THE ALLURE OF THE WINDOW DISPLAY

A Senior Scholars Thesis

by

TYNE P. VARELA

Submitted to Honors and Undergraduate Research
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the designation as

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOLAR

May 2012

Major: Environmental Design

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Approved by:

Research Advisor: Rodney Hill
Associate Director, Honors and Undergraduate Research: Duncan MacKenzie

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ABSTRACT

The Allure of the Window Display. (May 2012)

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The purpose of this research study is to examine the influence window displays have on consumers and the design techniques required in a window display to entice people to enter a store. From observation, I have found that stores that invest time and money into the face of their stores have more influence and intrigue than stores that do not. My research begins with an extensive literature review that explores the design principles that shape window displays and the importance of the visual appeal for consumers. I took this information and applied it to interviews with window designers to find out first hand how window displays are executed from concept to execution and how they use visual appeal to create a sense of allure. Simultaneously, I analyzed three empirical studies that did similar research to develop my final project further. The results of my interviews and data from my empirical studies discovered that window displays must be artistic to encourage exploration, reinforce the identity of the store, and combine color and lighting well.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to take this time to thank my advisor, Professor Rodney Hill, whose help

and guidance has been appreciated from my first to my final year in school. Thank you

for your wonderful attitude and never being too busy to help out a student in need.

A special thank you goes to Dr. Mark Clayton whose teachings in the field of

architectural research has given me the foundation to execute my research.

NOMENCLATURE

IRB   Institutional Review Board

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Down through the ages, anyone with something to sell has always looked for appealing ways to present their products" (Gallo & Pietro, 2007). The explanation for how selling products is not independent of the presentation of the product being sold is the basis for this project. The purpose of this research study is to look at the influence the window display has on consumers as well as the design techniques employed in a window display to entice people to enter a store. What qualities must a store window present in order to pull consumers from outside their store and into their store? My informal observation is that stores that invest time and money into the face of their stores and the methods to present their merchandise have more influence and intrigue than stores that do not. Therefore, they are more successful at bringing people into their store. This research will explore this conjecture by collecting empirical data and expert opinion. The research has been conducted in a systematic and careful way to reach well-supported conclusions. The initial step was to conduct a thorough review of literature to provide knowledge of prior related work and the accepted principles that govern display window design. Empirical studies were analyzed that did statistical research on window displays. Additionally, an interview with a window display designer, Kara Paslay, helps

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This thesis follows the style of *Art, Design, and Communication in Higher Education*.

to establish common practice and answers questions about the connection of design and retail business. Through triangulation, these data sources establish reliable evidence to support conclusions about window displays. The research reinforces the assertion that good design can entice customers to notice merchandise and enter a store.

Chapter I includes a review of literature and its summary as a set of principles for display design. Chapter II describes the data collection methods: the method for choosing experts to interview, the method for analyzing empirical studies, and the method to protect the privacy of participants in the research. Chapter III presents the results of the data, chapter IV provides the conclusions and explains the design of my window display based on the results of this study.

Introduction to literature

An extensive literature analysis has included the history and evolution of window displays, importance of window displays commercially, psychology of consumerism related to window displays, color, lighting, signage, and themes as design techniques.

History and evolution of window displays

Before industrialization, display methods were simple. The arrival of mass-produced goods brought on the first department stores and first shopping arcades. This, combined with Haussmann's model of the city, which sanctioned the connection between town planning and retail, inducing new patterns of consumer behavior, led to the introduction

of window displays (Gallo & Pietro, 2007). "It is the department store, with its huge array of merchandise and vast amount of window space, that is the pioneer of the window display" (Morgan, 2008). In the late 1800s, consumer goods could be seen displayed in stage scenery mirroring the World Fairs' lavish installments. By the 1900s, the urban landscape began to be a showcase for projects, with styling determined by the developing environment (Gallo & Pietro, 2007). Beginning in the 1930s, movies and musicals impacted the approach to window dressing. Films such as *Gone with the Wind* and artists such as Andy Warhol brought a taste of their own cultural sensibilities to the masses through inspirational imitation in window dressing (Fritz, n.d.). Information was limited on the history of window displays, but a brief understanding of how they were established help understand their significance to retail. While window displays are no longer seen as an innovative outlet in the marketing world compared to more advanced technology like the Internet, their roots are relatively new in that they were planted in the early 1900s when the urban landscape began to be a showcase for consumer goods (Gallo & Pietro, 2007). "Even in the present era of rampant e-commerce, the store window's role has by no means dwindled" (Gallo & Pietro, 2007) Technology, at the designer's disposal, has made a window display nearly limitless to the array of ideas it can encompass. "The means at the designer's disposal today are virtually unlimited, and although traditional and standard display devices continue to exist, the need for outshining rivals has prompted some highly personalized variants on those same standard fittings" (Gallo & Pietro, 2007). Window displays now can spill into streets, be interactive, or include live dancers and actors. "Harrods, London,

installed a window scheme for their 'Harrods Rocks' promotion that pushed the boundaries of retail technology. They invited their customers to not only view the store's windows but to interact with them by pressing touch-sensitive panels adhered to the window glass to create music" (Morgan, 2010). "A store window is no longer just a space that a retailer uses to promote their products… the windows of the twenty-first century are dynamic; they are created to enthuse and challenge the consumer and ultimately entice them into the store" (Morgan, 2010). Morgan also notes that "the longer a possible buyer is captivated by a window display, the more likely it is that they will enter the store and spend" (2010).

