly summarizes the elements of visual merchandising:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of Visual Merchandising in Fashion Retailing Store</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exterior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Store window: window display</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Entrance: the location of the entrance; the size of the entrance; manual/automatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Store location: store environment (location independently/shopping mall)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Store sign: the design of the logo; the way the logo is presented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Interior decoration; props, mannequins, flowers etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Point of sale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Store layout: division of different department; division of brand section; location of service area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Fixture: apparel fixture, display props</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Lighting system: type of light, color of light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Interior sign: sign of different department and service area; the position where the sign is placed etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sales personnel: friendliness, appearance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Elements of Visual Merchandising in Fashion Retailing Store (Zhu, 2009)

2.1.3 Effective Techniques

When designing the visual merchandising of a store, visual merchandisers often employ a number of techniques, in which Bastow-Shoop, Zetocha, and Passewitz (1991), Diamond (2006) and Ye (2016) define into five principles of visual merchandising:
• **Balance:** The distribution of weight is discussed in this principle. The placement may use asymmetrical balance to highlight design skills or adhere to symmetrical balance for identical products.

• **Emphasis:** Making a specific location the center of focus helps draw customers in and encourages them to shop at the establishment.

• **Proportion:** calls for the proper sizing and placement of various visual merchandising elements.

• **Rhythm:** It creates the movement of customers' eyes as they move from one section to the next and ensures that they will watch the full presentation.

• **Harmony:** the overarching principle that unifies all other principles. Harmony makes ensuring that viewers perceive a connection between each component of the display.

Through these techniques, stores are able to make better use of their store space for visual merchandising to attract consumers' attention and purchases.

### 2.1.4 Consumer Behaviour

Understanding consumer needs and desires, perceptions and attitudes, and purchase intentions are crucial for the strategic implementation of various retail activities since the concept of consumer behavior first emerged (Gangwani and Mathur, 2020). According to Nassé (2021), consumer behavior can be classified as an attitude or choice, encompassing attitudes, values, and behaviours from a consumption perspective (Agarwala, Mishra, and Singh, 2018). As Mokhlis (2008) also defines consumer behavior as the different aspects of consumption choices made by consumers, deciding whether to consume a particular product. Therefore, consumer behavior has an impact on retailing.

The purchase decision process of consumer behavior (need identification, information search, alternatives assessment, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior) is significantly influenced by independent factors (Karnreungsiri and Praditsuwan, 2017; Qazzafi, 2019). These independent factors comprise of social, marketing, situational, and psychological factors (Karnreungsiri and Praditsuwan, 2017). Although marketing factors that associate with strategies and campaigns are also related to this case, it is the situational factor that is most prominent, encompassing elements such as time, place, furniture, lighting, signs, and atmosphere. The other two psychological factors are motivation, perception, learning, and attitude with social factors refers to groups like friends and family as a factor (Karnreungsiri and Praditsuwan, 2017). As such, the success of retail stores depends on having a thorough understanding of their customers’ nature in the retail environment. As a number of scholars have found, visual merchandising is one of the common tools and most frequently used by stores to influence consumer behavior (Mondol et al., 2021; Bhatti and Latif, 2014; Ebster, 2015).
2.2 Window dressing

Window dressing is a subset of visual merchandising that refers to the design and presentation of a store's window display (Morgan, 2015). As previously described, a well-executed window display can capture the attention of passers-by, entice them into the store, and ultimately lead to increased sales (Sen et al., 2002). These are the common goals of window dressing, therefore in this section, we will further explore the additional goals of window dressing and the elements that make up a successful window display, and how window displays can be used to communicate brand messaging and entice shoppers into the store.

The primary goal of window dressing is to attract attention and generate interest from potential customers to entice potential customers inside (Strickland, 2020). However, the psychology of window displays extends beyond their basic purpose. This is described by Arnberg and Husz (2018), that window displays follow fundamental principles of advertising psychology. As a result, window displays have become a valuable tool for showcasing promotional sales and discounts, creating brand awareness, and crafting memorable experiences for passersby (Othman, 2021a; Edwards and Shackley, 1992). All these endeavors aim to boost sales and create lasting memories for the brand. Therefore, in today's fiercely competitive marketplace, window displays have evolved into a form of artistic expression, providing an effective means of communicating with customers and creating a distinctive identity for businesses (Opris and Bratucu, 2013). Large department stores, for instance, often feature window displays that resemble art installations or movie scenes rather than just functional product presentations (Othman, 2021b).

There are different types of window displays that retailers utilize, and their effectiveness may depend on the target audience and the context. According to Nobbs et al. (2015), window displays can be characterized in terms of their: background (open, closed, mixed), theme (message, product, promotion), design attributes (balance, harmony, and rhythm), and key elements (color, lighting, mannequins, props, graphics and signage, theme, materials, texture, and scale).

Similarly, to Nobbs et al. (2015), Bhatia and Kholiya's (2016) classification of retail window displays into three primary types is a useful framework for understanding the different types of displays that retailers can use based on openness.

1. **Closed-back window displays**: This type of window display is completely enclosed, and the products are displayed inside the window without any access from the outside. The display is meant to be viewed only from the front, and the products are often arranged in an aesthetically pleasing manner to catch the attention of the passersby. They also protect the merchandise from being touched and disrupted by shoppers, allowing for complete control over the
display and an opportunity to showcase a brand's image and style because they are only seen from one angle (Morgan, 2015).

2. Open-back window displays: These displays do not have a back wall and allow a clear view into the selling area beyond. This type of window display has several advantages, including its ability to stimulate and invite passersby to come inside and explore the store (Kalantari et al., 2022). Although, it can be very effective and requires less space and money to construct than closed-back displays, expensive merchandise would not be secure (Morgan, 2015). In addition, lighting can be a challenge, as spotlights may accidentally be directed at customers approaching the display, and excessive glare and reflection can be problematic. As such, a desired mood can be difficult to achieve due to distracting of the store's lighting in the background.

3. Partially open window displays: These types of displays use a combination of solid and clear or transparent backdrops to create a layered effect. Rather than having a completely closed window display, partially open displays typically involve leaving some space open between the window and the store interior. This type of display is typically used to create a sense of mystery and intrigue, while still showcasing products in a visually appealing way.

However, there are still some other window types such as corner windows, angled windows, arcade windows and showcase windows for small items such as jewels (Morgan, 2015). Additionally, there are two main types of window display design mentioned by Oh and Petrie (2012) namely, merchandise-centered window display design and artistic store window display design. Even though, there are still some other window displays design such as theme displays, assortment displays, lifestyle displays, seasonal displays and promotional displays (Bhatia and Kholiya, 2016). This is not what the authors would like to consider in this study. Therefore, with Morgan (2015) suggests a similar distinction of window displays in product-driven and attention-attraction-driven window displays with Oh and Petrie (2012) the following type of window is what this paper will focus on.

- **Merchandise-centered window display design** focuses on displaying the products in an appealing and eye-catching manner. This type of display design is often used to showcase a new product or collection, or to highlight items that are on sale or clearance. The goal is to entice potential customers to come into the store and make a purchase.

- **Artistic store window display design**, on the other hand, is more about creating an aesthetic and memorable experience for customers. This type of display design often incorporates elements of art, fashion, or design, and may not necessarily showcase specific products. The goal is to create an emotional connection with the customer and leave a lasting impression (Oh and Petrie, 2012).
These two types of windows characteristics are similar with Nobbs et al. (2015) classification which characterized window display by *theme* into message, product, and promotion. Window dressing therefore is designed based on the way the brand wants to communicate as they have the ability to grab the attention of potential customers and communicate a message or image in a visual and engaging way (Sen et al., 2002). By utilizing a variety of techniques such as displaying key products, selecting appropriate lighting & colors and imagery that align with the brand's message, brands can effectively communicate their message (Nobbs et al., 2015). These methods can be used to create a story, promote special events or promotions, and enhance a brand's overall identity with the goal of forming a desirable brand image (Othman, 2021b). Therefore, the window display does more than advertising and should be consistent with the brand's tone, values, and personality, so that customers can easily identify and connect with the brand.

### 2.3 Elements of window displays

Dressing a window well requires some factors including theme, color, lighting, props, and composition of displays. Just like the use of light, color is an element that can highlight a theme or a product (Morgan, 2015). Color as claimed by Pegler and Kong (2018), is a tool of the greatest motivator for shopping, as it sets mood, functionality and highlight the product (Bell and Ternus 2017). According to Morgan (2010) color helps create a certain mood and theme and motivates them to make a purchase. As some colors are associated with a certain festival such as black & orange for Halloween, red & green for Christmas, and red & pink for Valentine’s Day (James, 2015). Therefore, color is the first most important element to be considered when designing the window display as it can create drama and atmosphere while being an inexpensive tool to change the window's look and image (Morgan, 2015).

Color can be a highly subjective and culturally influenced topic, according to Morgan's (2015) description. To create a visually appealing display, it is important to use a well-chosen color scheme, which consists of a set of colors that work well together in a design, including primary, secondary, or tertiary colors. Based on Morgan (2015), using a single-color scheme has been widely used, and is highly effective since the different shades of the same color in the same display can create a strong and impactful design.

The layout is another crucial aspect of window displays. The layout must be visually appealing and balanced, with a clear focal point that draws the viewer's attention (Morgan, 2015). The focal point best place below eye level and a well-designed layout should create a sense of harmony and balance, similar to *design attributes* of Nobbs et al. (2015). Additionally, if the majority of pedestrians approach the window on the left side, then the grouping should be in the left (Morgan, 2015). As Larceneux, Rieunier, and Fady (2007) suggested that the increasing number of products shown in store...
window raises the price image and customer feeling of having a large choice, however, an exceedingly large number of products also has negative effects. Thus, the arrangement of products, props, and mannequins should be carefully planned, this includes the way of grouping whether in pyramid grouping or repetition grouping.

According to Morgan (2015), when designing window displays, it's crucial to begin by considering the theme, scheme, and merchandise, and then proceed to select appropriate props before arranging the layout. Because props in window displays have a functional role in enhancing the overall aesthetic appeal, much like they do on film sets or theatrical stages. Therefore, the use of props is to support the theme and add drama while complementing the overall look of the display. In fashion retail, mannequins are the most popular props used in window displays (Dua and Karolia, 2008). They not only showcase the products but also help customers to visualize how the clothing items would look on them (Abidin and Aziz, 2012). Realistic mannequins that reflect the size and scale of the store's primary target market can effectively communicate product information and entice customers to try on the products (Pillai, Iqbal, Umer, Maqbool, and Sunil, 2011). Apart from mannequins, other props like furniture, lighting, and decorative accessories and merchandise in masses can also be used to enhance the ambiance of the window display.

However, a mix of two-thirds props to one-third merchandise is recommended for props to support the product without overpowering it (Morgan, 2015). Hence, the choice of props, proportion, colors, and texture depends on the store’s product, theme, style, and target audience of the brand. As described by White (2012), that common errors in decorating window display are in too much or little merchandise, too many props or lack underlying theme.

2.4 Summary

Through the research of past scholars, it is clear the importance of visual merchandising to the retail sector as a whole, as well as detailing one of the window displays. As an effective communication tool with customers (Ye 2016; Mower et al. 2012), window displays can largely serve the desired purposes of retailers through the proper use of visual merchandising, including creating a unique identity for the business in a highly competitive market, providing a platform for retailers to showcase their products and build their brand image, thereby increasing their recognition as well as competitiveness (Opris and Bratuucu 2013; Morgan 2010; Othman 2021). In addition, it has a significant impact on consumer behavior and shopping experience as it can evoke emotions and shape customers' perceptions of the store, attracting consumer attention and thus attracting in-store purchases as well as promoting impulse spending (Strickland 2020; Fliess et al., 2004). Although this has been studied to some extent by scholars, how exactly window display design is used as a visual marketing tool is not well understood and studied. The different applications of window display in high-end and fast-fashion retail stores and the differences in consumer perceptions
have not been explored. In addition, the consistency between customer perception and the image that companies want to convey through their windows needs to be further investigated.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review, a conceptual framework for analyzing the design elements and strategies used in window displays by high-end and fast-fashion retailers can be developed. To answer the research question of ‘the key design elements and visual merchandising approaches in window displays between high-end and fast-fashion retailers?’, the authors need to analyze the element employ in the window display and the effect or intention of the display.

The framework first can be built on two dimensions of information that customers can acquire from store windows as distinguished by Sen et al. (2002). The first dimension is a scale that goes from providing information about the products such as fashion and product-self fit, like their latest trends, price, and quality, to providing information about the store, such as merchandise and store image. The second dimension is a scale that goes from obvious information that await customer to observe like sale announcements and brands, styles, to inferred information that is of global impression of the store, deriving from visual cues, such as creativity of window display’s aesthetic and ambient environment to infer to the store's image or its merchandise.

![Figure 1: Dimensions of information acquired from window displays, adopted from (Sen et al., 2002)](image)

This framework can be used to analyze the effectiveness of window displays in conveying information to customers. By examining the types of information presented in the display, one can determine whether it aligns with the retailer's marketing and
branding objectives. Furthermore, by considering the observed versus inferred information, one can evaluate how well the window display conveys the retailer's intended message to their target audience.

In addition, the framework can incorporate the four main characteristics of window displays suggested by Nobbs et al. (2015), which are background, theme, design attributes, and key elements. These characteristics can provide a structured way of analyzing the elements used in window displays, including lighting, props, mannequins, and signage, and how they are combined to convey information and evoke emotions in customers.

