

Communicating corporate identity through window displays - A semiotic analysis of ten fashion stores in Helsinki

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Objective of the study

This study aimed to analyze how fashion stores communicate the corporate identity through window displays. The window display is a crucial part of visual merchandising, which remains an important channel of corporate marketing communication. However, little attention so far has been paid to how the window display works as a channel for companies to communicate corporate identity. This research tried to fill the gap by studying the window displays of fashion stores.

Methodology and the Analytical framework

The study adopted the semiotic approach to analyze the window displays of ten fashion stores located in Helsinki. From the semiotic perspective, the window display can be regarded as a semiotic resource as well as a sign system containing multiple visual messages. In addition, this research utilized an analytical framework adapted from Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) three-metafunction framework of visual communication to analyze the window displays of the ten fashion stores.

Findings and Conclusion

Based on the analytical framework, the findings were elaborated according to the three metafunctions namely the ideational metafunction, the interpersonal metafunction, and the textual metafunction of the window displays. The results demonstrated that the fashion stores have integrated multiple signs and elements in their window displays into communicate corporate identity: 1) Clothing communication is the most salient and efficient in representing and communicating corporate identity; 2) Images and background are utilized as enhancement; 3) The less salient elements are used to support the communication of corporate identity. However, window displays also have limitations in communicating corporate identity. In some window displays, part of the corporate identity is missing, and the visual presentations are not recognizable.

Keywords corporate identity, window displays, visual merchandising, semiotics, visual communication, fashion stores

Table of Contents

1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 BACKGROUND FOR THE RESEARCH	1
1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS.....	4
1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS	4
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.1 FASHION MARKETING COMMUNICATION.....	6
2.1.1 <i>Fashion market</i>	7
2.1.2 <i>On-site fashion stores</i>	8
2.1.3 <i>Window displays in visual merchandising</i>	11
2.2 CORPORATE IDENTITY	14
2.3 VISUAL COMMUNICATION	18
2.3.1 <i>Window display as a semiotic resource</i>	18
2.3.2 <i>Visual communication</i>	20
2.4 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK	23
2.4.1 <i>The ideational metafunction</i>	23
2.4.2 <i>The interpersonal metafunction</i>	26
2.4.3 <i>The textual metafunction</i>	28
3 DATA AND METHODS	32
3.1 DATA COLLECTION.....	32
3.2 METHODS	38
3.3 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY	39
4 FINDINGS.....	42
4.1 THE IDEATIONAL METAFUNCTION	42
4.1.1 <i>Represented participants</i>	43
4.1.2 <i>Narrative structures</i>	48
4.1.3 <i>Conceptual structures</i>	49
4.2 THE INTERPERSONAL METAFUNCTION	50
4.2.1 <i>Gaze</i>	51
4.2.2 <i>Social distance</i>	51
4.2.3 <i>Perspective</i>	53
4.3 THE TEXTUAL METAFUNCTION	54
4.3.1 <i>Information value</i>	55
4.3.2 <i>Saliency</i>	57
4.3.3 <i>Framing</i>	58
5 DISCUSSION.....	61
5.1 CLOTHING COMMUNICATION.....	61
5.2 IMAGE AND BACKGROUND ENHANCEMENT.....	63
5.3 SUPPORTING ELEMENTS	64
5.4 LIMITATIONS OF WINDOW DISPLAYS	65
6 CONCLUSIONS	68
6.1 RESEARCH SUMMARY	68
6.2 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS.....	69
6.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	70
6.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	71

REFERENCE.....	72
APPENDIX 1. TABLES OF THREE METAFUNCTIONS ANALYSIS.....	81

List of Tables

Table 1. The analytical framework of the thesis.....	30
Table 2. List of fashion stores.....	33
Table 3. List of corporate identity.....	37
Table 4. Findings of the ideational metafunction analysis.....	43
Table 5. Findings of the interpersonal metafunction analysis.....	50
Table 6. Findings of the textual metafunction analysis.....	55