Importance of window displays commercially

"Too often, the smaller, independent stores feel that the resources or ideas for effective windows are the exclusive domain of the big department stores or the costly consultants" (Diamond & Diamond, 2007). This common misconception warrants that small businesses choose to believe it requires a large budget in order to have an effective window display. This attitude can be unfavorable to their position as retailers. Diamond and Diamond explain, "What they must remember is that they are in competition for the same shopping dollar and can use their window as their most effective marketing tool" (Diamond & Diamond, 2007). They are reassuring that window displays, despite a business's financial means, are necessary for that retailer to be successful. "There is no doubt that windows can be used to sell if they are eye-catching and innovative. They are the only major marketing tool that you do not have to pay for because they are part of

the store's architecture" (Morgan, 2008). Unlike the advertising that may cost millions such as television commercials, magazine advertisements, and billboards, window displays are a relatively free form of marketing. The window itself is included in the rent. Most importantly, the marketing is done in front of the store. This eliminates any commute if the target audience becomes interested in making a purchase. The decision can be made immediately whether to enter the store or not. Additionally, Morgan discovers in an interview with the Creative Director of Selfridges, a high-end department store in the United Kingdom, "If Selfridges were a magazine, the windows would be the front cover" (Morgan, 2008). This furthers the argument that windows have a strong relationship with the store itself. The decision to open a magazine occurs when the front cover has created interest. The decision to enter a store must then be related to the interest created in the window display. "The challenge for the visual merchandisers has always been to produce eye catching window displays that grab the customer's attention and encourage them to shop. Today, these glazed canvases promote the store's brand identity, keep the customer's informed of fashion trends and ultimately drive sales" (Morgan, 2010).

Store identities in window displays

"Most of all a window design aims to showcase the brand's market identity" (Gallo & Pietro, 2007). Window displays are the consumers' first impression of the store inside. Because they are the front of the store, they serve as the face of the store to the world much like the retailer's logo. The window display must complement the entirety of the

brand's image. It cannot clash with goals that the retailer has in mind for its consumers.

The window displays hold a promise of what the consumer may find if they were to

enter into the store. This is not limited to the merchandise, but also to the style,

innovation, and ambience. "A well dressed window not only attracts shoppers into the

store, it also enforces the retailer's brand image" (Morgan, 2008). In this way, the

window display holds the identity of the brand in its hand. It is the designers who "have

the necessary insights and abilities to help retail operations distinguish and differentiate

themselves from the competition, giving them an individuality so important to success in

this challenging business area… they often deliver the concepts and designs that make

their companies visually unique" (Diamond et al., 2007).   In a market where being

unique and cutting edge is coveted, retailers must stay above market trends in order to

sell consumers something never seen before, fascinate them, and create intrigue. In an

interview with Paul Symes, the Fortum & Mason window designer, he said, "The brand

image is of paramount importance when designing a window scheme; the scheme should

not only sit comfortably with the brand image but also embrace it" (Morgan, 2008).

Psychological importance

In *Psychological Principles of Marketing and Consumer Behavior*, the author, Stewart

Henderson Britt writes, "Wants are derived from needs. A communicator can make his

audience members aware of their needs by identifying specific ways in which their

wants might be met. These needs then become wants; and from the communicator's

standpoint, hopefully the audience members seek ways to fulfill these wants. The

communicator hopes that fulfillment will be through the desired behavior implied by his message" (1978). Window displays can act as the messenger between a consumer's need and that need being met. For example, you may have never thought about needing an apron because you do not cook. However, with the right presentation, a window display can convince you that not only do you want to start cooking, that in order to cook, you need this apron on display. This example supports the claim that Gallo and Pietro make on how window displays transmit a subtle "message that relies on illusion to an imaginary or projected lifestyle, merely hinting at the identity of the prospective purchaser" (2007). "They must entice" (Diamond et al., 2007) and window displays are "about educating and exciting customers about why they can't live without it" (Bartley Ingram via Morgan, 2008).

Color

"Color is the biggest motivation for shopping" (Pegler, 2006). "Color is purchased before size, fit, or price" (Pegler, 2006). "It can set mood, emphasize features, and highlight a product" (Bell & Ternus, 2012). "The most effective window displays are designed with a strong emphasis on colour" (Morgan, 2010). These quotes taken from experienced visual merchandisers and window display designers emphasize the importance of color when making decisions on how to creatively display merchandise. This is vital due to the fact that "In market research studies, it has been determined that 60 percent of acceptance or rejection of a product is based on its color. Within 90 seconds, a person will make a choice to accept or reject a purchase" (Bleicher, 2005).