- **background** (open, closed, mixed)
- **theme** (message, product, promotion)
- **design attributes** (balance, harmony, and rhythm)
- **key elements** (color, lighting, mannequins, props, graphics and signage, theme, materials, texture, and scale).

To enhance the analysis, it is beneficial to draw from the knowledge provided by Diamond and Diamond (2007) and Morgan (2015), which offer valuable insights into the use of design elements in window displays. In addition, for **key elements**, only props and color will be considered. Additionally, **design attribute** can be further refined with the framework provided by Diamond (2016), where Balance, Harmony and Rhythm stay the same with additional of Emphasize as a focal point or focus and Proportion if different elements in display are appropriately scaled and placed.

Furthermore, the use of props in window displays can be analyzed using the guidelines suggested by Morgan (2015) and the categorization proposed by Dua and Karolia (2008). This analysis considers the proportion of props to merchandise and the type of props used, which can be divided into merchandise and non-merchandise props. By analyzing the use of props in a window display, we can gain insights into how they effectively use props to enhance the appeal of the product, while measuring whether it is overpowering the product. As a general rule provided by Morgan (2015), it is recommended for 2-3 props and 1-3 merchandise ratio.

We also take into consideration where the window display is situated, whether indoor or outdoor, small, or large window, since this factor can contribute to the difference in design and usage of window display.
3 Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology employed in this research. It describes the research approach, strategy, design, data type, method, operationalization, sampling, and data analysis. The chapter also justifies the use of these methodologies and concludes with a discussion on the quality of the research and ethical and sustainable considerations.

3.1. Research Approach

The paradigm chosen influences the trustworthiness of the data, results, and the way the data will be analyzed (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). Because this research seeks to explore differences in the use of window displays in high-end and fast-fashion retailers, it is essential to align with the interpretivism paradigm to capture the subjective meanings and perspectives associated with these design elements. By adopting an interpretive lens, the researchers can delve into the intricate nuances and contextual factors that shape the practice of window dressing, thereby ensuring a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of the phenomenon. This is also because aligning with the interpretivism paradigm enhances the credibility and validity of the collected data by acknowledging the social and subjective nature of the research topic (Saunders et al., 2019). Thereby, allows for a rich and nuanced analysis, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape window displays design in high-end and fast-fashion retailers.

In addition to this, the choice of research approach is also crucial as it guides the researcher in designing the study, collecting, and analyzing data, and drawing conclusion (Saunders et al., 2019). This choice between two main research approaches, deductive and inductive, depends on various factors, including the research question, the research design, and the nature of the data being collected. The deductive approach is a way of conducting research by developing a hypothesis based on existing theory and collecting data to test whether the hypothesis is true or false (Woiceshyn and Daellenbach, 2018). The inductive approach on the other hand starts with the observations and theories are proposed towards the end of the research process as a result of observations (Malhotra, 2017). An inductive approach is often used in qualitative research, where researchers aim to explore and understand complex phenomena in their natural settings without any preconceived hypotheses (Saunders et al., 2019). Therefore, it is a method of reasoning that involves developing generalizations or theories based on specific observations or evidence.

In this research, the objective is to explore the use of different design elements by high-end and fast-fashion retailers, with a focus on findings similarity and differences. Therefore, an inductive approach is appropriate as it allows for an open exploration of the data collected without predetermined hypotheses, which is necessary for understanding the differences in window displays. As Malhotra (2017) notes,
generalizations in an inductive approach come from observations about specific phenomena that support them. Hence, the researchers derive research-specific area from the data, which then form the basis for developing a conceptual framework (Saunders et al., 2019). Although a purely inductive approach may require a significant amount of time in coding the data, the resulting conceptual framework will be grounded in the data and provide a comprehensive understanding of the research question, since the framework will be further refined as the analysis progresses. As such, by taking an inductive approach, the researcher will have the flexibility to analyze and interpret the data in a way that is responsive to the unique design elements and strategies observed in high-end and fast-fashion window displays to provide insight into their approach. Additionally, considering that this research approach is inductive, it further supports the interpretivist perspective as inductive research involves deriving theories and generalizations from specific observations and data (Saunders et al., 2019).

3.2 Research Strategy

Choosing the appropriate strategy to answer the research questions is one of the most important stages in the research process (Sandelowski, 2010). In this study, the researchers chose a qualitative research strategy for data collection and analysis. Because qualitative research is a research approach that focuses on non-numerical or textural data and is commonly employed to investigate the intricacies and variations of social phenomena (Williams, 2007), as opposed to quantitative research, which emphasizes the measurement of quantity or amount (Kothari, 2004). It is also unlike quantitative research, which starts with hypotheses and predetermined outcomes, qualitative research enables the researcher to continuously develop research questions and concepts throughout the data collection and analysis process therefore there is no exact starting point for qualitative research (Williams, 2007).

Since this study’s purpose is to explore the differences between the design elements and strategies used by high-end and fast fashion retailers in terms of window displays and to understand how these design elements and strategies help differentiate brands and convey their intended messages and images to their target audiences. A qualitative research strategy can us understand complex phenomena (Saunders et al., 2019) and better meet this objective as it allows the researcher to continually adapt the research questions and concepts during the data collection and analysis process to the actual design elements in window displays (Bergin, 2018). Moreover, the study of visual merchandising approaches in high-end brands and fast fashion brands is a relatively new research area that lacks previous research results and established theoretical foundations. This is mentioned by Bradshaw, Atkinson, and Doody (2017) that in areas where little is known about the topic being investigated a qualitative descriptive design is considered most appropriate as it recognizes the subjective nature of the questions, and where the time and resources are limited. Therefore, the researchers decided to
conduct a qualitative research study to gain valuable insights into the differences in visual merchandising approaches between high-end brands and fast fashion brands, informing future research and industry practices.

3.3 Research Design

A research design refers to the overall plan or strategy for conducting a research project and addressing the research questions at hand (Saunders et al., 2019). For this qualitative research that aims to explore the patterns of window design in high-end and fast fashion retailers, a descriptive research design will be adopted. This is similar to the approach taken by Othman (2021b) in exploring window display design techniques.

In qualitative research, a descriptive research design involves the collection of data through methods such as observation, interviews, or document analysis (Lambert and Lambert, 2012). These research methods are commonly employed in various fields including education, psychology, and social sciences (Nassaji, 2015). Therefore, both qualitative and descriptive research methods aim to gather naturalistic data (Lambert and Lambert, 2012; Ragab and Arisha, 2018). The descriptive approach is also often chosen when a straightforward description of a phenomenon is desired (Lambert and Lambert, 2012). As the main objective of descriptive research is to provide a detailed description of a phenomenon and its characteristics, focusing more on answering "what" rather than "how" or "why" questions regarding the occurrence (Nassaji, 2015). This aligns with Brink and Wood's (1995) definition of descriptive research, which seeks to address "what" questions to provide direction on where and with whom to conduct research.

Furthermore, descriptive research design is often employed for comparative purposes, as it enables researchers to compare different variables at different time points, facilitating the identification of similarities and differences (Manjunatha, 2019). This corresponds to Krishnarao's (1961) and Kothari (2004) definition of descriptive research as a fact-finding that seeks to uncover facts and interpret them in order to understand the nature and characteristics of the subject under investigation. While also provides a snapshot of the phenomenon, although it may become obsoleted over time (Johnson, 1953). However, the descriptive research approach provides comprehensive and high-quality information that can significantly contribute to the decision-making process (Manjunatha, 2019). Within this approach, a crucial element is the content analysis of unstructured data, where the data is carefully organized into meaningful categories. These categories are then presented in tables or graphs, offering a visual representation of the sample and facilitating a clear description (Brink and Wood, 1982). It is important to note that when conducting descriptive analysis, the conclusions drawn should be limited to the specific sample under study. In this particular study, the collected data were meticulously analyzed and coded into categories, enabling researchers to identify themes and patterns within the dataset.
3.4 Type of data

The type of data refers to the nature and source of the data that is being used in the research (Saunders et al., 2019). There are two distinction type of data: primary and secondary data. Primary data refers to data that is collected directly by the researcher for the specific research project, while secondary data refers to data that has already been collected by other researchers or organizations for a different purpose (Hox and Boeijie, 2005). In this study, the type of data collected is primary data, which is gathered through direct observation of window displays in high-end and fast-fashion retail stores. Specifically, photographs will be taken of the window displays to document the visual elements and analyze their use of visual merchandising techniques. This primary data will be complemented with secondary data sources such as academic journals, industry reports, and online articles to provide additional context and support for the findings.

In addition, there is a distinction between cross-sectional data and longitudinal data. Cross-sectional data refers to data collected at a single point in time, while longitudinal data involves collecting data over an extended period of time and it can be seen as a series of cross-sectional studies (Kumar, 2018). In addition, cross-sectional study is less time-consuming and costly than other research methods. Therefore, with the time span for completion of this thesis, it is only reasonable to adopt a cross-sectional study, which is also best to capture a snapshot of the prevalence or phenomena. Even though, may not be able to track changes over time. Another argument for cross-sectional study for this thesis is that the longitudinal is actually not suitable or worthwhile to conduct in this type of research. Instead, multiple cross-sectional data can provide a better insight into each crucial moment, such as new season or high season like Christmas which overtime can be combined providing valuable insights into trends and patterns that may exist across different time periods. However, this thesis was only conducted once at the specific time, April 2023.

3.5 Research Method

The research method is a technique for collecting and providing research with relevant data (Saunders et al., 2019). According to Nassaji (2015), in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observation are the top three qualitative research methods that are frequently used. As described previously, this study utilizes qualitative and descriptive research methods to examine the visual merchandising techniques employed by high-end and fast-fashion retailers in their window displays. Hence, according to Manjunatha (2019), there are three distinctive methods to conduct descriptive research namely, observational method, survey method and survey research. Among these three, observational method is a commonly used tool to gather data for descriptive research (Nassaji, 2015).
For this research, observational is appropriate as it allows for the collection of data on visual elements of window displays, which are best captured through photography. This method also allows for the collection of naturistic and rich visual data which is the type of data required by this study (Brink and Wood, 1983) to then be analyzed to identify key trends and patterns in their use of visual merchandising elements. However, observational method is not without limitation. According to Mertler (2021), observational method requires more advanced planning and attention to detail more than other descriptive approach. In addition, there is a limitation of information that can be gathered in the form of observations, compared to more in-depth approaches and a wider scope of case studies that often involve multiple sources of data including interviews, documents and observations which can provide a rich and detailed understanding of the subject under investigation (Manjunatha, 2019). Nonetheless, the observation is a more appropriate and effective research method for this study, due to the short time span that various research cannot be conducted in time and the limited generalizability of the case study method compared to pure observation.

Furthermore, it is important to note that there is a possibility of observer bias and that observations may only provide a snapshot of behavior or phenomena, which may not fully capture the context or underlying motivations for decoration (Manjunatha, 2019). Moreover, the observation method can be constrained by external circumstances, making it challenging to ensure consistent standards in data collection. Despite this, observation as a research method is enough for this thesis that seeks to answer the overall approach and real practice if there are differences between high-end and fast fashion, not the underlying motive and reasoning of each decoration of display by retailers that can be gathered through interview. Therefore, as noted by Brink and Wood (1983), as long as the authors account for potential bias during coding, data analysis, and interpretation, this method can provide valuable advantages.

3.5.1 Non-participant Observation

Observation methods choice can vary depending on the research objectives and there consists of participant observation, non-participant observation, and structured observation (Saunders et al., 2019). Because this research involves direct observation of window displays in high-end and fast-fashion retail stores to document the visual elements and analyze the use of visual merchandising techniques. The chosen observation method can be classified as non-participant observation since the researcher is not actively involved in the setting, but rather observes the behavior and actions while taking pictures of the store’s window displays, allowing for the collection of real-world examples of visual merchandising techniques in window display dressing without intervening or interacting with the retailers. Using non-participant observation also ensures that researcher is detached from the event being observed (Saunders et al., 2019), enabling objective data collection by observing the displays as they naturally appear. By using this method, researchers can capture the actual
practices of retailers without influencing any changes or adaptations to gain better results in the research.

By conducting visual observation, the researcher can also capture the nuances of the window displays that may not be communicated through other forms of data collection. Additionally, observation is a non-intrusive method that allows the researcher to study the natural behavior of the subjects without disrupting their normal routines of seasonal decoration and collection (Siedlecki, 2020). This approach provides researchers with a true representation of the setting and usage of window displays, ensuring the validity and reliability of the collected data within a natural context.

### 3.5.2 Collection of Data

This section clarifies what data was selected for the study and how it was collected. The window displays of fashion stores were chosen as the data for this study. Despite the rapid growth of online marketing such as online shopping today, offline fashion retail stores are still an important channel for marketing communication because they provide goods and services directly to customers (Strickland 2020). Since the purpose of this study is to compare and investigate the visual marketing strategies of window displays in high fashion and fast fashion stores, chain stores of high fashion and fast fashion brands were selected as representative data for the study. First, these chains are operated by larger fashion companies, and their visual merchandising design is mostly directed by the head office, which means that the chains are more systematic and give more attention to window displays than those independent retail stores (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2010).

Since this study explores the visual merchandising strategies of window displays in both high fashion and fast fashion stores, it was necessary to find regions with enough stores of both high fashion and fast fashion brands for data collection in order to avoid different preferences due to different regions and other irrelevant variables that may affect the observations (Bryman and Bell, 2017). During the time period selected for data collection, the authors decided to choose Paris as the destination for data collection, and planned to collect data on the way, since the authors happened to have to visit Paris for reasons that perfectly fit the criteria of being a fashion brand destination. The researcher tried to avoid window differences between street-level stores and indoor stores, however, since most high-end brands in Paris are only able to find windows on the street level, the interiors are open and have no window displays.