List of Figures

Figure 1. Operation model (Gray & Balmer, 1998).....	17
Figure 2. Window displays of Sand, Hugo Boss, and Monki.....	44
Figure 3. Window displays of Marimekko and Filippa K.....	45
Figure 4. Window displays of Tiger of Sweden and H&M.....	46
Figure 5. Window displays of Diesel, H&M, and Monki.....	47
Figure 6. Window displays of Ivana Helsinki and Marimekko.....	48
Figure 7. Window display of Zara.....	49
Figure 8. Images in window displays of H&M and Diesel.....	51
Figure 9. Close-shot images in window displays of Monki and Sand.....	52
Figure 10. View the window display from below.....	54
Figure 11. Window display of Hugo Boss.....	56
Figure 12. Window displays of Diesel and H&M.....	58
Figure 13. Window display of Diesel.....	59

1 Introduction

1.1 Background for the research

Although online shopping has enjoyed an incredibly speedy expanding in recent years, shoppers still mainly consume in the physical stores. According to the newly published total retail survey report by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) (2016), evidence shows that the in-store shopping remains crucial for consumers since it can provide physical interaction with a product, and about 52% of the global sample prefers consuming in a physical store. Moreover, in terms of buying clothing and footwear, 53% of the survey respondents mostly prefer to purchase in-store (PwC, 2016). The report further points out that the store environment has a fundamental impact on converting shoppers who prefer to buy offline to purchasing customers, and retail stores should present their respective purposes apparently to meet different customers' expectations (PwC, 2016).

In terms of the fashion business, fashion stores are the place where in-store purchasing is available for customers, and they play a significant role in fashion marketing communication. Earlier researchers find that fashion stores provide customers not only with consumption goods but also abstractly shopping experience (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Scarpi, 2006). Customers of fashion stores are looking for the match between self-personality and fashion store personality (Amatulli & Guido, 2011; Brengman & Willems, 2009; Willems, Swinnen, Janssens, & Brengman, 2011). Moreover, many researchers address the retail environment of fashion stores in their studies of customer behaviors (Lea-Greenwood, 2013; Chong, 1996; Hall & Broek, 2012; Doucé & Janssens, 2011; Doucé & Janssens, 2011; Leung & Kin-man To, 2001).

For the fashion retailing, visual merchandising is an important part of communication and has a significant impact on the fashion retail environment. Moreover, it is crucial in terms of conveying messages to customers to stimulate sales and build fashion brand/store image as well as fashion identity (Lea-Greenwood, 2013; Birtwistle &

Shearer, 2001; Kim, 2013; Bell & Ternus, 2006). Many researchers have proved in their studies that the elements of visual merchandising including store layout, window display, shelf appearance, and signage, etc. are influential to customers in terms of shopping behaviors (see Smith & Burns, 1996; Newman & Foxall, 2003; Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2010; Mishra & Agnihotri, 2012; Singh et al., 2014). Lea-Greenwood (2013) illustrates that the declining spending on in-store merchandising service has resulted in the same look among fashion stores by broadly using safe and foolproof visual merchandising strategies.

Given the fierce competition among fashion business nowadays, the window display is recognized as the most crucial since it is the first point of interaction between the store and customers, communicating style and meaningful content (Taskiran, 2012; Christopoulou, 2011). However, most studies value more how window displays affect consumer behaviors in terms of having impact on entry decision and regard sales as the prior purpose of window displays (e.g. Sen et al., 2002; Mishra & Agnihotri, 2012; Mower et al., 2012; Lange et al., 2016). Only a few studies have investigated the impact of window displays on store images (e.g. Cornelius et al., 2010; Oh and Petrie, 2012). Furthermore, much less attention is paid to how the window display works as a channel for fashion companies and their retailing stores to communicate corporate identity.