According to The Color Marketing Group (CMG), a group of color specialists that guides and forecasts the direction that color trends are moving, America's color taste is softening and warming up. Earth tones show more care for the environment and a need for comfort (Pegler, 2006). James Martin, an architectural color consultant states, "People have been stressed out, assaulted by the media and hyped out to the point of exhaustion" (Pegler, 2006). "There is no doubt that colour is a universal instrument used to show or influence emotions" (Morgan, 2010). Although color psychology is a tool for most window designers and visual merchandisers, not every person has the same reaction to a single color while shopping. Cultural and regional variations can cause confusion. "Other cultures may apply different significance to certain colors" (Bell & Ternus, 2012). However, there are a few general assumptions that can be made by most colors. In *Silent Selling*, Bell and Ternus (2012) discuss the generalizations of most colors: yellow is sunshine and innovative; orange is overt and filled with anticipation; red is passionate, conveys a message, and is patriotic; pink is sweet but can connote something raw; green is alive and a "growing" color; blue is comfortable and is a favorite of most; purple is distinct and tasteful, gray is neutral and while is makes separations, it makes no statements; brown is earthy, warm, and simple; white it a strong supporting player that makes other colors bolder and can also be associated with newness; black is mysterious and echoes sophistication (Bell & Ternus, 2012). In *Color Design Workbook*, Terry Stone researched color meanings and found that red is the most visually dominant color; yellow is the first color that the human eye notices; blue

suppresses hunger; green is the easiest color on the eyes; purple is said to enhance imagination; orange is an appetite stimulant and is used for visibility enhancement; black is supposed to boost confidence; white can give people headaches for being so bright; and gray seldom evokes strong emotions (Stone, 2006). Window designers should be aware of how colors can affect the emotions and attitude of a viewer. Fast food restaurants have embraced this information to inform their color choices to stimulate customers to buy their food. Notice that many restaurants do not use blue because it is a hunger suppressant. Window designers must know beforehand what message they want to convey prior to choosing the color to act in their display.

In a window display, the pairing of colors is just as important as the choosing of a single color. The backdrop and the merchandise must work together to promote the person passing to enter the store. "The background color is important because it can either add or detract from the color of the merchandise presented" (Bell & Ternus, 2012). A white dress in front of a stark white backdrop can make the dress appear to be dingy. Change the backdrop to a deep gray, and the dress will appear to be whiter (Bell & Ternus, 2012). "The accessories shown with the merchandise can also affect the color" (Bell & Ternus, 2012). Take a white dress and pair it with a navy belt. The navy belt will contrast with the white dress to give it a crisp and sparkling presentation. Take a white dress and pair it with a beige belt. The white dress is softened in proximity to the beige. Merchandise will rely on sharper and more contrasting accessories that help the product stand out (Bell & Ternus, 2012).

"There is no doubt that the use of colour can attract attention and send positive messages to a future customer. Most visual merchandisers take inspiration for the colour scheme from the products they are tasked with displaying. Whether following a fashion trend or being bold enough to make an individual statement that draws the eye, colour is by far the most efficient way to create the backdrop for an effective window display" (Morgan, 2010).   It appears that a well-chosen color scheme will be shown to be more successful in a window display than one that lacks a thought-out color scheme.

Lighting

"Color– as color– means little unless it is considered in relation to the type of light in which the color is seen. It is light that makes all things visible" (Pegler, 2006). "The cheapest and most effective starting place in getting attention and recognition is with good lighting" (Pegler, 2006). Without light, there is no color, and without color, there is no allure to enter the store—lighting in its purest form makes the first impression. "Lighting should never be an afterthought. The process of lighting a window should be planned at the same time as the window scheme" (Morgan, 2008).   For window displays, lights must be incandescent or MR16 miniature low-voltage tungsten in order to prevent casting light onto the glass but to shine directly onto the merchandise (Pegler, 2006). MR16 (miniature reflector) is a lamp that emits sharp bright light and will illuminate merchandise at four or five times the ambient level of other lamps. They burn cooler and use less energy. For open-back window displays, the light must shine

stronger than the light offered inside the store. If a person is walking by sees the light,

they will also see the merchandise, and be made aware of the value of retail items inside

the store. Lighting offered by an enclosed display window—one with three walls, a

floor, and a ceiling, has the opportunity to go further with the lighting. Window

designers can use the lighting to create color schemes to dramatize the setting. By the

use of filters, a window display can appear to be snowing, raining, starlit, or have the

illusion of fireworks (Pegler, 2006). To control the light that may enter from the sun,

designers are encouraged to set up their display as far back from the window as possible,

to fight glare and reflection (Pegler, 2006). "As well as highlighting the products,

lighting undoubtedly adds excitement to a window display" (Morgan, 2010).

Themes

Themes refer to "the creative element that will be used to support the product" and they

are used to "create drama, to tell a story, and to inspire" (Morgan, 2008). "A theme is

the main topic of the window presentation. It should include the color, the props, and

the relevant merchandise that will make the overall idea come to life" (Morgan, 2008).

"The product on most occasions will help dictate what the overall window presentation

will look like" (Morgan, 2008). Morschino's design gives form to fantasy by displaying

their line of shoes riding various roller coasters and Ferris wheels in their window

display "giving a poetic twist to the rather prosaic job of product promotion" (Gallo &

Pietro, 2007). Another example includes using imagery of a well-known concept and

twisting it to foster interest. For example, Flos, a design firm, used the idea of a police

investigation line-up with the suspects as their products—lamps. The lamps are lined up against a backdrop of red lines measuring heights while the glass is stamped 'WANTED' (Gallo & Pietro, 2007). These techniques create interest while displaying the product that they want you to buy. While these products may indeed be interesting to look at, does it create enough interest to enter the store?