Fast fashion brands, on the contrary, are mostly located inside shopping malls with windows, while the only street-level stores happen to be undergoing renovation and are difficult to photograph. Therefore, on April 16, 2023, the researcher visited and observed selected chains of high-end fashion retail stores on the Champs-Élysées, where high-end fashion brands are located, and also visited the shopping center, Westfield Forum des Halles, near Châtelet Les Halles, which is a transportation hub,
where fast fashion brands congregate. The photographs of their window displays are taken with smartphones, including panoramic views and close-ups of each window. In addition, to avoid the problem of glass reflection due to lighting, the researchers tried to capture photo on a cloudy day with various angles of each window making sure that photo of each window will be less reflective and as clear as possible to be able to use for data analysis. Furthermore, to protect personal privacy, the researcher avoided the presence of store employees, consumers, and passersby as much as possible.

3.6 Operationalization

Operationalization is the process of defining how a concept will be measured, which includes identifying the variable, the measure, and the interpretation method (Decarlo, 2018). It involves outlining the research procedures that will be used to collect data about the concept being studied. After the literature review and conceptual framework establishment, as previously mentioned the photograph of window displays would be taken first and then elements and intention of each window display will be interpreted and describe based on the conceptual framework through content analysis of the information presented in the display. Hence, the conceptual framework developed in the literature review has been used to create a coding scheme for the analysis.

The coding scheme for this thesis comprises of four sections (see Appendix A). The first section covers the main dimensions of the analysis, including information and observation dimensions, background, and theme. The second section focuses on design attributes and layout, which are crucial components in creating an effective visual display. As mannequins and lighting are also props, the third section will delve into key elements in props usage. This includes their types, proportion, placement, color, texture, and lighting, which can play a significant role in shaping the visual message. Finally, the fourth section is dedicated to color, which is a critical element in visual communication and can influence the mood, tone, and message of a display.

Analyzing data through these concepts in visual content analysis is to help distinguish and find patterns to further look for common practice and ideal practice of each fashion sector. The reason for this approach in the data collection process was to provide the opportunity to have more in-depth interpretation and analysis that a quantitative or survey could not be done. As of this, the authors are aware of the potential biases that may arise from a qualitative approach, such as subjectivity and the possibility of personal biases influencing the interpretation of the data. To address these concerns, an objective coding scheme and a systematic and rigorous approach has been used in the analysis process, including multiple coders and inter-coder reliability checks to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. Multiple coders refer to the use of more than one researcher to independently analyze the same data (Olson, McAllister, Grinnel, Gehrke Walters and Appunn. 2016). This is done to increase the validity and reliability of the findings, as having multiple perspectives can help to reduce the impact
of individual biases and errors. Inter-coder reliability checks involve comparing the results obtained by different coders to assess the level of agreement or consistency between them to ensure that the findings are not heavily influenced by individual biases or interpretations (Olson et al., 2016). Finally, there are also specific criteria and characteristics for each coded element (see Appendix A) that the window should have to be marked as having that particular trait or element. This is to ensure that the coding process remains consistent and objective to reduce the likelihood of personal biases influencing the interpretation of the data and analysis later on. For example, there should be a presence of the brand name in the window vicinity for a certain retailer to be marked having the Brand in Theme element.

3.7 Sampling

The sampling strategy adopted for this study was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research and is a non-probability sampling method in which researchers focus on specific characteristics of participants when selecting them and rely on their sound judgment to obtain a representative sample to make the most efficient use of limited resources (Rai and Thapa, 2015).

Bryman and Bell (2011) state that criteria for the cases being sampled should be established before conducting purposeful sampling in a study. Therefore, the following criteria were developed for the windows selected for the study. First, the windows were all from Paris, France, on April 16, 2023. To avoid differences due to geographical differences and dates, all windows were from the same destination on the same date. Secondly, all the windows are from a chain of stores, run by a larger fashion company, whose visual merchandising design is directed by the head office. This means that chain stores are more systematic in their window displays than those independent retail stores and are worthy of study. The third researcher selected relatively large windows to ensure that they covered visual merchandising elements for the study. Based on this, the researcher chose six fast fashion stores and six high fashion stores to photograph. To avoid violating the privacy of individuals and the rights of brands, the researcher asked the store staff in advance and obtained permission to take photos of the window displays, avoiding employees and consumers as much as possible during the shooting process.

3.8 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of examining, interpreting, and making sense of data collected during a research study or investigation (Saunders et al., 2019). It involves transforming raw data into meaningful information to draw conclusions, make inferences, and derive insights. Data analysis is a critical step in the research process as it helps researchers make sense of the data they have collected and answer research questions or test hypotheses (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). It is a critical step in the research process that requires careful and systematic analysis of data to ensure that
As said earlier, this thesis has use content analysis, particularly visual analysis, as an approach to analyze the data. It is through content analysis that the patterns and trends in the data in form of photograph can be identify that may not be apparent through other methods (Stemler, 2015), as it allows for a more systematic and objective analysis especially when the coding scheme is in used (Stemler, 2001; Prasad, 2008).

### 3.8.1 Visual content analysis

Visual content analysis is a research method that involves the systematic and objective analysis of visual material, such as photographs, videos, or graphics (Stemler, 2015). In conducting a content analysis, the researcher can interpret the images in a qualitative way, focusing on identifying and interpreting patterns and themes within visual content. (Bell, 2001). Therefore, this is a content analysis of a visual image. This method involves breaking down the visual material into smaller units of analysis, coding them according to predetermined categories or themes, and then analyzing the data to identify patterns and relationships (Stemler, 2001).

Visual content analysis is therefore a valuable method for studying and interpreting visual communication, allowing for the systematic analysis of visual data which can reveal information about a range of phenomena, from social trends to individual behaviors (White and Marsh, 2006). The use of visual content analysis in this thesis is therefore reliable and strong enough to answer the research question and purpose in providing valuable insights into the unique design elements and visual merchandising strategies that characterize high-end and fast-fashion retailers. Therefore, a visual content analysis was conducted on the images of window displays collected through observational analysis. The analysis involved systematically categorizing and interpreting the data to identify patterns and themes related to the research question. The analysis was guided by the conceptual framework developed in the literature review and the coding scheme created for the study.

The empirical data will be presented with photos of window displays of each brand, followed by the descriptive of the display element for each photo. The first step in interpreting the data is to code the image according to the conceptual framework and operationalization. Later, the gathering data after interpretation will be presented in table, with percentages indicating the frequency of each code to facilitate comparison of display and theme characteristics. Regarding design elements, the summary will be drawn first from empirical findings to further discuss and analyze the different use of design elements. Finally, key differences between high-end and fast-fashion retailers will be concluded before the findings will be discussed in relation to the research question and existing literature, highlighting the key insights and implications of the study.
3.9 Quality of research

In a research study, there is no exception to the requirement of accuracy and quality based on scientific rigor to build trust in the results of data analysis. According to Bryman and Bell (2011), reliability and validity are two of the most commonly used quality measures in business research. Reliability refers to the consistency of a measurement, meaning how well you manage to measure what you intend to measure. Validity refers to the accuracy of a measurement, which implies how well the measured phenomenon corresponds to the perceived reality (Bergin, 2018). In this study, the authors will also assess the quality of the study based on the criteria of validity and reliability.

3.9.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to replication and consistency, whether the techniques used to collect and analyze data are consistent over time, replication by other researchers, and interpretation of empirical data (Saunders et al., 2019). Bryman and Bell (2011) suggest three salient factors involved in considering whether a measure is reliable, which are Stability, Internal reliability, and Inter-observer consistency. Stability refers to whether a measure is stable over time. The key to internal reliability is to ensure consistency within a research project. Inter-observer consistency considers whether consistent conclusions are generated if a large number of subjective judgments are involved in activities such as recording observations or transforming data into categories, and if more than one "observer" is involved in these activities (Saunders et al., 2019).

To ensure the reliability of this thesis, the methodological approach is described in a clear and coherent manner to ensure a comprehension approach into the process from gathering empirical data, comparing the data using theory, and drawing conclusions. In this study, the authors used a non-participant observation approach to data collection, to ensure that the behavior or phenomenon they were observing was not influenced. To prevent subjective interpretation or bias of the observer on data collection, each observation has followed the same procedures and consistently measure through the same variables. Thus, for reliability, based on the fact that there are two observers participating in this study, both researchers will independently record and describe the observation individually and then compare their findings to assess consistency.

When analyzing the data, the authors chose to conduct a content analysis. The authors will analyze the content based on the pictures and when analyzing the pictures, it is necessary to avoid low quality, blurred pictures. Such pictures will cause the researcher to be unable to accurately identify the details in the pictures and reduce the reliability therefore to increase the reliability of the analysis of the pictures the researcher will
select high quality pictures with appropriate brightness and clear pictures. In content analysis, Weber (1990) states that "in order to make valid inferences from the text, it is important that the classification process be reliable in the sense of consistency, and that different people should code the same text in the similar way (Weber, 1990). One way to ensure the reliability of content analysis is to use a standardized coding scheme, which is a set of rules for identifying and classifying the various elements of the text being analyzed. The coding scheme should be well-defined and thorough, with clear definitions and guidelines for each category. Different coders can apply the same rules consistently when using a standardized coding scheme, which helps ensure coding reliability. Using multiple coders is another way to improve the reliability of the content analysis. Researchers can compare their findings to identify any discrepancies or errors by having multiple coders independently code the same data. This contributes to the consistency and accuracy of findings (Stemler, 2001; Bryman and Bell, 2011).

3.9.2 Validity

Bryman and Bell (2011) state that validity refers to whether the indicator (or set of indicators) designed to measure a concept actually measures the concept which is one of the most important criteria when conducting research. When conducting qualitative research, validity is often divided into internal and external for measurement (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Internal validity refers to whether there is a good match between the researcher's observations and the theoretical ideas they develop. External validity refers to the extent to which research findings can be generalized across social settings (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982).

This study compares the visual merchandising strategies of high-end and fast-fashion fashion store window displays, using a non-participant observation method to collect data and content analysis to analyze the data. To ensure the validity of non-participant observation, first, ensure that the observer is measuring the behavior or phenomenon under study and that the relationship between the observed variables is causal and not caused by other factors. To achieve this, the researcher will control and avoid as many irrelevant variables as possible that may affect what is observed (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Furthermore, the researcher will carefully choose the setting and sample of participants to ensure that they are an accurate representation of the subject under study, ensuring the data collection process has external validity. To ensure the validity of the content analysis, researchers must use a reliable and objective coding scheme that is consistently applied to the data when analyzing data (Saunders et al., 2019). This study will also select window samples that accurately represent high-end and fast-fashion brands using a representative sample of data. Furthermore, any data bias or omissions should be acknowledged and addressed in the analysis (Saunders et al., 2019). Furthermore, as Stemler (2001) stated, this study will employ a coding scheme that is applicable to other settings and populations, as well as provide a clear and detailed description of the methods to allow other researchers to replicate the study in a different setting, ensuring the external validity of the analytical process of the study.
Additionally, providing a detailed description of the research method and variables can enhance the validity and reliability of the study, as it allows other researchers to replicate and verify the findings. By describing the variables in detail, other researchers can understand how the variables were operationalized and measured, and whether the methods used were appropriate for the research question. This can also facilitate the comparability of the results across studies and increase the generalizability of the findings.

3.10 Ethical considerations

Research ethics refers to the set of guidelines to be followed when conducting social research, different ethical considerations may occur throughout the phases of the paper, for example in data collection and interpretation of results (Saunders et al., 2019), and one of its core principles is that no one should be harmed by participating in the research (Denscombe, 2009). Therefore, based on ethical considerations, the authors took a number of precautions throughout the study to minimize the risk of harm to participants in this study.

The research will be carried out with a high level of integrity, trustworthiness, and reliability in accordance with the ethical rules and standards outlined in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR or EU 2016) Data shall be gathered only for legitimate purposes that are consistent with the objective and scope of this study (GDPR, Article 5(1)(b)). Informed consent has been obtained from all participants prior to the start of the data collection process (GDPR, Art. 6(1)). This process will provide participants with information about the purpose, duration, and scope of data use, while also increasing the transparency of the study and the protection of participants' rights. Prior to photographing the windows, the researcher clearly informed the store staff that their store and windows would be photographed and that their images would be used as research material for the paper. Permission was obtained before the filming took place. In order to maintain personal privacy, the researcher avoids photographing passers-by and customers in the store as well as staff members when taking window photographs as much as possible, however, it is inevitable that figures will be photographed. To protect personal privacy and keep their identities confidential, appropriate measures such as mosaics or removal from photographs have been taken to ensure that their personally identifiable information is not disclosed. In addition, care has been taken to avoid offending any individual or damaging the image of any reference store. Socio-economic factors have also been considered to ensure that the research is conducted in a fair and equitable manner. Finally, in order to maintain the credibility and trustworthiness of the research and to promote our collective understanding of the world, the result of the research has been reported accurately, with primary data has not been altered or falsified, even if they contradict the intended results (GDPR, Art. 5(1)(f)).
3.11 Sustainable considerations

The significance of sustainable development is growing, and it must be considered in research activities. The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) report "Our Common Future" defines sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without jeopardizing future generations' ability to meet their own needs" (Bruntland 1987, p16). Elkington developed the Triple Bottom Line model (TBL) in 1994 to examine the social, environmental, and economic aspects of business based on the WCED report and other academic studies (Elkington and Rowlands, 1997). This section of the article will present an overview of the sustainability criteria evaluated during the study, as well as the findings' potential implications for fostering a more sustainable future.