As nowadays the fierce competition is among fashion business, it is important for a company to communicate corporate identity with stakeholders and differentiate itself from other competitors. Corporate identity is extremely vital to a company, because through the communication of corporate identity the company's competitive advantage can be generated (Gray & Balmer, 1998). Moreover, Gray and Balmer (1998) emphasize that it is crucial for a company to have comprehensive and consistent communication of a strong corporate identity to stakeholders, and the ultimate survival of a company may rely on the whole communication process which integrates all possible communication resources. In light of Gray and Balmer's (1998) argument, the retailing fashion store is one of the ways for fashion companies to communicate

corporate identity to stakeholders especially customers. During the communication process, window display in fashion stores is the visual message sent from the fashion company, and the consumers are the message receivers.

Researchers have addressed the importance of visual messages in communicating corporate identity. Simoes, Dibb and Fisk (2005) underline that the visual system plays a key role in corporate identity management. Visual presentations can consistently bridge the corporate mission and corporate identity (Westcott Alessandri, 2001). The visual message can potentially convey the organizational features to corporate stakeholders (Van Riel and Van den Ban, 2001), and it supports effective corporate communication as it comes with the deep understanding within the company in terms of what the company is and what the company stands for (Topalian, 1984). Furthermore, Van den Bosch, De Jong and Elving (2005) argue that visual messages in corporate communication benefit the organization in the visibility, distinctiveness, authenticity, transparency, and consistency of corporate identity. Thus, window displays with various visual messages of the corporation are assumed to have the responsibility of communicating corporate identity.

However, few studies have explored in this area in depth. This study tries to fill the gap between window displays and corporate identity by investigating the fashion stores' window displays. To analyze the window displays this study adopts the semiotic approach, in which window displays are regarded as a semiotic resource. From the semiotic perspective, Chandler (2007) explains that semiotic signs can be in various forms such as words, images, sounds, odors, flavors, acts or objects, and it is us, the meaning-makers, who enable those things to become signs by creating and interpreting meaning of them. The elements such as a window display, inner decorations, layout, lights, colors, texts can be recognized as a sign system of fashion stores. Furthermore, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) have developed the three metafunction framework of visual communication to analyze visual messages. In this research, by utilizing the analytical framework adapted from Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) the window displays will be analyzed in a thorough way.

1.2 Research objectives and questions

This study aims to find out how fashion stores communicate their corporate identity through window displays. Thus, the main research question is:

RQ: How do fashion stores communicate corporate identity through window displays?

To answer the main question the following two sub-questions are generated from the semiotic perspective:

SQ1: What are the signs of window displays?

SQ2: How do these signs function in communicating corporate identity?

To answer the research questions this study investigates the window displays of 10 fashion stores which are the chain stores of different fashion companies. The window displays are viewed as three-dimensional images and analyzed by utilizing the visual communication framework developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006).

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The current chapter introduces the research topic by addressing the need as well as the importance of communicating corporate identity through window displays. Further, it presents the objective and questions of this research.

Chapter 2 reviews the earlier literature related to the topic and addresses the analytical framework for this research. The first subchapter sheds light on fashion marketing communication by introducing fashion market, fashion stores, and visual merchandising including window display. Then another major theoretical concept of this thesis – corporate identity is discussed in Subchapter 2.2. Subchapter 2.3 addresses the theories of semiotics, in which visual communication is introduced as a way to read and analyze

visual presentations of window display. Based on the prior literature, the final subchapter elaborates the analytical framework for this study.

Chapter 3 discusses data collection for this study and the methods. Subchapter 3.1 elaborates on what kind of data are chosen and how they are collected, and then Subchapter 3.2 clarifies the analysis methods, followed by Subchapter 3.3 illustrating the trustworthiness of this study.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the analysis based on the analytical framework introduced in Subchapter 2.4. The findings are elaborated according to the three semiotic metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal and textual. The findings of each metafunction are discussed in subchapters respectively.

Chapter 5 discusses the research findings, relating them to the earlier literature and answering the second sub-question of this investigation namely how the signs of window displays function in the communication of corporate identity.