Graphics and signage

"There is no doubt that an illustration (graphic) or piece of text (signage) in a window is a sure-fire way to get a statement across to the customer, be it piece driven or informative…the use of bold, colorful text can enhance many window displays. Often signage and graphics may be used as a statement to support the window theme, or sometimes as the prop that ties a window scheme together" (Morgan, 2008). When Bartley Ingram, a Visual Merchandising Director, was asked by Tony Morgan in *Visual Merchandising,* about the importance of signage and graphics in store windows, he responded, "Signage is probably the most important component to any display. You can't assume that every person who sees a display is going to understand it. There are many ingredients that go into signage. It needs to educate, explain, and make the product something you just have to have" (Morgan, 2008). Morgan also asked Brad John and John Sencion, founders of Flight 001, a store specializing in travel goods, the importance of signage in their stores. They responded, "Signage is our dialogue in courting our customers, so it is very important. The challenge is making signage unobtrusive but meaningful" (Morgan, 2008). Morgan notes that text and images should

be a secondary visual tool compared to the main priority: to display the product effectively (2010). "Window signage should be planned at the same time as the scheme or theme—it should never be an afterthought" (Morgan, 2008). While signage may declare that a sale is occurring, it can also serve to further a theme. For example, in a window display exhibiting an obnoxious amount of kitchen and home goods strewn about in a reckless fashion, the sign in a speech bubble reads 'Everything but the kitchen sink.' The display is an integral use of cleverness and as a way to tie the text together with the display (Morgan, 2008).

Elements as a whole

While these specific elements, color, graphics and signs, lighting, and theme appear to be the most written about elements in the literature review, Oh and Petrie (2012) construe that "esthetic properties of visual stimuli leading to preference and the underlying mechanism have long been of interest to researchers in art, environmental psychology, and marketing". He continues to say that the individual properties are not reliable to drive pleasure; instead, he used Berlyne (1971) studies to conclude "collative properties (change, complexity, and novelty) that determine preference due to the moderate level of arousal induced by these properties encourage exploration." Furthermore, Oh and Petrie describe the Gestalt principles (balance, symmetry, continuation, closure, figure-ground, focal point, isomorphic correspondence, proximity, similarity, and unity/harmony) as organization properties that may also produce visual understanding (2012). "Cumulated prior studies seem to suggest that visual elements

facilitating understanding (Gestalt principles) or exploration (Berlyne) produce approach behaviors" (Oh & Petrie, 2011). Furthermore, Edwards and Shackley explain in their journal article how cognitive and social explanation can focus on content and meaning *or* on form, layout, and source, which can explain how a window display may change someone's perception of a product solely on how it is presented (1992).

Conclusions from the literature review

After scouring books and journal articles on window displays and visual merchandising, I have discovered that window displays are a complex form of design in which several factors: color, signage, graphics, lighting, themes, and harmony in the overall window display must coexist to create allure and present merchandise in a way that intrigues a person to enter. In addition, a psychological approach reinforces that intrigue cannot be created by one specific design element alone, and principles like the Gestalt principles rationalize that it is the design as a whole that creates intrigue. The literature informed my research of basic knowledge in order to create a display of my own in terms of what lighting works best during certain times of the day, and how to pair colors successfully. From what I have read in the literature review, color and signage are presented as the most vital part of display with one author suggesting that color is the most pivotal part of the display; challenging another author who suggested that signage is the most important. I will pursue this contradiction further to find a resolution.

Next step

The next step of my research project was to take the information gathered in my literature review and apply it to an interview to find specific, first-hand knowledge of the design process from someone who designs and executes the window displays, and the results of that work. Also, I analyzed previous window display research projects that have studied different aspects of the consumer and window display relationship to find an overall conclusion to directly benefit the results of my thesis.

CHAPTER II

METHODS

My method for conducting research, in order to obtain the most valid information, is to take on a multi-method research approach to complement what I discovered in the literature review. Due to the research's soft science quality, I opted to use two different methods to find results so that the validity will be stronger: empirical studies drawn from the literature, and interviews I then applied the insights gained to design a window display to further explore, illustrate, and test the concepts.

Empirical studies

Researchers prior to my project have asked the same questions: are window displays necessary? What styles attract customers? Why are they effective? Researchers from universities as well as professionals have looked into this matter and created studies that suggest answers for these questions with mathematical and systematic rigor. Three specific projects from the *International Journal of Advertising* and the *Journal of Retail and Consumer Services* use their sources in professional research to make connections between the window display and consumer. In Chapter III, I will give results of their projects as empirical studies and make further conclusions using the three empirical studies collectively.

Institutional review board

In order to protect the privacy of human subjects (i.e. the designers for interviews), I obtained the Institutional Reviews Board's (IRB) approval. This approval was gained by submitting a detailed request and summary of how I will be using human subjects, receiving the needed signatures, as well as taking an online test to be educated in the field of protecting human subjects. After submitting the IRB request in early November, I received approval in early February to continue my research. Furthermore, I informed my human subjects the risks involved in participating and received consent from them.

Interviews

Because my final project was to design my own window display, I interviewed a window designer to ask her insights and expertise in the world of window design. In my literature review, I discovered that many authors disagreed on what was most important in design concepts, and I wanted further opinions from designer's currently in the field of women's clothing.

I created my interview questions after conducting my literature review to find what designers specifically do in their work with their store. In order to avoid generalizations, I opted to ask free response answers. Table 1 presents questions asked of the participant to establish background information.

Table 1. Background information. This table explains the relationship between the questions I asked in the interviews and the purpose of the questions. This table focuses on the interviewee's background information.