According to Elkington and Rowlands’s (1997) TBL model, window displays, as the initial step in reaching customers in offline retail businesses, are determined to be a potent instrument to attract consumers by influencing their buying behavior to some level in this study. At the same time, window displays can be a cost-effective alternative to costly brand advertising. Effective window displays significantly boost a company's competitiveness to improve economic efficiency and long-term economic development. This study might serve as a great resource for retailers looking to improve their use of window displays. The second is concerned with social sustainability. This study discovered that window displays, in addition to product displays, are a significant approach to promoting branding and that as a visual marketing tool, they can act as a communication vehicle for brand values (Guimarães, 2011). Incorporating the theme of sustainability into window displays is more welcomed and can improve the perception of sustainability. This can improve business sustainability focus, satisfy corporate social responsibility, and promote social sustainability. Finally, environmental sustainability. During this study, everything was done online to avoid paper waste. The study is attempted to make retailers aware that not the more extravagant and glamorous the window display is, the more popular it is, but rather they should develop a windowing strategy that works for them. This will help reduce the amount of waste some stores spend on window displays, thus reducing their environmental impact and promoting a more sustainable future.
4 Empirical Findings

In this chapter, the authors present the findings of analysis based on the conceptual framework introduced in Subchapter 2.5. The findings are categorized and elaborated into four themes according to the Subchapter 3.6 operationalization. The tables and explanation of each coding scheme can be found in Appendix A to assist when reading this chapter.

4.1 Window Characteristics

Table 2. Window Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Information Dimension</th>
<th>Observation Dimension</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Product-related</td>
<td>Store-related</td>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>Open/ Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-End</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inferred</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph Lauren</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>bd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prada</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>bd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moncler</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>bd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loewe</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Closed, Mixed</td>
<td>bd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Givenchy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Open, Mixed</td>
<td>bd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chanel</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>bd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast Fashion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zara</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Closed, Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H&amp;M</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pull &amp; Bear</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniqlo</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mango</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>bcd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“?” means it is unclear.

In information and observation dimensions as previously described in conceptual background, it could be divided into information (product or store-related) and observation (observed or inferred) dimension. As shown in Table 2, all high-end fashion retailers’ windows displays are store-related and inferred, while all fast-fashion retailers are product-related and only Pull & Bear and Mango that has inferred windows while others are observed.

Regarding “?” in the table, it is because most of the window display of Zara and H&M is product-related, but somehow have a particular window that dedicated solely to display Brand Logo which is considered to be store-related (Figure 2). In fact, this type of window for brand logo is a duplication from high-end display. Although Pull & Bear do similarly, their others window is also store-related, conveying the type and style of its merchandise, which is a store-related and inferred window.
Figure 2: Window display with logo brand of Zara (left), H&M (middle), Pull&Bear (right) (Photo by the authors)

For the background of window displays, they are mainly divided into three types: completely closed, partially open (mixed) or fully opened. The table above shows that of the 12-store window displays photo collected, three stores have more than one type of window background. First, Givenchy used both opened- and partially closed (mixed) windows. Second, Zara has a closed-back window for brand logos and mixed or see-through window display which is a type of partially closed to showcases the products. Lastly, Loewe used both a closed- and partially closed (mixed) window, Of the remaining stores, there are 1 fast-fashion opened-back windows, 2 high-end partially closed windows, and seven closed-back windows which consists of 4 fast-fashion and 2 high-end.

Regarding theme, there are four categories that are being considered here: message, product, promotion, and brand. Message-themed refers to a particular informational cue that a retailer conveys to its customers through its display such as advertising the benefits of a product or a call-to-action such as the promotion of the product's focus on sustainability. This includes encouraging customers to take specific action, such as "Buy now and get 20% off your purchase" or "Limited time offer - don't miss out!". In the data collected, it was observed that there is only Uniqlo (Figure 3) who has message theme in its signage to promote and advertise their technique of producing their products, known as 3D knit.

The product-themed approach, on the other hand, emphasizes the features and attributes of the products themselves, often showcasing them in an aspirational or desirable way. Therefore, Uniqlo window display is a good example of these two approaches that highlighting the unique textile technology used in a retailer's products as a product-themed approach, emphasizes the features and attributes of the products, and educating the customer about the benefits of the unique textile technology, improved comfort, and durability as msged-themed approach.

Promotion-themed window displays highlight the store's promotions through text posters, etc. Lastly, brand-themed window displays reflect the brand as a whole, for example, by prominently displaying the brand logo, branded items or by expressing the brand's unique personality and attitude through artistic design. Therefore, if there is the brand name or logo in the vicinity of the window there is a brand presented window. This can be observed in Appendix A or the following figures.
In a message-themed approach, the call-to-action message is used to convey a specific informational cue to the customer and prompt them to take action. In contrast, a promotional-themed approach uses call-to-action messages to emphasize a sale or promotion with a focus on promotion or discount being offered to the customer, rather than on conveying a specific informational cue about the product. A good example for this is GAP window, that it its sigage said “GAP days, up till -50%, on a selection of articles”.

Figure 3: Window displays with big signage of Uniqlo (left) and Gap (right) (Photo by the authors)

This signage's primary focus on the promotion and the incentive to buy, rather than conveying a specific informational cue about the products or the brand therefore it is only promotional-themed not message-themed approach. This Gap window also has a brand logo and merchandises in it, therefore Gap also has brand-themed and product-themed approach in their windows.

According to the data in the table above, all of the window displays exhibit the product-themed approach with all high-end fashion brands window displays also incorporate brand-themed that there is a brand logo or name in the vicinity of the window display. For fast fashion brands, the choice of theme was diversified. Even though all windows have product-themed approach, there is Uniqlo with message, Pull & Bear with brand, Gap with both brand and promotion, and H&M with promotion. Only Mango and Zara are solely product themed.

From this it could be seen that all high-end retailers favor products- and brand-themed while fast-fashion also favor products, but additional theme depends on the marketing strategy of each retailer.
4.2 Window Design attributes and Layout

Table 3. Window display Design attributes and Layout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Design Attributes</th>
<th>Layout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>Harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Symmetric/Asymmetric</td>
<td>Color, Shape, Texture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-End</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph Lauren</td>
<td>Asym CST</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prada</td>
<td>Asym CST</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moncler</td>
<td>Asym CST (R)</td>
<td>Y,E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loewe</td>
<td>Asym CST (R)</td>
<td>Y,Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Givenchy</td>
<td>Sym CST</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chanel</td>
<td>Asym CST (R)</td>
<td>Y,E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast Fashion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zara</td>
<td>Sym CST (R)</td>
<td>Y,E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H&amp;M</td>
<td>Sym -ST</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pull &amp; Bear</td>
<td>Sym -ST</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniqlo</td>
<td>Sym -(S)T (R)</td>
<td>Y,Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mango</td>
<td>Asym CST (R)</td>
<td>Y,Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>Asym -ST (R)</td>
<td>Y,Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Focal point variables are Have (Y) or Not have (N), and Eye level (Y) or Elevated (E)
In Composition, inside “()” refers to the overall view, outside “()” refers to a single window.

A window display's design elements and layout are crucial elements that significantly affect the window's overall visual impact. Balance, harmony, and rhythm are concepts used here to assess the design attributes of window display. Balance is divided once more. Asymmetry or symmetry can create balance by creating a visually unique experience and drawing attention. To achieve harmony and produce a visually appealing presentation, color, shape, and texture are carefully chosen. The viewer's eye is guided by rhythms established through repetition, alternation, or gradation, which gives the rhythm a sense of flowing.

Based on the summary of the design attributes in Table 3, among the balance attributes, only Givenchy adopts a symmetrical composition among the high-end fashion brands, and only mango and Gap adopt an asymmetrical composition among the fast fashion brands, and Gap's window is not symmetrical in its overall view, but all of its mannequins are placed in a symmetrical way. From this, we can conclude that high-end brands seem to prefer asymmetrical window compositions, while fast fashion brands prefer symmetrical balance. Although it is not possible to conclusively determine that fast fashion brands prefer symmetrical compositions while high fashion tends to have asymmetrical window compositions. However, the data collected for this study does show such a tendency.
In terms of rhythmic attributes, repetition creates a sense of unity and cohesion, allowing the dominant elements to stand out and capture attention (Diamond and Diamond, 2007). In the data collected, there is no rhythm found for Uniqlo and Gap, while Zara has a graduation of height and Ralph Lauren of size of dominant color. On the other hand, Chanel, Mango, and H&M have an alternation rhythm in design. Chanel has both in color black and white and texture, while Mango and H&M have alternation in color. The rest of the retailers adopt repetition rhythm either in color, shape, or texture. Still, it seems that high fashion brands and fast fashion brands have no particular preference, but rather choose the Repetition/ Alternation/ Gradation rhythmic approach according to their respective circumstances.

![Figure 4: Symmetrical and Asymmetrical window display of H&M (left) and Loewe (right) (Photo by the authors)](image)

When it comes to harmony, it is clear that every high-end retailer’s store window display takes into account the color, shape and texture part of harmony, while fast-fashion lacking about color harmony. Furthermore, in high-end the way that they do it also differently. In harmony of design, it means all of the elements must be exactly the same such as all merchandise in all red, same shape with similar texture (Diamond and Diamond, 2007). In the case of texture, it refers to the textural or tactile characteristics of an object’s surface. It can be an actual grain, pattern or detail, or a texture simulated through visual effects. Shape harmony requires consideration of the shape relationships between individual elements to ensure that they echo and harmonize with each other in the window. The harmony of textures and shapes can provide a rich sensory experience for the viewer and add depth and interest to the overall design. Moncler, Prada, and Loewe are the easiest to identify the harmony elements (Window displays of Moncler and Loewe can be seen in Figure 7 or Appendix A). As in Moncler it has similar manakins in same color, texture and shape that is also resonated with the background color. While in Prada for the pink display there is a harmony of shape and texture with different color for the handbag and harmony of color for the backdrop and the skirt. It is the same with green display of Prada that there is a harmony of shape and texture in shoes but with different color and harmony of color from green backdrop and handbags. But this one also has the harmony in texture and color on checked clothes with different shapes on mannequins.
The brand's use of color, shape, and textures is more evident in high-end brands. In Loewe display that uses the same smooth and glossy props of the same shape and same color but in different sizes, therefore, has a texture, color, and shape harmony with different size, a proportional harmony. Furthermore, the dress on mannequin is also draped with silk, together with metal and leather textured of accessories and handbag. Givenchy also used smooth and glossy window props to display its products, with silk dresses and leather textured shoes and handbags, Givenchy's window used different sizes of square textures together to form the picture; Ralph Lauren's window displays use textiles with same textures (neat and subtle), including silk, wool, and cotton. Leather textured handbags and belts were also used. In addition, to create a warm and natural atmosphere, Ralph Lauren's window displays use wood textured blinds and plants in the same color palette. Chanel's window is divided by simple geometric textures, and its models' clothes are mainly made of tweed, silk, and cotton with delicate textures. The pearl and jewel textures were highlighted and matched to the models' outfits. Handbags, shoes, and leather goods with metallic and leather textures were also used. These textures highlight the elegance and luxury of the brand, creating a shiny and sophisticated effect.

The use of shapes and textures is also evident in fast fashion brands. Zara uses simple geometric patterns and lines to create a modern and minimalist sense of texture, with a semi-open window displaying denim, cotton, faux leather, and synthetic fabrics to enrich the textures. The Gap window is decorated with a simple two square logo to create a simple texture. The textures on display include soft cotton, knit, denim, and print. Uniqlo pays attention to the texture of the fabric, posting additional signs in the window to introduce the garments as 3d knit texture, and the props in the window are all on the same plane to create a sense of simple and smooth texture. In the H&M store collected by the researcher, it was found that it had two windows with completely different styles on the corner sides of the wall. One of them is in black and white, and the overall style is very similar to the Chanel window, but the difference is the texture of the clothing is different, the texture of the clothing is rougher, with heavy lace, synthetic fibers, and no leather and jewelry elements with the texture. The other
window theme is sportier and more energetic, the texture of clothing to denim, cotton, synthetic fibers. In addition, the texture of the background and the model wearing the texture of the clothing fits very well, the geometric shape of the posters divided so that the picture looks very simply.

Through the collection, high-end fashion brand textures mostly like to show silk, tweed, leather, jewelry, cotton, and other textures, often want to create the brand's luxury high-end atmosphere. Fast fashion brands mostly show denim, cotton, knit, synthetic and other textures based on different styles to show a comfortable, dynamic, and simple feeling. In terms of shapes, it seems that fast fashion brands avoid more complicated shapes and focus more on the simplicity of their windows.

When it comes to the layout of the window displays, the authors divided the study into four parts, including Focal point, Traffic flow, Composition and Density. Table 3 shows that all window displays take into account the focal point, which indicates whether the traffic flow comes from the left or the right. The authors found that 2/3 of the high fashion brands had window focal points above eye level, while 5/6 of the fast fashion brands had window focal points at eye level. Above eye level tends to appear more distant from the consumer, thus showing the brand's premium feel, while flat appears more approachable. In addition, the focal point also varies depending on the size and height of the window. The windows of high-end fashion brands are all along the street, so the height of the window may be higher than the windows of fast fashion brands, so we cannot exclude the influence of this factor.

In addition, there is also a big difference in density, and it is worth mentioning that the density here refers to a relative level. The authors found that high-end fashion brands tend to have more sparse windows, spending a smaller percentage of their windows displaying merchandise, while fast fashion brands tend to display their merchandise relatively densely, showing more items in one window. The picture below shows the window displays of two stores that their display are moderate and dense, Zara and Uniqlo.