The final chapter summarizes this research and discusses the limitations, practical implications, and suggestions for future studies.

2 Literature review

This research project investigates the window displays of fashion stores, and this chapter addresses the relevant key concepts and former literature. The first subchapter sheds light on the relevant aspects of fashion marketing communication by introducing fashion market, fashion stores, and visual merchandising including window display. Then another major theoretical concept of this thesis, corporate identity, is discussed in Subchapter 2.2. Subchapter 2.3 addresses the theories of semiotics, which introduces the visual communication as a semiotic way to read visual presentations of window display. Based on the prior literature, the final subchapter elaborates the analytical framework of this study.

2.1 Fashion marketing communication

Fashion itself is all about changing and creating, and it can be massively involved in all kinds of human activities (Easey, 2009, pp. 3-5). From this point of view, fashion is almost everywhere. For example, nowadays it is a fashion to promote green life style. Regarding the consumption products, fashion drives the booming development of clothing, cars, and electronic equipment, etc. (Saviolo, 2002). In this research, the concept of fashion mainly focuses on clothing and accessories which construct an important domain in the fashion field. More specifically, this study looks into those companies producing and selling clothing and accessories.

Fashion marketing communication is the tool by which fashion companies can communicate the brand with consumers and create impact on them (Lane Keller, 2001). This subchapter aims to form the background knowledge of this research by discussing the relevant aspects of fashion marketing communication. The first section introduces the general segmentation of fashion market, followed by presenting prior research on on-site fashion stores. Moreover, this subchapter discusses visual merchandising and window displays as important marketing communication channels.

2.1.1 Fashion market

Fashion market can be segmented from different perspectives such as groups of clients (e.g. menswear, womenswear, kidswear), and product category/end use (e.g. sportswear, formal wear, jeanswear) (Saviolo, 2002). Despite the various levels of product price, quality, and style, the fashion market is segmented into three levels regarding strata and price. They are haute couture, designer wear (or ready-to-wear), and mass market (Sorensen, 2009, pp. 21-22; Dillon, 2012, pp. 10-14):

- Haute Couture remains the highest-level in the fashion market and is run by well-known designers. They sell individual garment of high quality at very high prices. Perfumes, accessories, and other goods may also be sold under the designer's name. Chanel, Dior, and Versace couture are the fashion companies identified in this level.
- Designer wear (or ready-to-wear) is a level where stylish designs and high quality are still offered at high prices, but they are available to a wider range of audience since they can be found in more places such as the designers' shops, independent stores as well as department stores. In comparison, ready-to-wear is as unique as haute couture, but is still manufactured under strict quality control and produced in limited numbers. Representative fashion companies in this level are Calvin Klein, Gucci, and Prada.
- Mass market or street fashion owns the largest ratio in the fashion market, in which most people buy their clothes due to lower prices and trendy designs. New fashion features released by haute couture and ready-to-wear will be quickly found among mass market but of lower qualities and much less exclusivity. H&M, Zara, and Mango are typical fashion companies at this level.

Saviolo (2002) holds a similar but slightly more complicated view towards fashion market segmentation by taking lines of designers into consideration. She argues that ready-to-wear includes garments by couture as well as the designers of first lines who

become famous but do not originate from couture. There are two more levels, diffusion and bridge, between ready-to-wear and mass market, in which diffusion is defined by second lines of designers and lines of new designers, followed by bridge level representing the medium-high level upper than the mass market (Saviolo, 2002).

The three-tier or four-tier view of fashion market is effective to have sketchily a look at fashion markets. However, it still underestimates the complexity of fashion market as many levels are lying between the ones mentioned (Sorensen, 2009). Moreover, Sorensen (2009) argues that consumers are not strictly limited to any certain level permanently (p. 22). For example, people who only buy mass market clothing may purchase designer wear once or twice a year when huge discounts are available during seasonal sales, and people who are into designer wear may drop by mass market for basic shirts.