Interview Questions	Purpose of Question
What is your name?	To identify different subjects
How were you educated in this field? If not, please explain how you came to be a window designer.	I wanted to know if they were educated specifically in this field or they came to this position through other paths.
What stores have you designed for?	This answer would give me an idea of what merchandise they work with, the budget they may have, how much experience they have, as well as what their style may be.
What is your typical budget range?	This may greatly affect what they are able to do or if they are used to working within a budget. Part of my project is to create steps for businesses that cannot afford a designer.
What is your role in the design process?	This question is to find out if the designers work in a group or alone and how/what they contributed.

From there, I used the Internet to discover window designers to contact. I used websites such as linkedin.com, an online professional networking tool, Google search engine to broaden the scope of my interviewees, and lastly, a referral from my advisor.   I discovered Kara Paslay on Pinterest, an online pin board featuring images that people

Table 2. Design methods. This table explains the relationship between the questions I asked in the interviews and why I chose to ask those questions. This table focuses on the interviewee's design methods.

Interview Question	Purpose of Question
When designing for a window, please give a statement of your course of action from concept to execution.	This question serves to better understand the step-by-step process in creating window displays.
What design techniques do you find most effective and why?	I wanted their personal opinion on how they prefer to design.
Do you design with merchandise in mind? Or do you find merchandise that fits your design concept?	This question determines how the designer starts the design process.
What use does lighting have in your displays?	I wanted their opinion of lighting as a design technique.
What colors attracts people? Colorful merchandise or colorful display?	I wanted their opinion on color as a design technique.
Rank these sources of inspiration from most to least importance. What inspires you the most? How have you used it?	In this question, I gave the designers many examples of where inspiration may come from that way we can reproduce some of this creativity.

can 'pin' from various websites. Upon discovering her and looking at her design work, I

emailed her inquiring if she would be interested in participating in the research. Because

Table 3. Marketing factors. This table explains the relationship between the questions I asked in the interviews and why I chose to ask those questions. This table focuses on the interviewee's marketing factors that they have to consider.

Interview Questions	Purpose of Question
How important are window displays to the retailer's success? Vital, Expected, or Not necessary?	I wanted the designers' knowledge of how the commercial side of the business has affected them.
Can you think of a time when your display brought attention to the store or a specific piece of merchandise? Explain.	The purpose of this question was to receive some information proving that window displays are important commercially.
"Many retailers believe that exciting fashion displays in store windows are miniature theatrical productions that turn passer byres into window shoppers. The fashion message must be strong enough to compel window shoppers to enter the store and locate the item in the department. Effective fashion windows mark the first step in a planned progression that leads shoppers from viewing into purchasing." –Judy Bell To what extent do you believe in that statement?	This quote was to get further information that wasn't covered in my previous questions.

I found my designers to interview through the Internet, I continued to use the Internet to conduct the interviews because of the range of locations in which the designers live. I contacted the designers prior to interviewing them to introduce myself, tell them what my project was about and why I wanted their help, and lastly, to ask if they were interested. Once I established the relationship, I sent them an interview through email.

Table 2 and Table 3 represent the rest of the interview questions I asked along with each questions' purpose.

I chose to ask open ended questions so the designers could write as little or as much as they wanted. My assumption was that if they understood the importance of my research, and they had already agreed, they would not mind writing open ended. I used the Internet as a means for my interviews, which allowed the busy designers to get back to me in a manner that fit into their schedule rather than arranging a phone conversation. I did ask permission if I could talk to them via phone if I had a question with their answers. I made sure to respond with a thank you upon their response.

Unfortunately, I found that the lack of urgency and the impersonal nature in an email left several unanswered request. While I hoped to find more than one participant for my interview, I only had one window display designer respond.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Empirical studies' results

Three empirical studies summarized and analyzed below take different approaches to find out how certain elements of window displays work or do not work.

Empirical study #1

Hyunjoo Oh and Jenny Petrie asked the question, "How do storefront window displays influence entering decisions of clothing stores?" (Oh & Petrie, 2011). Their purpose was to find how shoppers' perceptions of window displays help them in making their store entry decision. Specifically, they chose to compare two different styles of window dressing: *merchandise-focused displays*, which focus on selling merchandise quickly through a straightforward display of what the store has to offer, and *artistic displays*, which focus on communicating the store's image and style using implied messages that the shopper must interpret. Prior to their study, Oh and Petrie did make this observation, "the visual appeal of the store front, window displays, and overall building façade enable consumers to form quick impressions about a store to determine whether they enter a store or not. After all, if consumers are not interested in a store conveyed to them through exteriors such as window displays, the consumer will be unlikely to enter a store to shop or make purchases" (2011). Furthermore, in comparing the two displays, the authors hypothesized, "Merchandise-focused displays convey concrete messages and

thus facilitate an understanding of the merchandise itself to influence shoppers' store entry decisions. In contrast, artistic displays convey abstract messages to induce curiosity and further encourage exploration within the store" (Oh & Petrie, 2011). Participants were surveyed and asked to look at eight different window display images and decide if they would enter, not enter, or undecided. Then they were asked to indicate their level of understanding and exploration. The results for this Empirical study showed that merchandise-focused displays produced a greater understanding and less exploration, while the artistic display produced less understanding with a greater need to explore. Overall, they found that more people would enter a store if it had an artistic display over a merchandise-focused display (Oh & Petrie, 2011).