Figure 6: Window displays of Zara (left) and Uniqlo (right) (Photo by authors)
4.3 Window Props

Table 4. Window props

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Props</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
<th>Placement</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Texture</th>
<th>Lighting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1) Merchandise</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fore/Middle/Back &amp; Large or Small grouping</td>
<td>Large, Medium</td>
<td>Bold/Subtle, Mono/Multi</td>
<td>Smooth/Rough &amp; Shiny/Matte</td>
<td>HL, or Non-HL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Non-merchandise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High-End</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ralph Lauren</td>
<td>(1) &amp; (2)</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>FMB, S</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>S, Multi</td>
<td>SM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prada</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>B &amp; O</td>
<td>FMB, S</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>B, Multi</td>
<td>SM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moncler</td>
<td>(1) &amp; (2)</td>
<td>Slightly O</td>
<td>FMB, S</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>B, Multi</td>
<td>SM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loewe</td>
<td>(1) &amp; (2)</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>FMB, S</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>B, Multi</td>
<td>SS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Givenchy</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>Slightly U</td>
<td>FM, S</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>B, Multi</td>
<td>SS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chanel</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>FMB, S</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>S, Multi</td>
<td>SM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fast Fashion</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zara</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>M, S</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>S, Multi</td>
<td>SM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H&amp;M</td>
<td>(1) &amp; (2)</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>FB, L</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>BS, Multi</td>
<td>SM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pull &amp; Bear</td>
<td>(1) &amp; (2)</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>MB, S</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>S, Multi</td>
<td>RM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mango</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>FM, L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>BS, Multi</td>
<td>SM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>(1) &amp; (2)</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>MB, L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>S, Multi</td>
<td>S, low S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"/" means no data
Placement if considered other props beside mannequin.
*SM = Smooth & Matte, SS = Smooth & Shiny, RM = Rough & Matte, RS = Rough and Shiny
*HL refers to highlight

The Table 4 Window props, provides a breakdown of various props used in visual merchandising, categorized into two groups: merchandise and non-merchandise. The props are further described based on several attributes including type, proportion, placement, size, color, texture, and lighting.

Starting with type of props, merchandise (1) and non-merchandise (2). Because merchandise props are props that are directly related to the merchandise being sold. Therefore, the mannequins that display in all sampling window displays means that all retailers employ merchandise props. This includes signage of discount and product promotion that are also merchandise props. Non-merchandise props on the other hand are props that help create a certain mood or atmosphere or to convey the story. Of the data collected, there are 7 retailers, which are 3 high-end and 4 fast fashion that have non-merchandise props in displays.

For proportion of props use versus merchandise in display, it is measured from area of props and the size of window. In the data collected, it is generally balanced in high-end retailers with few have props slightly under or overshadow merchandise. This is
contradicted with fast fashion that majority of their displays merchandise overshadow the window. Thus, the sense of merchandise is lessened as there is too much merchandise that merchandise became a prop and there is no sense of star mannequin. This leaves only Zara and Pull & Bear that have Balance proportion between props and merchandise.

For props placement, among high-end retailers, other than Givenchy that does not have props background other high-end retailers have props at foreground, middle ground, and background. In high-end retail displays, the foreground props take a prominent position in the foremost plane, effectively showcasing the brand name, as depicted in Figure 5. While foreground props in fast-fashion retailers, are signage that provides information of the product being shown. It is only Uniqlo Lifewear that has foreground props for both product information and brand while Zara and H&M and Gap has only foreground props for products (figure 4). In addition, as could be seen in table 4, there is a mixed of props placement for fast fashion retailers ranging from foreground to background. Regarding props in the background, there are only Uniqlo and Zara that do not have background props. Additionally, it is observed that in high-end retailers' displays, props are often arranged in small bundles while fast fashion retailers are present in large groupings with the exception of Zara and Pull & Bear.

In terms of prop size, it is worth noting that no retailers specifically utilize small-sized props. Among high-end retailers, the majority opt for medium-sized props, while Moncler and Loewe stand out with their use of large-sized props, as depicted in Figure 7. In contrast, fast fashion retailers generally make use of larger-sized props, with Zara and H&M being the exceptions as there are not any particular props in the Zara display while the only notable props in H&M is partitions with scenery view.

Figure 7: Window displays of Moncler (left) and Loewe (right) (Photo by authors)

In terms of color, all retailers use more than one color to decorate their window, with only Chanel and Ralph Lauren using Subtle color while other high-end brands use bold color in display. For fast fashion retailers, all of them use subtle color with 3 that use
both subtle and bold color, namely H&M, Uniqlo, and Gap. Even though there is a bold color (red) in H&M display it is only a red logo or text, thus could not compare to other window that have bold color. In addition, all of these retailers’ window displays use multi color, and there is none that plays with different shades of a certain color. Not even Loewe (red, figure 7). In fact, there are also window displays that incorporate only a single color in what we have found, however, it is only present in teenagers fashion windows. For example, Dior and Zara teenage stores in Figure 6.

![Figure 8. Dior (left) and Zara (right) teenager clothes store window display.](image)

Regarding props texture, there is a use of smooth props in combination with matte for Ralph Lauren, Prada, Moncler, and Chanel while the other two high-end retailers Loewe and Givenchy use smooth in combination with shiny texture for props. Among fast fashion retailers there is also a majority use smooth and matte props beside Mango that props are slightly shiny instead of fully matte and Pull & Bear that use rough texture with matte props.

Regarding accent lighting, it was observed that among the high-end brands, Moncler and Chanel are the only ones that utilize accent lighting to highlight specific areas or products. This accent lighting is strategically designed to highlight a small area and draw attention to that highlighted area. On the other hand, among the fast-fashion brands, four of them were found to incorporate accent lighting specifically to highlight their products to help enhance the visual appeal of the merchandise and attract customers' attention. Additionally, it was found that Mango has a relatively low levels of accent lighting compared to the other brands, while Uniqlo does not employ accent lighting to highlight their products at all.
4.4 Window Colors

Table 5. Window color

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color Scheme</th>
<th>Contrast</th>
<th>Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monochromatic/analogous/</td>
<td>Light vs.</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complementary (2/3/4)/triadic</td>
<td>dark (LD)/</td>
<td>Accent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>warm vs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>cool (WC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>High-End</strong></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ralph Lauren</td>
<td>LD, WC Medium</td>
<td>Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monochromatic</td>
<td>Low Beige</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prada</td>
<td>LD High</td>
<td>Pink(w)/Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monochromatic</td>
<td></td>
<td>White, Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moncler</td>
<td>WC High</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loewe</td>
<td>LD High</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Givenchy</td>
<td>LD High</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chanel</td>
<td>LD Medium to</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast Fashion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zara</td>
<td>LD, WC Low</td>
<td>Yellow (w)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H&amp;M</td>
<td>WC Low</td>
<td>Neutral (c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pull &amp; Bear</td>
<td>LD Low</td>
<td>Blue (c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniqlo</td>
<td>WC High</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Pink (c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mango</td>
<td>WC Low</td>
<td>Pink (w, c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LD Low</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAP</td>
<td>WC High</td>
<td>Red (w), Pink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LD Low</td>
<td>Dark color</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Complementary 2 means split-complementary, two colors that are directly opposite each other on the color wheel that create strong contrast and enhance each other's intensity.

* Complementary 3 means triadic colors, which are three colors that are evenly spaced around the color wheel, forming an equilateral triangle. One color serves as the main color, while the other two appear on either side of it.

* Complementary 4, means tetradic colors which involved that are arranged in two complementary pairs. This color scheme consists of two main colors and their respective complementary hues.

Table 5 provides an overview of the color schemes, contrasts, and the use of dominant and accent colors in the window displays of both high-end and fast fashion retailers. Among high-end retailers, monochromatic and complementary color schemes are prevalent. Ralph Lauren, for example, adopts a monochromatic color scheme with medium contrast, utilizing brown as the dominant color and complementing it with accents of green. Similarly, Chanel opts for a monochromatic color scheme with medium to high contrast, showcasing white as the dominant color and incorporating black as a complementary touch. Another high-end brand, Prada, embraces a monochromatic color scheme with high contrast. Their window designs prominently
feature either pink or green as the dominant color, while white and black act as accent colors.

The remaining three high-end retailers are opting for complementary color scheme. Moncler employs a split complementary color scheme with yellow that occupies the most space as dominant colors and pink (cool undertone) accents, showcasing a high contrast display. Loewe and Givenchy both utilize a triadic complementary color scheme with high contrast. Loewe places red as the dominant color and incorporates accents of yellow and green, while Givenchy showcases red as the dominant color and accents it with white and green.

Fast fashion retailers, on the other hand, employ various color schemes and combinations in their window displays. For low contrast scheme there are Zara, H&M, Pull & Bear and Mango. While Zara adopts a complementary of triadic scheme, featuring the warm vs. cool contrast between yellow and its complementary colors, blue and white. H&M embraces a multi-color scheme with a focus on warm and cool tones, utilizing a dominant neutral color and accentuating it with vibrant red. Meanwhile, Pull & Bear focuses on blue as the dominant color, accompanied by accent colors such as yellow and beige similar with Zara but with analogous color scheme. Mango, on the other hand, embraces a low-contrast color scheme with a monochromatic approach, utilizes pink as the dominant color, ranging from light to deep shades, and complements it with yellow in the opposite of color wheel.

Uniqlo utilizes a complementary color scheme in one of its displays, combining blue and orange tones. However, their other display incorporates a multi-color palette. Similar for GAP, that one window has a multi-color with big bright red signage as accent color. Another window of GAP has an analogous color scheme with the use of light green, light yellow, light pink, and light grey couple with dark blue, black, and white. So, the accent color for this window is dark color.

Regarding contrast of light vs. dark and warm vs. cool, there are 5 out of 7 windows that use light vs. dark contrast for high end and 5 out of 10 for fast fashion. For warm vs. cool there are 3/7 for high end and 6/10 for fast fashion windows. Furthermore, there are 7 windows with low contrast for fast fashion and only 1 in high end. Among these 2 are medium to high in high end and 1 medium in fast fashion, others are high contrast.
5 Analysis

This chapter presents the analysis of the empirical findings obtained through the collection of primary data. As part of the analysis, trends and patterns will be identified, and the implications and importance of the empirical findings in relation to the body of existing literature will be discussed. The analysis will investigate the underlying causes and explanations for the noted trends and patterns by adopting the same format as the empirical findings.

5.1 Comparison of Display Characteristics

According to Sen et al. (2002), customer decisions to enter store are largely affected by store-related information while purchasing an item is largely influenced by product-related information. From this it could argue that the reason for adopting product-related or store related for high-end and fast fashion is different by the intention of the display as well as the strategy of selling of each sector. According to the findings in Table 2, all high-end retailers are adopting store-related and inferred. The reason for this approach is likely because luxury fashion retailers aim to sell the brand. Since, according to Figure 1. in conceptual framework section, store-related and inferred to convey the store image. While products-related and inferred is to imply the degree of product fit (conveying the suitability of the product for the consumer), and products-related. While observed, is to promote new products, new collections, and fashion. Therefore, as store-related information dimension is about image and creativity, while inferred dimension is about meaning generated from the informational cues (Sen et al., 2002), the combination of these is the most suitable for the high-end retailer’s selling strategy.

As Nobbs et al. (2015) described, luxury brands are selling not by suggesting wardrobe style but by the brand, heritage, story, and expertise. Hence, even though high-end retailers also introduce new collections for each season like fast fashion, it is less frequent, and it is about the image of brand in each season instead of suggesting fashion clothes for that month.

Therefore, for fast-fashion retailers, that are all product-related can be justifiable by the fast-fashion business model that favors introducing new collection and products every two or so weeks. Especially Zara, H&M, Mango, and GAP that categorized into product-related and observed dimension. However, for Pull & Bear and Mango, it could be because these two brands emphasize high quality material and sophisticated design and serving a niche market like high-end retailers. This can then be a reason for inferred to imply product fit to attract the customers who interested in this type of product instead of observed. As Sen et al. (2002) described, products-related and inferred especially encourages purchase decision more than store-related and inferred.

According to these, the difference in strategy and business model is likely to be the reason for different application of information dimensions for these retailers.
Furthermore, for observation dimension it is clear that brands that emphasize quality and selling products to niche market will prioritize inferred rather than observed as all high-end retailers and Pull & Bear and Mango did. Thus, this could be a distinction of whether to product or store-related and inferred or observed. Since, observed both for store related or product are to promote something, either discount promotion or new collection to provide consumers with information cues (Sen et al., 2002). As also described by Oh and Petrie (2012), that merchandise-focused display (observed) facilitated understanding of the products, whereas the artistic window display (inferred) promoted exploration, entice consumer to learn more about the brand and brand’s merchandise.

Regarding the background of window display, the data collected shows that a total of 8 fashion stores chose closed-back windows as the only (one of two) backgrounds, which is the most chosen of all types. High-end fashion accounted for three of these stores and fast fashion stores accounted for five. For closed-back windows, based on the researcher's observations and previous scholarly studies, it was possible to find that firstly, it has the advantage that the merchandise is protected from being touched or damaged by the buyer. Secondly, the closed area makes it easier to present any theme or mood, even if the interior of the store is softly lit and dim, the window can express the mood through vibrant colors and bright hues (Bhatia and Kholiya, 2016). A typical example in the researcher's observation is Moncler, which has a very impactful contrasting color design of bright yellow and bright pink in its windows, while the interior of the store is on the dimmer side of the light as well as color scheme, with a sharp contrast between the interior and the exterior. Thirdly, the closed window also blocks the view into the store, thus maintaining the mysterious impression of the store interior for consumers. However, there are some disadvantages, firstly, the construction of closed windows requires a higher level of expense and process, as the entire window design must be integrated into the store's exterior, and because it is completely enclosed, the technology required is harder to employ than for open windows. Secondly, because closed windows are a separate space from the store, they tend to use more props than in open windows to achieve a good display (Othman, 2021).