No matter which level the fashion companies belong to, they need to build an access to consumers. Fashion retailing functions as an important channel for fashion companies to reach customers. Willans (2009), in his study regarding retailing as “the face of fashion”, illustrates that fashion retailing enables fashion companies to build a positive store image, which can create loyal customers and achieve stable sales as well as profits (pp. 150-151). Nowadays, due to highly developed technologies fashion retailing can be classified into online retailing and on-site retailing. Physical fashion stores as on-site retailing are discussed in the next section.

2.1.2 On-site fashion stores

On-site fashion stores are the places where in-store purchasing is available for customers, and they play a significant role in fashion marketing communication. The following paragraphs shed light on earlier studies of fashion stores from various perspectives.

In light of Lea-Greenwood's (2013) fashion marketing communication theory, the main types of fashion stores are flagship stores, stand-alone units, concessions and independent stores (pp. 92-93):

- Flagship stores are built to provide the widest range of products and services. They are commonly located in capital cities and they sometimes can even be recognized as a tour sight for tourists and travelers.
- Stand-alone units are smaller in scale than flagship stores and usually cannot offer a full range of products and services as flagship stores do. The main cities and secondary locations in capital cities are the sites for their location.
- Concessions (shops in a shop) usually take space in a department store. They are operated by the brand or the department store. The products and services may be very limited.
- Independent stores are owned and operated by individual retailers and buyers whose retailing is independent of the fashion company.

For example, Marimekko has implemented these distribution strategies globally. It has the flagship store as well as other three kinds of stores in Helsinki. The stand-alone stores are located worldwide, for example, in Stockholm and large cities in China.

Fashion stores provide customers not only with consumption goods but also abstractly shopping experience. The pioneering research conducted by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) reveals that fashion stores' customers are pursuing fantasies, feelings, and fun when consuming. Then Scarpi (2006) argues that consumers are not only looking for fun and hedonic shopping but also utilitarian shopping.

Also, Evans (1989) investigates the consumer behavior towards fashion in UK clothing industry and emphasizes that consumers are looking for the match between brand images and self-image. Relative findings are also demonstrated in Amatulli and Guido's research that consumers obtain their self-confidence and self-fulfillment when buying

luxury fashion goods (Amatulli and Guido, 2011). Willems et al. (2011) similarly opine that consumers' self-personality are more likely to be an incongruity with fashion store personality. Although Brengman and Willems (2009) address that "genuineness", "solidity", "sophistication", "enthusiasm" and "unpleasantness" are determinants of fashion store personality (Brengman and Willems 2009, p. 349-252), these determinants are still subjective and hard to be measured.

As up to 70% of purchasing decisions are made when consumers are right in the fashion store, the retail environment is a vital factor directly affecting customer behaviors (Lea-Greenwood, 2013, p. 90). According to Lea-Greenwood (2013), the retail environment consists of product, price, place and promotion which all stimulate in-store purchase (p. 90). Also, Chong (1996) underlines that targeting customers are influenced by store atmospheres which consist of attractive decorations and impressive display. Aesthetic labor in fashion stores has a contribution to shopping environment too (Hall and Broek, 2012). Other aspects found influential to customers are ambient scents (e.g., Doucé and Janssens, 2011), color and lighting (e.g., Bastow-Shoop et al., 1991), and music (e.g., Tendai and Crispen, 2009), etc. Moreover, service quality (Leung and Kin-man To, 2001) and patronage (Willems et al., 2012) are found influential in the process of impression formation of fashion stores.

Lea-Greenwood (2013) further emphasizes that visual merchandising, as a pivotal part of communication within the fashion retail environment, is a visual communication tool to convey messages to customers and build brand image (pp. 90, 95-97). For example, the mannequins can present the brand image physically through their style, pose, and clothes, giving a direct cue to the customers about what the fashion store is selling and whether it is suitable for them (Lea-Greenwood, 2013, pp. 95-97). Elements such as layout, quality, and selection are crucial in consumers' perception of fashion store image (Birtwistle and Shearer, 2001). These elements can usually be noticed in the fashion stores' window displays. As this research focuses on the window display which

is a crucial component in visual merchandising, more studies of visual merchandising and window display will be discussed in the next section.