Empirical study #2

The second Empirical study explored "How storefront displays influence retail store image" by testing whether innovative displays are more effective in attracting consumers' attention than traditional displays. The researchers, Cornelius, Natter, and Faure, hypothesized that innovative storefront displays induce more positive display image evaluations compared with classical storefront displays (2010). They had participants watch a video in which they took the perspective of walking down a street passing eleven various stores. Four versions of the video were shown. In the first, an A-board, a sign made from two pieces of wood connected by a hinge, appeared in front of one of the eleven stores; in the second video, a flag appeared in front of one of the eleven stores; in the third, both the A-board and flag were in front of their respective

stores; and the last, no displays were in front of their stores. One store had an innovative

display (a flag with an upside-down drop) and another had an A-board representing the

traditional displays, which was conducive to prior research they had found. The

remaining nine lacked any display. The results indicated that more participants exposed

to the flag recalled the store that the flag was in front of than the participants exposed to

the A-board (Cornelius et al., 2010). "We therefore find evidence that the type of

display influences display awareness" (Cornelius et al., 2010).

Empirical study #3

In "Window displays and consumer shopping decisions," Senkar Sen, Lauren Block, and

Sucharita Chandran explored how the store and product information communicated by a

store's windows are related to consumers' shopping decisions (2010). The study

compared *store related information* and *product information*. In these two categories,

they explain how consumers use observation and inferences to make necessary decisions

on whether to enter or not (Sen et al., 2010).

For store related information, the consumers can use window displays to obtain a variety

of information regarding the retailer such as brands, styles, prices, and quality through

observing the window. Furthermore, the study notes that store image is information that

is inferred based on cues gathered from the ambience of the window. For product-

related information, the study notes that consumers may look at a retailer's windows to

obtain up-to-date information about an evolving product category through observation,

but consumers may look to windows to infer if the products would fit with their physical

and symbolic selves. One hundred and twenty nine people were surveyed on what they look for in a window display, and measured the acquisition of (i) observed, store-related information in terms of promotions and merchandise, (ii) inferred, store-related information in terms of store image, (iii) observed, product-related information in terms of fit, and (iv) inferred, product-related information in terms of mentally simulating themselves in the clothes. Additionally, they measured whether people would look, enter, and purchase merchandise from the store based on its window displays. According to the results, those who are looking for inferred information, like store image and product fit information, are more likely to enter a store than those looking for observed information, such as merchandise, promotion and fashion information. The findings prove that clothing retailers, in this case, may have the most success in bringing in customers by focusing on cues that allow consumers to infer fit and store image information (Sen et al., 2010).

Interview results

Kara Paslay, of Kara Paslay Designs, agreed to answer interview questions to further the understanding of window displays from someone who actually designs them. Paslay's background information shown in Table 4 reveals that she was informally trained in the art of design. Her design talent has enabled her to design for Anthropologie, a women's upscale clothing store known for their innovative window displays.

Table 4. Background information results. This table shows the response to the interview.

Interview Questions	Response
What is your name?	Kara Paslay
How were you educated in this field? If not, please explain how you came to be a window designer?	No, I wasn't. I got my degree in communications. After college, I realized my passion for creating. Due to my great desire to create; I simply started to take on DIY projects, art projects, and designs in my own home. After I did this for a while, I started to do the same for friends and family. I slowly started to build a portfolio paying special interest to create things that were out of the box and extremely unique. It was this portfolio and body of work that allowed me to obtain a job in window design.
What stores have you designed for?	Anthropologie- Tulsa, OK Ida Red (gift/clothing boutique)- Tulsa, OK Loops Yarn- Tulsa, OK
What is your role in the design process?	Everything with some collaboration on the design at times.

Her role ranges from coming up with the concept to executing the design, so she is familiar with working from the early creative process, development and the end product. I found the design method results, shown in Table 5, to be the most informative.

Table 5. Design methods results. This table shows the response to the interview questions.

Interview Question	Response
When designing for a window, please give a statement of your course of action from concept to execution.	1.Find out from the client if there is a theme to go with. 2. Based on client's response I start researching ideas. I will either start with a certain material that inspires me or the theme requested by the client. 3. Often I will buy a few materials and play with modifying them in some way. Sometimes I create sketches to plan out the flow of the window. 4. Once I decide on a general look, I figure out how I will actually install the piece. 5. Last I do the install. Sometimes, during install the design will change. If a particular element is looking great, I may add more. Or if something is not working, I may modify it during install.
What design techniques do you find most effective and why?	It all depends on the window size, shape, and the lighting surrounding it. Based on the environment and details of the window itself, that will determine what sort of display looks best. Ex. If the window is tall, I would create a very tall, dramatic display to draw on the height provided. A more horizontal display in a tall window would not be as pleasing to the eye.
Do you design with merchandise in mind? Or do you find merchandise that fits your design concept?	Varies, sometimes the store want to highlight a particular item. In that case, the merchandise determines the concept.
What use does lighting have in your displays?	Lighting is extremely important. The coolest display can disappear if the lighting is off or the colors of the display don't interact well with the light.

Colorful merchandise or colorful display?	Bright colors in general. But again the lighting surrounding the window will make some colors void while greatly enhancing other colors.
List most important inspirations to least important inspirations. (1=Most Important, 9=Least Important)	1. Retail Image Decision- "signature" stylistic elements exclusively. Characteristic of the retailer's image or the store's design. 2. Popular color palettes 3. Product's Style 4. Product's Fabrication 5. Current trends in fashion design- events that involve or influence fashion 6. Theme 7. Product's use 8. Holiday themes 9. New developments in props or decorative items available from the display industry Windows are all about getting a customer into the store. Your window must communicate who and what you are about. When I design a window, more than anything, it must be in line with the store's identity.