The least choice was the open-back window, with only one brand, Uniqlo, choosing the open-back window entirely as the only background option. The advantages of open windows are that they can easily see the entire retail area behind them because they show the interior of the store, they can effectively attract passers-by to see the interior of the store and choose to enter, and they take up less space and cost less money to build (Morgan, 2016). However, the disadvantages are also obvious. Firstly, because the windows are not covered with the store interior, they are easier to touch and therefore the displayed goods are harder to protect. Secondly, lighting is a problem, as the light from the display window may blend or clash with the light inside the store. In addition, it is more difficult to set the atmosphere of the window, and harder to
express independent moods and themes, as consumers are easily distracted by the interior of the store and the background, and thus cannot focus on the content and mood that the window wants to express (Bhatia and Kholiya, 2016). Finally, for the partially open (mixed) window, four of the six high fashion brands opted for this type of window. Partially open windows are a detached version of the open window, used to shield communication with the interior without blocking the entire space (Morgan, 2016). Furthermore, the partially open window allows customers to better understand the details and characteristics of the displayed items while ensuring the safety of the merchandise and brand image. Although the pattern is not strong or significant yet there is the likelihood that high-end retailers favor mixed-back of window to give a glimpse of inside the store while fast-fashion is opposite. Since there are four high-end stores windows that are mixed and five fast-fashion that are closed-back.

When discussing the themes of the window displays, the most salient participants in each of the window displays collected in this study were the products sold in the stores, and they were also one of the themes of each window display. In addition to the fixed display products, sellers develop different window themes according to the needs of the store. Barnes and Lea-greenwood (2010), emphasize that window displays as part of the overall marketing communication of a fashion brand, aim to relate to the needs of the target group and, the needs of the sellers. The theme of window displays summarized in this study include information, product, promotion, and branding. The data collected shows that all high-end fashion brands use the window display to express their brand specific image and express their personality while displaying their products, in addition, they do not hesitate to display their brand logos and logos in the window to maximize the brand impression on consumers. Morgan (2015) also mentions that it is important to determine the theme of a store because through this it can influence the perception of the customer and the information they receive, therefore, the store needs to choose the most important information of the moment as the theme to be displayed in the window. It is easy to understand why high-end brands tend to display selected pieces and express their brand philosophy in the window, while fast fashion brands tend to display their brand products while expressing what they need or promotions or quick updates of the new season's clothing, catering to the season's fashion trends, thus theming their window displays.

5.2 Comparison of Display Layout and Design attributes

By coding and summarizing the data collected, the researcher compared the design attributes and layouts of high-end fashion brands with those of fast fashion brands and found some significant differences between them, stemming from different business models, target markets, and geographical locations. High-end fashion labels cater to affluent customers who value exclusivity, superior quality, and a luxurious shopping experience. Fast fashion retailers, on the other hand, cater to price-conscious shoppers
who value affordability, fashion, and convenience. These distinctions have an impact on the display layouts and design attributes used in various stores.

In terms of design attributes, there is a clear difference between high fashion brands and fast fashion brands, starting with the balance, fast fashion brands choose more symmetrical, classic, and aesthetically pleasing ways of displaying their windows, while high fashion brands use more asymmetrical placement, creating a sense of visual stability through different combinations of props (Diamond and Diamond, 2007). Symmetry is commonly employed as a traditional and straightforward method of display. However, it can also be error-prone, particularly in the context of fast fashion brands. According to Costa (2017), fast fashion brands exhibit a higher frequency of window changes compared to high-end fashion brands. On average, fast fashion brands alter their clothing designs and update their displays approximately once every two weeks. Consequently, fast fashion brands have significantly less time to dedicate to window design compared to high-end fashion brands. This accelerated pace of change in fast fashion results in a shorter lifespan for window designs and necessitates more frequent replacements. Unlike high-end fashion brands, which enjoy longer periods between updates, fast fashion brands face the challenge of consistently refreshing their displays to stay current and appeal to their target audience.

When it comes to the harmony of the windows, color, shape, and texture are all important considerations. Through the above summary, for color harmony, the authors found that all 12 stores created a harmonious atmosphere through color, however, high-end fashion brands chose bolder colors than fast fashion brands, and half of the stores used more clashing colors to make the windows more artistic and eye-catching, while fast fashion tended to use the same color palette, the overall picture was harmonious and comfortable. However, the researcher found that the hues chosen among them, each high-end brand chooses the hues are close to the brand itself, and each has a strong connection with the brand, which is very easy to identify the brand name through the window. For example, the classic green-pink and black-and-white check elements in Prada windows, the classic black-and-white color scheme of Chanel, and the beige color scheme of Ralph Lauren. As for fast fashion brands, Uneiqlo's color scheme is very representative of the neutral color scheme (Uneiqlo, 2023), the rest of the stores seem to be difficult to identify the brand if the name of the fashion store is not displayed. Among them, Zara, and H&M in particular, it is difficult to distinguish the difference between their fashions through their windows. For the harmony of shapes and textures, the researchers found that the windows of high-end brands tend to use smooth, glossy, reflective props with background textures, and the garments displayed tend to have delicate textures, using textures such as silk, tweed, wool, and cotton, with leather, metal, and jeweled textured accessories. The texture of the matching highlights the brand's sense of elegance and luxury, creating a shiny and sophisticated effect. Or as in the case of Ralph Lauren window display fine clothing texture and wood texture of the blinds and the same color plant potted plants and its
props to create a luxurious and warm natural atmosphere. The window displays of fast fashion brands tend to use simple geometric lines and textures to create a simple atmosphere for the windows, displaying clothing in knit, cotton, denim, synthetic fabrics, and other textures to show its comfortable, dynamic, and affordable effect. As Lea-Greenwood (2013) points out, by using a safe and foolproof visual marketing strategy, the visual aspects of the stores are often similar and indistinguishable from each other.

A window display arrangement involves key considerations such as focal point, traffic flow, composition, and density. To attract viewers, identify the primary focal point or center of attention in the display. Traffic flow takes into account the natural movements and paths that viewers take when viewing the display, ensuring that the layout does not obstruct or confuse flow. The arrangement and placement of props, products, and other elements in the display to ensure a visually pleasing and balanced composition is referred to as composition. Finally, density refers to the strategic spacing and grouping of items in order to avoid overcrowding or clutter while creating a visually appealing and organized display (Morgan, 2015; Nobbs et al., 2015).

Using the data collected, the researchers found that the major difference between the window layouts of fast fashion and high fashion brands is the focal point of their displayed items and the intensity of their displays. Hansen and Wänke, (2011); Truong, Simmons, McColl, and Kitchen (2008) mention that high-end fashion brands tend to create a more premium and distance-oriented strategy to better convey the brand's premium feel. distance strategy to better express the brand's premium feel, while fast fashion brands are more approachable and easier to approach, encouraging consumers to enter casually. There is also a clear difference in the density of the window layout between the two types of brands. The majority of high-end fashion companies opt for less dense window displays. In order to convey a feeling of exclusivity and luxury, they place a high priority on showcasing a select group of carefully chosen products (Morgan, 2015). By emphasizing each item's craftsmanship, details, and distinctive qualities, this method enables it to receive individualized attention. The distances between items are typically wide, giving plenty of room for customers to concentrate on smaller details and showcasing the sophistication of their products. Fast fashion companies, on the other hand, typically have a higher density of window displays, and their aim is to showcase more products to emphasize the wide variety and current trends available in their stores. This provides a range of options and grabs the attention of the customer through the abundance of options. As a result, the spacing is closer together to make room for more products, which reflects the fast-paced nature of the products (Costa, 2017).

5.3 Comparison of Display Props

Window displays often tell a story, utilizing various props that either share a connection with the merchandise or create an artistic balance between props and
products. According to Morgan (2015), some retailers even choose to showcase windows without any merchandise, instead focusing on selling the image of the store or promoting in-store events. These displays may incorporate elements such as artwork, live performances, or animated sets to captivate and engage viewers and during sale periods, the merchandise itself may take center stage, forming the sole focus of the window display.

The first element in window props that will be considered is the type of props on display. Because props are objects that visually support other displayed items while merchandise is to create harmony in a window display (Kernsom and Sahachaisaeree, 2012). In the data collected, there is only 1 pattern identified here that all fashion retailers use merchandise props while only some (3 high-end and 3 fast fashion) use non-merchandise props. However, it also considers the quality and purposes of props in display into those art-like and those that are not to sell product but provoke opinions of the store (Morgan, 2015). Then Moncler and Loewe props are clearly the fine-art ones, with Ralph Lauren props are to create a sense of exclusivity for the store with partition and flowers. There is also Pull & Bear that props act both as a scene for display and to provoke opinion for the brand about the relaxed and laid-back image. While H&M and Mango non-merchandise props is only to create scene for the products. Hence, there is a difference in the purpose of props even though it cannot form any pattern yet.

There is also the form, position and posture of mannequin that also convey story and create a sense of human-like. As Morgan (2015) described mannequin dressing is an art that is very serious, the pose, wig, face, and grouping have a major impact in the overall appearance of the display. For this reason, when look at mannequins standing in data collected, there are mostly high-end brands that mannequins are not standing straight and face outward the window (Ralph Lauren, Prada, Givenchy, and Chanel). While there is only Zara and Mango of fast fashion brands that mannequins have some form of display. Hence, this could potentially be the second pattern of the posture of mannequin that high-end retailers care about more than fast fashion. Because along this analysis we will see that Mango and Zara has many design attributes that is similar to high-end design and therefore by having Zara, Mango and Pull & Bear doing the same with high-end brands, it is more likely to be a confirmation of the trend for future window dressing style.

Third, props proportion, according to the empirical findings, achieving a balanced proportion between props and merchandise seems to be a common goal for many brands in their window displays. If under-shadow props means that props are insignificant and fail to draw attention to the merchandise, Moncler window in Figure 5. can be the best example of a slightly over-shadowed case that props are dominant, significantly enhance the merchandise and drawing attention to it (Morgan, 2015). Especially with the contrast of color that applies here. This observation introduces a
third pattern, where high-end retailers strive for a balance that leans towards slightly overpowering props. In contrast, fast fashion retailers often prioritize the merchandise, leading to displays where the merchandise itself overpowers the overall presentation. These excessive uses of mannequins potentially turn mannequins and merchandise into props and lose their sense of merchandise.

A similar phenomenon can be observed in the display of brands like Prada (green), where an excessive number of mannequins in a small display area leads to visual overload and a cluttered or confusing environment. When merchandise overtakes the display to such an extent, customers may find it difficult to focus on the products and understand the intended message of the window display. This practice is so noticeable in the displays of fast fashion retailers such as H&M, Mango, and Gap.

The fourth pattern identified is the different grouping strategies, as evident from Table 4 that high-end retailers typically arrange their items in smaller groups, while fast-fashion stores often have large groupings with multiple mannequins. This observation aligns with Nobbs et al., (2015) study that high street mannequins are often presented in a large group while minimalism is a key for luxury brand and hence display mannequin in a small grouping. This is also suggested by Morgan (2015) that ideal window display should feature a few prominently styled mannequins, while the rest serve a supporting role. Therefore, the groupings of mannequins can be used strategically to showcase different clothing options and help customers understand the various combinations available. For instance, a suit that comes with both shorts and trousers can be displayed on a small group of mannequins, demonstrating all the available choices. Furthermore, to create cohesion within the display, accent colors can be carried over to the other models, as exemplified in the window displays of Ralph Lauren and Mango. However, Mango display is considered a large grouping while Ralph Lauren is small grouping according to Nobbs et al. (2015).

![Figure 9](image-url) Window display of Ralph Lauren (left) and Mango (right) (Photo by authors)

In this regard, although Zara and Pull & Bear have a balanced and small grouping of mannequins in their window displays, it still cannot convince and change the fact that they are indeed follow the window dressing design of high-end brands from the first
pattern in window display for brand logo. Therefore, if other fast fashion retailers predominantly exhibit a particular tendency and these two brands appear to deviate from the norm but are similar to high-end design. Then these two brands would just increase the tendency of decorate a window display to a certain approach.

When it comes to the placement of props in the foreground, middle ground, and background, there is a lack of clear patterns among fast-fashion retailers. However, among high-end retailers, there is a consistent preference for placing props in all three areas. This placement strategy is aimed at creating depth and visual interest in the window display. According to Diamond and Diamond (2007), the foreground is typically used to place the title or brand name to draw the attention of customers and encourage them to enter the store. The middle ground is traditionally reserved for mannequins, tables, and other display elements. The background serves as a backdrop or back wall, contributing to the overall visual composition. High-end retailers have props in these planes and did similar to Diamond and Diamond (2007) theory.

Similarly, there is no distinct pattern observed regarding the size of props. However, it is clear that none of these retailers tend to use small props. High-end retailers though often prefer medium or realistic-sized props that complement the overall aesthetic and atmosphere of the display. On the other hand, fast-fashion brands often incorporate exaggeratedly large props, such as oversized signage, to create a bold and eye-catching effect. Examples of this can be seen in figure 2-page 33 window display of Uniqlo and Gap.

According to Morgan (2015), the use of color in window displays can have a significant and impactful effect and choosing strong and bold colors is crucial as subtle color variations may go unnoticed from the outside. By replicating a color from a specific merchandise item and incorporating it into the window’s wall with paint, a coordinated theme can be easily created. The use of color therefore offers an economical and flexible means of creating a visually striking window display that can be tailored to suit different themes and attract attention (Morgan, 2015). In the data presented in Table 4 reveals a notable trend that high-end retailers tend to use bold colors more frequently, while fast-fashion retailers lean towards more subtle color palettes. This finding is rather contradicted with Nobbs et al. (2015) findings that luxury brands are leaned towards subtle color and high street is too flashy color. Regarding this, in our findings there is also Gap that has a flashy color and Chanel and Ralph Lauren that has subtle color. However, in our analysis, both Ralph Lauren and Chanel are known for their emphasis on timelessness and sophistication, so it is only reasonable for them to opt for a more subtle color palette than bold colors. Therefore, in this identified pattern it is still suggestable that high-end brands are often bolder in their use of color compared to their fast-fashion counterparts. Because this pattern holds consistently in use of hues or pure color by high-end brands while fast-fashion is in tint (hue+white), tone (hue+gray), shade (hue+black). Nonetheless, it is to admit
that the choice of color can also be impacted by the type of products and the brand identity as happens with Ralph Lauren and Chanel.

In addition to color, most of the windows, both high-end and fast fashion uses smooth texture props. Smooth props mean to display items or props with a sleek and polished surface, which often have a modern and sophisticated appearance that help create a clean and polished look in a display (Diamond and Diamon, 2007). Loewe fake flowers here in Figure 5. have a smooth texture with a glossy surface, provide a sleek and polished look to a display. While Moncler animal manakins have a smooth surface texture of plastic materials instead of mimicking the appearance of fur or feathers that would make the texture become rough. Rough texture props therefore have a more textured and tactile surface such as unfinished wood and raw stone, which in here there is only Pull & Bear window that has the rough texture props giving a sense of a more natural and eco-friendly aesthetic. Thus, the pattern identified here is that the choice of props texture in fashion industry are tilted towards smooth texture unless the brand or products of the store emphasize on rustic or natural aesthetic.

In regard to lighting, there is a notable difference between fast-fashion and high-end retailers that fast-fashion retailers tend to use lighting more extensively compared to high-end retailers. According to Diamond and Diamond (2007), the lower the use of general lighting the higher the need for accent lighting in which daylight and lighting from nearby elements also need to be considered for overall illumination. Among the sampled high-end retailers, Moncler and Chanel with closed background utilize lighting to create contrast between the background and the mannequins, effectively making the products stand out. On the other hand, retailers like Ralph Lauren and Prada, with their transparent backgrounds, do not rely on lighting to highlight their products and also avoid using shiny props. Similarly, Loewe and Givenchy, which have open backgrounds, do not incorporate specific highlighting techniques. Uniqlo, which has an open background, also does not utilize lighting for highlighting, while other fast-fashion retailers employ lighting techniques to accentuate their products, particularly when they have a closed background. Despite this Zara, which has transparent background, uses lighting. It is then assumed that if the background of Zara can prevent this lightning from affecting instore light, then the use of lighting here is not much different from lighting in closed background. Therefore, as an almost last pattern for window props. It can be said that the decision to use lighting to highlight products depends on the background design and its potential impact on the overall visual composition of the store.

Lastly, it is worth noting that open-end or see-through back window displays, such as those observed in Givenchy, Uniqlo, and Zara, typically do not feature props placed in the background. This design choice possibly aims to maintain a sense of openness and transparency, allowing customers to view the products and the store environment beyond the window. Therefore, there would not be props place at background for open-
end, see-through, or transparent window. This approach aligns with the concept of creating an inviting and immersive shopping experience, where customers can easily envision themselves interacting with the products within the store of Kalantari et al. (2022). Otherwise, the prop at background would be partition as happened in Ralph Lauren which then change the type of window from opened to semi-closed window display.

5.4 Comparison of Display Colors

In examining window colors, several patterns can be identified based on the practices of different retailers. One useful theory to understand these color schemes is the color wheel, which consists of primary, secondary, and tertiary colors (Diamond and Diamon, 2007). The color wheel also includes complementary colors, which are positioned opposite each other on the wheel and create a high contrast when used together. As a first pattern, high-end retailers, such as Ralph Lauren, Chanel, and Prada, consistently employ monochromatic and complementary color schemes in their window displays. A monochromatic color scheme revolves around a single dominant color, creating a sense of harmony and sophistication (Morgan, 2015). By utilizing a monochromatic approach, these retailers are able to convey a refined brand identity and emphasize a singular aesthetic vision. To complement the dominant color, accent colors are selectively incorporated into the displays of high-end retailers. The usually chosen accent colors are from shades of green, white, or black (see Table 5.), as these colors create subtle contrasts and enhance visual interest within the overall monochromatic scheme. This careful attention to accent colors demonstrates the meticulous design approach taken by high-end retailers, ensuring that each element in the window display contributes to the overall aesthetic impact as can be seen in Loewe display (see Figure 5.).

In contrast to high-end retailers, fast fashion retailers such as H&M, Uniqlo, and GAP exhibit a wider range of color scheme choices in their window displays. Hence, unlike the deliberate focus on a single dominant color found in high-end retailers, fast fashion retailers often incorporate multiple colors into their displays. This absence of a singular color as a prominent feature in fast fashion displays suggests a different strategic approach. According to research by Nobbs et al. (2015), high-end retailers favor having an iconic color and producing a single coherent message. While fast fashion retailers incorporating multiple colors in their displays can be driven by the need to capture the attention of a broader customer base and communicate a sense of dynamism and trendiness.

When it comes to the contrast between light and dark colors, and warm and cool colors, there are not any significant patterns here. However, a tendency can be observed that high-end fashion tends to favor the use of light versus dark contrasts, while fast fashion retailers lean towards warm versus cool contrasts. This means that in the world of high-end fashion, designers and brands often utilize the striking contrast between light and
dark shades to create visually impactful and sophisticated looks. On the other hand, fast fashion retailers, who aim to produce trendy and affordable clothing quickly, tend to focus on the interplay between warm and cool colors to create vibrant and eye-catching garments. This is aligned with Nobbs et al. (2015) findings that high street retailers often employ contrasts and color combinations in their window displays to grab attention. While luxury retailers adopt a more subtle approach by incorporating new lighting techniques to capture the interest of passersby.

In addition to the previously mentioned patterns, another notable pattern is the contrast level in window displays as high-end retailers tend to have higher color contrast, while fast fashion retailers generally exhibit lower contrast. While high-end retailers like Ralph Lauren and Chanel may not exhibit as high of contrast as some other luxury brands, their emphasis on timelessness and sophistication actually encourages them to rather a medium contrast more. This choice would allow them to create a more dramatic and luxurious visual impact while maintaining a cohesive brand identity. This is similar with Uniqlo and Gap that exhibit high contrast due to the use of bold graphic element, signage. Without it, their overall contrast level would be lower, similar to other fast fashion retailers.

Table 5 provides insights into the frequent use of specific colors in various design contexts. Notably, colors such as pink, red, yellow, black, and white are commonly employed. Among these, black and white are considered neutral and cool colors that play a crucial role in providing contrast and establishing a solid foundation for the overall design (White, 2017). Additionally, colors like yellow, red, pink, and brown fall under the category of warm colors, while blue violet and green are considered cool colors (Diamond and Diamond, 2007). Nonetheless, the warmth or coolness of colors like pink and green, which lie in the middle of the warm and cool spectrum, depends on their undertones or assisting colors. If pink has an orange undertone, it is considered warm, whereas a purple or violet undertone gives it a cool quality. Similarly, for green, a yellow undertone makes it a warm green, while a blue undertone categorizes it as cool green.

According to Diamond and Diamond (2007), warm colors have the ability to attract customers and stimulate their interest in trying on products. They also have an advancing effect, creating a perception of proximity. For instance, when faced with a limited display area, merchandisers may choose a pale and less intense blue color to create a sense of openness and spaciousness. Conversely, warm colors are employed to establish a cozy ambiance and give the impression of walls being closer (Diamond and Diamond, 2007). Hence, according to table 5, high-end window designs typically have warm colors take on a dominant role and cool colors as accents. Meaning that warm colors like red, yellow, and brown are prominently featured in such designs, while cool colors serve as complementary accents. On the other hand, in the window displays of fast fashion, cool colors tend to dominate, with warm colors playing a
secondary role as accents. This can be seen in Moncler’s display, where yellow (warm) is the dominant color and pink (cool) serves as an accent. This is similar with Prada, that has a monochromatic color scheme pink in warm shade as dominant color and white and black as cool color to accent the display. An example of fast fashion retailers is Mango where pink (warm) acts as accent color and white (cool) dominate the display.

Diamond and Diamond (2007) also explain that in visual presentations, achieving dominance is often accomplished by incorporating large elements. Therefore, visual merchandisers commonly use oversized graphics in combination with traditionally sized merchandise to capture attention and create a focal point. This presents a challenge for both Gap and Uniqlo displays, especially Uniqlo that the two main colors both have the potential to be dominant colors. This is because the repetition of color, shape, and texture also plays a significant role in establishing dominance within a design, drawing the eye's attention and emphasizes the importance of these elements to the customer (Diamond and Diamond, 2007). Hence, it is even more clear of the effort high-end retailers put in their display working with color, harmony elements and rhythm to send a uniform single strong message as the Mango below also achieved.

![Figure 10. Dominant and Accent color in Moncler (upper-left), Prada (upper-right), and Mango (bottom-left) and Uniqlo (bottom-right) windows displays (Photo by authors)](image-url)
6 Conclusion

In the final chapter of this thesis, the conclusion will be presented. It will start by addressing the research questions and providing integrated answers. Furthermore, the conclusion will delve into the research's implications. This chapter will also present this research's limitations and offer suggestions for future research.

6.1 Research summary

Visual merchandising holds a vital position in today's fiercely competitive retail industry, serving as a powerful tool to attract and engage customers (Mondol et al., 2021). Particularly, window displays that act as captivating showcases that influence consumer perceptions to drive traffic and sales (Sen et al., 2002). However, window display designs vary significantly between high-end and fast-fashion retailers, reflecting distinct branding strategies and target markets (Nobbs et al., 2015). Regarding this, theories of visual merchandising have provided valuable insights into the factors that contribute to these differences.

In this study, researchers have drawn upon several theories of visual merchandising to explain the differences in window display designs between high-end and fast-fashion retailers. These theories include the information and observation dimension and theme theory by Sen et al. (2002), window types and layout theory by Morgan (2015), and design attributes and color theory by Diamond and Diamond (2007). Additionally, the study takes into account the location and size of the window display, considering whether it is situatated indoors or outdoors, and whether it is a small or large window.

Based on these theories, the researchers compared and analyzed different window designs to further identify the similarities and differences between the window display elements of high-end fashion brands and fast fashion brands and the differences in their visual merchandising approaches. The study findings reveal notable distinctions in various elements of window display design, ranging from the purpose of the display, that leads to the theme, information conveyed, to the balance and harmony of the display which visually differs in terms of characteristics, props, density of item displayed, color, and contrast. Therefore, it already starts from the intention of the window display that high-end retailers’ intents to convey a message about the brand and the store while fast-fashion retailers are to promote products and increase sales. The layout and design of high-end and fast-fashion retailers are also different in that high-end retailers emphasize on balance of visual weight while but still create visual interest through asymmetrical displays. Fast-fashion retailers, on the other hand, have symmetrical display but happen to have unbalanced visual weight. Additionally, the focal points of high-end retailers are also often elevated from eye level while it is eye level or below eye level for fast-fashion retailers.
This finding hence highlighted the different brand positioning strategies employed by high-end and fast-fashion retailers. High-end retailers aim to establish a refined brand identity and singular aesthetic vision, using smooth, identical sleek props, specific colors, and lighting choices. They emphasize smaller groupings of curated products, creating an exclusive and luxurious impression. In contrast, the use of space in fast-fashion window displays are more densely filled to maximize the visibility of products which create a sense of excitement, accessibility, and availability with larger product groupings, that showcase abundance and variety.

Furthermore, high-end retailers exhibit a notable sense of harmony of color, shape, and texture and often feature a predominant color in their window displays. This is in contrast with fast-fashion retailers that exhibit less distinct patterns and colors. It has also been found that black and white are commonly used colors for both high-end and fast fashion retailers, but warm colors are prominent in high-end designs, while cool colors dominate fast-fashion displays. This is assumedly because high-end retailers aim for a refined brand identity and a singular aesthetic vision through their displays, while fast fashion retailers focus on capturing a broader customer base and conveying trendiness. In addition, from findings it is evident that smooth, sleek, and polished props are favored in the fashion industry, including the use of accent lighting in closed windows to avoid reflection and excessive glare. This is also described by Bastow-Shoop et al. (1991) that in closed-back windows, it is crucial to have a high level of general illumination, and the window lights must be strong enough in all windows to mitigate reflections from external objects such as parked cars and buildings. Hence, the indoor or outdoor stores there is no difference in accent lighting usage more than the type of window.

6.2 Implications

From a theoretical perspective, the study found that it is quite important for retailers to know how to strategically plan their window design and use in order to fully utilize the potential of this tool in achieving their business goals, especially through brand iconography and visual design that can enhance the retailer's brand identity. However, there is a deficiency in how they perceive and assess which elements are supportive and appropriate to their desired image and objectives. This thesis, therefore, builds on previous knowledge to develop a theoretical framework to analyze the design elements and approaches used by high-end and fast-fashion stores in their window displays. This theoretical framework can be used to analyze the ability of window displays design in communicating the intended messages to customers if it meets the retailer's marketing and branding objectives, which can be continuously evaluated by retailers to enhance their window display strategies.