The level of dialogue between the client and the designer also held interest for my research. Could the client have more say than the designer? Paslay explained that the client is your first priority; it is their decision to highlight a piece of merchandise or choose a specific theme. Paslay also says something that I did not find in my literature review. When asked what design techniques she finds most effective, she responds, "It all depends on the window size, shape, and the lighting surrounding it. Based on the environment and details of the window that will determine what sort of display looks

Figure 1. Post-It note detail and display. This detail on the left exemplifies what Paslay answered, "I will either start with a certain material that inspires me or a theme requested by the client" (2012). This also supports her belief that bright colors attract people. Image from: http://karapaslaydesigns.blogspot.com/2011/06/my-anthro-displays-post-it-windows.html

best" (2012). Her example is in the case of a tall window, she would design a tall

display to best utilize the height (Paslay, 2012). By ranking *retail image*

decision as the most important design inspiration, Paslay confirms what Paul Symes, the

Fortum & Mason window designer, said, "The brand image is of paramount importance

when designing a window scheme; the scheme should not only sit comfortably with the

brand image but also embrace it" (Morgan, 2008).

Paslay reveals that graphics and signage are rarely used in her window displays. In the

literature review, color was argued as being the most important element in a display

while another author argued it was the signage and graphics. Paslay, not using any

graphics and signage clarifies that perhaps color takes a more vital role in the success of

the window design. However, graphics and signage may not be consistent with

Anthropologie's *retail image decisions,* the characteristics of the store image. Paslays's

Table 6. Marketing factors results. This table shows the response to the interview.

Interview Questions	Response
How important are window displays to the retailer's success?	I don't think window displays are vital to success, but I do think they can take a business to another level of success. Not only can their design draw customers into the store, they will want to buy the merchandise in the window if it's presented in a way that is appealing and desirable.
Can you think of a time when your display brought attention to the store or a specific piece of merchandise? Explain.	People come just to see the displays. Not everyone buys product, but you at least get people in the door to check out what's available. That is half the battle. The creative display also gets people's imaginations going. Maybe they start to then see the product in a new light and desire the "life" that the product could bring to them or their home.
Do you use signage or graphics in your displays? What kind?	I rarely use signage or graphics. I find people don't really need you to spell it out for them. Unless you're having a big sale- people love sales!
What is your typical budget?	No more than $500.

designs have brought people to the store to look at the windows. "People come just to look at the displays" which is a mark of a truly remarkable window display. She explains a "creative display also gets people's imaginations going. Maybe they start to see the product in a new light and desire the 'life' that the product could bring to them or their home" (Paslay, 2012). An example of a creative display is shown in Figure 1. She used Post-It notes to frame the merchandise. This answer validates Empirical study #1 that concluded that artistic displays that created a sense of exploration are the most successful in bringing people into the store. She also states that lighting is of

Figure 2. Lighting display. Paslay believes that light "is extremely important. The coolest display can disappear if the lighting is off or the colors of the display don't interact well with the light" (2012). Image from: http://karapaslaydesigns.blogspot.com/2011/07/my-anthro-displays-dot-dot-dot-windows.html

extreme importance, and if not done correctly, can cause a display to look wrong (2012).

An example of her work with lighting is shown in Figure 2. Paslay contradicts the

literature review taught when it comes to the importance of window displays with her

responses in Table 6. She explains that window displays are not vital to success, but that

"they can take a business to another level of success" (Paslay, 2012). While she does

not suggest that they are unimportant, she does not credit them solely for a business's

success or failure.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

Empirical study analysis

From reading these three empirical studies in detail, I will make the assumption that these empirical studies'' results can be used to guide the execution of a successful design. Empirical study #1 shows that an artistic styled window induces a need for a passing person to explore the store. Similarly, Empirical study #3 discovered that inferred cues such as, store image and product fit, encourage entrance over observations, like promotions or merchandise. Empirical study #2 showed that innovative displays that people are not familiar with are more memorable than those that are considered traditional. Overall, it appears that window displays encourage people to enter a store when they are artistic focused, innovative, and that allow for inferred understanding.

Interview analysis

The overall research project did not reveal as much as I would have hoped. I struggled with finding designers to interview. With the amount of time allotted after receiving IRB's approval to use human subjects, I had lost leads and correspondences fell silent. Fortunately, I was able to find a designer who did give me information that I found helpful and insightful. My goal initially was to find 5-10 designers to interview in order to analyze stronger and more thorough results, but due to this unforeseen time restraint,

finding one designer proved to be insightful. I believe my results would have been more valid had I had a range of designers' opinions.

The interview questions could have been approached in an additional way. Questions regarding what elements discourage people from entering might have given me a stronger foundation. My results would have been shaped more successfully had I acknowledged that there are elements that keep people out.