From a management perspective, by exploring the differences in window display elements and strategies between high-end fashion brands and fast fashion brands, it
can first provide valuable insights to managers especially small fashion retailers without a professional design team to compete more effectively in this competitive market. This knowledge can help guide retailers to design, identify, and select the most appropriate window display designs based on target market preferences and trends. By doing so, they can effectively engage potential consumers, establish initial communication, and effectively communicate the value of their merchandise. Ultimately, this can enhance store competitiveness, attract more customers into stores, increase sales, and drive business success.

Furthermore, understanding which elements suit and support their intended image and goals is of great value for retailers. By identifying the right elements for their window displays, retailers can effectively convey the desired brand image and message to their target audience. This knowledge allows them to align their window displays with their overall marketing and branding strategies, creating a cohesive and impactful visual representation of their brand. This not only attracts the right customers but also helps in building a strong brand identity and differentiating themselves from competitors. Because by carefully selecting and incorporating the appropriate elements, retailers can fully realize the potential of this tool in achieving their business goals.

Another important management implication is resource allocation. The creation of aesthetically beautiful displays is often a major investment for high-end goods, whereas fast-fashion brands prioritize rapid updates. Retailers can allocate resources and budget wisely by looking at these tactics to find the best way to do so. In addition, analyzing visual merchandising tactics also encourages creativity and flexibility. Managers must keep up with new trends and consumer preferences because the fashion industry is continuously changing. Managers can be inspired to adopt new technology, interactive aspects, and innovative displays into their own visual merchandising efforts by studying successful tactics. This will help them stay adaptable and pertinent in a constantly changing world.

6.3 Limitations

For the limitations of this research, the research focuses specifically on the design characteristics of window displays in the context of high-end and fast-fashion retailers. However, it does not delve into other factors that may influence window display design, such as cultural preferences, regional variations, or specific store contexts. Therefore, the findings may not apply to all retail sectors or geographic locations. Furthermore, since fashion trends and consumer preferences are dynamic and change quite rapidly, although fashion trends can be predicted to a certain extent, they cannot be accurately identified, therefore, due to the unique nature of the fashion industry, there is still limitation in terms of fashion trends, although the study can provide valuable insights for retailers.
Besides, the sample size for this study was relatively limited and focused only on high-end and fast fashion retailers in specific geographic locations at specific time periods. Therefore, the findings may not be representative of the entire population of retailers in these sectors and lack generalizability. There may also be variations in window display design among different subcategories, regions or time that may result in different findings. Hence, a larger and more diverse sample at different region and time would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the design characteristics across the industry. Furthermore, this research lack of consideration for the retailer's perspective with the analysis focusing primarily on the visual characteristics and design elements of window displays, it does not take into account the specific goals, strategies, and constraints that retailers may have in creating these displays. Therefore, an interview to gain the retailer's perspective may have provided more insight into their decision-making processes and the specific goals they aim to achieve through their window display designs.

In addition, with the development of technology, recently retailers have started to prefer to include high-tech technology in their windows as well as electronic screens for their displays (Pantano and Vannucci, 2019). However, in this paper, the authors prefer to explore more traditional window displays, which also leads to a certain degree of incompleteness. Moreover, research relies on content analysis, which inherently involves subjective judgment and interpretation. Hence even though we use inter-rater reliability and employ standardized evaluation criteria, subjective factors such as personal preferences or biases, may still influence the analysis and potentially introduce limitations or inconsistencies in the findings.

Finally, during our analysis, we encountered a question regarding the preference for open or see-through windows in outdoor stores. However, due to the limited data available, we cannot provide a definitive answer at this time. Hence, further research and data collection are necessary to explore this aspect in more detail and understand the factors that influence the choice between open or see-through windows in both outdoor and indoor retail environments. Since the use of open or see-through windows can have implications for the overall design and functionality of the window display allowing passerby to see the displayed merchandise and creating a sense of curiosity that encourage potential customers to enter the store.

6.4 Future research

Future research in the field of window display design for high-end and fast-fashion retailers can focus on several key areas to expand our understanding and address existing knowledge gaps. One important avenue for future exploration is conducting comparative analyses across different retail segments. While this summary specifically highlighted the differences between high-end and fast-fashion retailers, it would be valuable to extend these comparisons across markets, cultures, and segments. By
examining the window display practices of various settings, researchers can identify unique characteristics and trends specific to each market, culture and segment which can also contribute to developing culturally sensitive and effective window display strategies for global retailers.

Investigating the long-term impact of window displays is another important area for future research. While existing studies mainly focus on the immediate effects of window displays on consumer behavior, exploring the long-term effects, such as brand perception, customer loyalty, and sales performance over an extended period, can provide insights into the sustained effectiveness and return on investment (ROI) of window display strategies. Furthermore, the rapid advancement of technology opens new possibilities in window display design. Future research can explore the effectiveness, consumer responses, and practical implications of integrating digital elements, interactive displays, and augmented reality into window designs. This can involve assessing the impact of interactive elements on engagement, exploring innovative ways to enhance the customer experience, and understanding the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing technology-driven displays. By delving deeper into these areas, future research can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of window display design and its impact on consumer behavior, brand perception, and retail success.
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Book


**Business**


Legal Document/Regulation


Theses/ Dissertations


Websites


Appendices

Appendix A – Four sections of Operationalization

1. Window Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Reasoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information dimension</strong></td>
<td>To assess whether the information presented in the display is more product-related or store-related.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Sen et al., 2002)</td>
<td>• Product-related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Store-related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observation dimension</strong></td>
<td>To assess whether the information presented in the display is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Sen et al., 2002)</td>
<td>• observed (e.g., sale announcement) or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• inferred (e.g., store’s image).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background</strong></td>
<td>To assess the type of background used in the display.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Morgan, 2015)</td>
<td>• Open (e.g., no barrier between the display and passersby),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Closed (e.g., passersby have no assess to product in window display),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mixed (e.g., partially open).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
<td>To assess and categorize the main theme of the display.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Sen et al., 2002;</td>
<td>• Message (e.g., promoting sustainable fashion),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diamond and Diamond, 2007)</td>
<td>• Product (e.g., showcasing specific items),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Promotion (e.g., sale or discount),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Brand (e.g., brand logo).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Window Layout and Design attributes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Reasoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design attributes</strong></td>
<td>To assess the design elements, which are fundamental principles used in creating any visual design in balance, harmony, and rhythm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Balance</strong> - Refers to the distribution of visual weight in a design. (Diamond and Diamond, 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Symmetrical: when the elements in a design are mirrored on either side of a central axis and creates a sense of stability order, and clarity, and often conveys a more formal and traditional aesthetic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Asymmetrical: when the elements or masses in a design are arranged in an uneven manner. Asymmetrical balance can create a more dynamic and visually interesting display. It can convey energy and movement, capturing the viewer’s attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Harmony</strong> - Refers to the pleasing combination of different design elements. When different elements in a design work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

xv
together cohesively and create a sense of unity and harmony. 
(Diamond and Diamond, 2007)
- **Color harmony**: Using colors that complement each other or belong to the same color scheme.
- **Shape harmony**: Using shapes that are similar in size or style.
- **Texture harmony**: Using textures that complement each other or belong to the same visual style.

- **Rhythm** refers to the repetition of certain design elements to create a sense of movement and visual interest. 
(Diamond and Diamond, 2007)
- **Repetition**: Repeating a particular design element, such as a shape, color, or texture, at regular intervals to create a pattern that leads the viewer's eye.
- **Alternation**: Alternating between two or more design elements, such as colors or shapes, in a regular pattern to create a sense of movement and visual interest.
- **Gradation**: Gradually changing the size, color, or shape of a design element to create a sense of progression or flow.

To assess the arrangement of elements in terms of focal point, traffic flow, composition, and density. Because these are concerned with how the individual elements within a display are arranged to create a visually compelling and effective display.

- **Focal point** - Refers to the part of the display that immediately catches the viewer's eye. Displays with a clear focal point will have an element that immediately captures the viewer's attention, guides the viewers, and creates a sense of hierarchy in the display. Displays without a clear focal point may be visually confusing or overwhelming, categorized into Center/Off-center and Eye level/ Elevated (above eye level). 
(Morgan, 2015)

- **Traffic flow** - Refers to the path that viewers are likely to follow when viewing each display will be determined, based on the arrangement of key elements and the placement of signage. To categorize whether it starts from left or right, is considered from the desired focal point or main visual element within the display that locate at the Left or Right. 
(Morgan, 2015)

- **Composition** - Refers to the overall arrangement of elements in the display. A balanced composition, whether achieved through symmetrical or asymmetrical arrangements, aims to distribute visual weight evenly and create a sense of order and stability. The elements are organized in a way that is clear and easily understood by the viewer since the goal is to communicate the intended message without causing confusion.
or uncertainty. Therefore, depending on if the visual weight of the elements is distributed evenly or not, it can be categorized as Balance and Unbalance. (Morgan, 2015)

- **Density** – Refer to the amount of visual information in the display, such amount of merchandise and props displayed within the display area, categorizing in Sparse, Moderate, Dense. (Kerfoot et al., 2003; Moore et al., 2010)

3. Windows props

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Concept</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Prop type** (Morgan, 2015) | To identify and categorize the props used in display.  
- Merchandise (e.g., mannequins or clothing racks displaying the latest styles and trends)  
- Non-merchandise props (to create certain atmosphere or story). |
| **Prop Proportion** (Morgan, 2015) | To evaluate the balance of props and merchandise that allows the merchandise to be the primary focus of the display.  
- Balance  
  (Refers to the ratio of props to merchandise in a display. A balanced display typically has 2-3 props for every 1-3 pieces of merchandise, which allows the merchandise to be the primary focus of the display.).  
- Overshadow  
  (Refers to a situation where the props in a display are too dominant, which can detract from the merchandise and make it less noticeable or appealing to customers. This can happen if there are too many props or if the props are too large or visually distracting.)  
- Under-shadow  
  (Refers to a situation where the props in a display are not prominent enough and fail to draw attention to the merchandise. This can happen if there are too few props or if they are too small or unremarkable compared to the merchandise.) |
| **Prop Placement** (Kerfoot et al., 2003; Moore et al., 2010; Nobbs et al., 2015) | To analyze the placement of props in the window display and grouping of props.  
- Foreground, middle ground, background (Diamond and Diamond, 2007)  
- Large grouping or small grouping (Morgan, 2015)  
  (A larger grouping might include more props or multiple layers of visual interest to create a more complex and dynamic display.)  
  (A small grouping typically consists of a limited number of props or merchandise items, designed to highlight a specific product or theme.) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Prop Size</strong></th>
<th>To assess the prop scale compares to human body as it can affect the balance and composition of a scene:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Diamond and Diamond, 2007)</td>
<td>- Large (exaggerate), Small (mini), Medium (realistic).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Prop color</strong></th>
<th>To evaluate the use of color in props in the window display:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Morgan, 2015)</td>
<td>- Bold (brightly colored, e.g., red, orange, yellow, neon)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Subtle (muted/earth tones e.g., pastels, beige, gray, or white.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Monochromatic and Multi-colored</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Prop Texture</strong></th>
<th>To analyze the texture of the props used in the window display.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Diamond and Diamond, 2007)</td>
<td>- Smooth/matte, rough, shiny</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Prop Lighting</strong></th>
<th>To assess whether there is a use of lighting to set a mood or draw attention to specific props or products in the window display.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Diamond and Diamond, 2007)</td>
<td>- Highlighted*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Non-highlighted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In this thesis we will not look at illumination lighting but accent lighting to highlight specific area inside the display window. Therefore, the accidentally falling light on object of illumination lighting will not be considered as it is not accenting lighting and act in highlight any specific area or specific item.

4. Window Color

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sub-concept</strong></th>
<th><strong>Reasoning</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Color scheme</strong></td>
<td>Identify the combination of colors used in the display and how they work together to create a cohesive look.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- monochromatic, complementary (split or double, and triadic), analogous, neutral (Morgan, 2015; Schulz, 2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contrast</strong></td>
<td>Analyze and record the use of contrast in the display and how it draws attention to certain elements or creates a particular mood. High contrast can create a bold and dramatic effect, while low contrast can create a more subtle and calming mood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Diamond and Diamon, 2007)</td>
<td>- light vs. dark or warm vs. cool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- low, medium, or high contrast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dominant color</strong></td>
<td>Identify the primary color used in the display, which can influence the mood and tone of the display. It is the most prominent, covers a large area and eye-catching color used. This means it has more visual weight and attracts immediate attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Diamond and Diamon, 2007)</td>
<td>- Record the most prominent color in the display</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accent color</strong></td>
<td>Identify any additional colors used in the display, which have been used to highlight certain products or elements. These accent colors create a focal point to draw attention or provide visual variety. Accent colors have less visual weight and are used to add emphasize or contrast specific elements. It is often in small areas and highlights specific details or areas of interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Diamond and Diamon, 2007)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Record the use of accent colors in the display
Appendix B – Photos of window displays

High-Ends Fashion Retailers

1. Ralph Lauren

2. Prada
3. Moncler

4. LOEWE
5. Givenchy
6. Chanel
Fast-Fashion Retailer

1. Zara
2. H&M
3. Pull & Bear
4. Uniqlo
5. Mango
6. GAP
Appendix C – Authors Individual Contribution – Yufan Cui

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Varissara Nattakrannuwat (%)</th>
<th>Yufan Cui (%)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D – Authors Individual Contribution – Varissara Nattakrannuwat

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