Paslay was able to give her opinion on contradictions found within the literature review. While Bartley Ingram, a Visual Merchandising Director said that signage is probably the most important element of a display, Paslay explained, "I rarely use signage or graphics. I find people don't really need you to spell it out for them." Paslay affirmed "the most effective window displays are designed with a strong emphasis on colour" (Morgan, 2010) by ranking color palettes as second on the most important element in designing in a window behind signature stylistic characteristics of the brand's image. She did provide insight on the importance of window displays by saying that they were not vital to the success of a store. Many books spoke on the absolute necessity of window displays to the success of a store, but Paslay said, "I don't think window displays are vital to success, but I do think they can take a business to another level of success." When asked if her displays bring special attention to the store Paslay confirmed that people come by just to see the displays. She explains further that, "… they start to then

see the product in a new light and desire the "life" that the product could bring to them or their home" which confirms that window displays do create a sense of allure.

Window design

The aim of this research was to find out what design elements help create an effective display to turn people passing the store window into store customers. The results discovered in this research went to benefit the women's' resale clothing store, Clothes Mentor, which aims to recycle clothes in a fashionable and affordable way. From my research, I found that these factors were most important in developing my design.

The window display must *reinforce the store identity*. Paslay brought up on more than one occasion that the window display must reinforce what the store is about. "Your window must communicate who and what you are about. When I design a window, more than anything, it must be in line with the store's identity." She ranked "signature stylistic elements exclusively characteristic of the retailer's image or the store's design" as being her highest form of inspiration. Because Clothes Mentor's focus is recycled fashion, I imagined a recycled outfit created out of different pieces of clothing items representing all the types of clothes that the store buys and sells. This concept would encourage the brand identity and the eclectic mix of items you would find within the store. Also, Empirical study #3 found that more people were to enter a store when the store focused on cues that allow consumers to infer store image information.
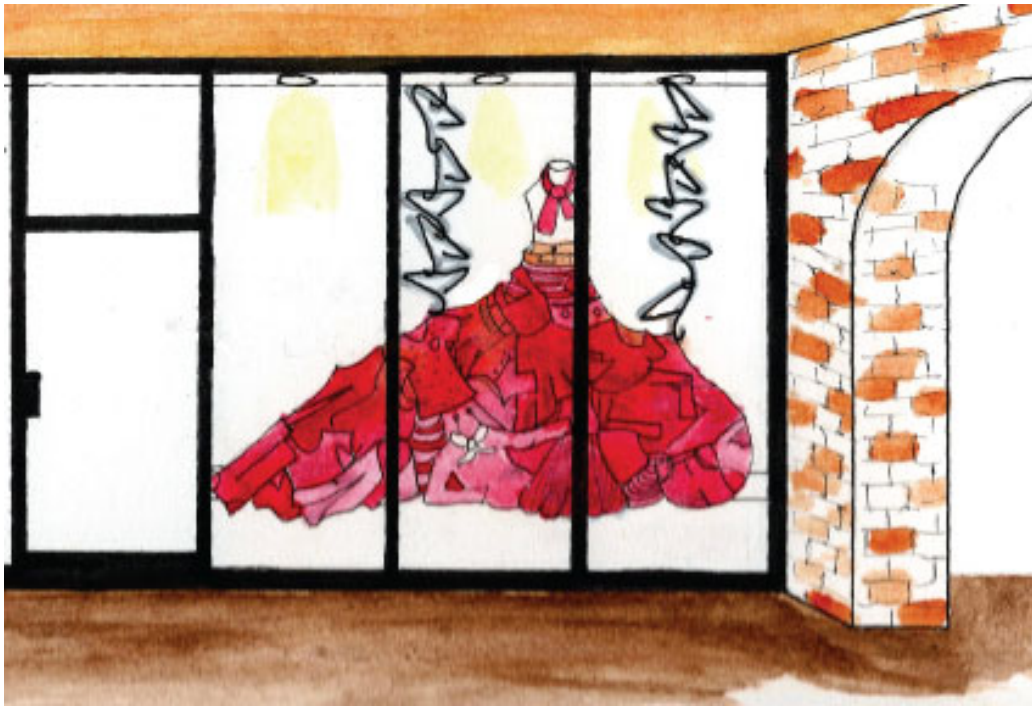
Figure 3: Window design. The concept derives from the results that suggest that an artistic and store image reinforcing design that reinforces store image, as well as one that focuses on dynamic color and lighting, is most likely to be successful. Wire hangers hang from the ceiling to give the illusion that they are lifting the skirt to showcase all the items.

An *artistic window display will encourage exploration*. In Empirical study #1, the information shown proved that exploration into a store occurred most often when the display was artistic, not based solely on merchandise display. For my design shown in Figure 3, I chose to create an "extreme" outfit made up of many different pieces of clothing billowing in the shape of a large, skirt. Wire framing would create the skirt with different pieces of clothing stretched across it. The used clothing is reinventing fashion to encourage a closer look. Empirical study #2 proved that innovation over tradition made for a more memorable display. These two ideas fit together. Artistic and innovative displays will leave more of a lasting impression and encourage people to

enter.

The window display must use *color and lighting together well*. Paslay reinforced what I found to be predominant in the literature review. Color and lighting are united in the quest for a visually appealing display. I chose the recycled outfit to be monochromatic red because of what Stone found in the *Color Design Workbook*. Red is the most visually dominant (2006). Paslay also declared that in her experience bright colors tend to be more eye-catching.

As you can recall from Chapter I, my hope was to find out how design can create desire within a person to motivate them to enter a store. While I had hoped to find out more, I am satisfied with the level of knowledge I was able to acquire through the literature review, empirical studies, and interviews. I discovered that the window design is as important as the merchandise, and that an artistic and innovative display will create a sense of exploration. While this is not exactly 'desire,' it does encourage a further look.

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