2.1.3 Window displays in visual merchandising

This research investigates the window display of fashion stores, which contribute to a more detailed study of how fashion stores utilize window display to communicate fashion companies' corporate identity. The prior research mentioned above demonstrates the big picture of fashion business and fashion stores. This section aims to illustrate further the visual merchandising and window displays as well as the links between them.

Visual merchandising integrates multiple visual resources and factors such as layout, graphic sign boards, window display, lighting, and even customer services, to heighten the brand images as well as lure customers to visit the store and induce them to purchase (Kim, 2013). The elements, both exterior and interior, of the store, are there to form a positive image in customers' mind and attract their attention and interests (Bastow-Shoop et al., 1991). Lea-Greenwood (1998) further argues that visual merchandising is beneficial to communicate a cohesive brand image and differentiate the offer from the competition. Bell and Ternus (2006) also emphasize that visual merchandising is supportive to not only sales and retail strategies but also the communication of fashion brand and identity (pp. 20-24).

According to Diamond (2006), there are three approaches to visual merchandising strategy concerning store type (pp. 348-352). The department store mainly applies full-time staff to develop and execute their visual programs of different themes to which all the visual display is following in a given period of time, for example, the Christmas sale. Chain organizations, especially the large companies such as GAP and Zara, often centralize their visual merchandising. As a result, they form a team operating at company's headquarter and apply the standardized visual merchandising to every chain

store. Small stores like boutiques and specialty stores may hire freelancers for visual merchandising, and the design would be in various freestyles and of more creativity. (Diamond, 2006, pp. 348-352).

Five principles are widely followed by visual merchandisers in their design. They are (Bastow-Shoop et al., 1991, pp. 13-21; Diamond, 2006, pp. 363-365):

- Balance. This principle refers to the distribution of weight. The placement may follow symmetrical balance for identical items, or use the asymmetrical balance to show off design talents.
- Emphasis. Taking particular area as a focal point to catch customers' eyes and attention can motivate them to shop in the store.
- Proportion. It involves that different elements in visual merchandising should be appropriately scaled and placed.
- Rhythm. It formulates the flow of customers' eyes traveling from one part to another and guarantees that they will have a look at the entire presentation.
- Harmony. This is the umbrella principle integrating every other principle. Harmony ensures the feeling that every element in the display is interrelated.

By following these principles, stores can maximize the effectiveness of distinctive visual presentations in order to enhance the brand image as well as stimulate more consumption (Diamond, 2006, p. 363).

Many researchers have proved in their studies that the elements of visual merchandising including store layout, window display, shelf appearance, and signage, etc. are influential to customers in terms of shopping behaviors (see Smith & Burns, 1996; Newman & Foxall, 2003; Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2010; Mishra & Agnihotri, 2012; Singh et al., 2014). Davies and Ward (2005) utilize facet theory and find that the connections between visual merchandising and retail brand do exist, but how they influence each other is not covered.

Nowadays fashion stores usually overemphasize promoting sales and neglect the importance to differentiate brand image through visual merchandising. Kerfoot et al. (2003) find that although the customers respond to visual merchandising by immediate purchasing, they are less able to recognize the fashion brand through visual merchandising since they feel that the stores look identical everywhere. Lea-Greenwood (2013) illustrates that the declining spending on in-store merchandising service is resulting in the same look among fashion stores by broadly using safe and foolproof visual merchandising strategies.

The window display is recognized as the most crucial in visual merchandising elements since it is the first point of interaction between the store and customers (Taskiran, 2012). To viewers, shop window displays sometimes become free exhibitions of beautiful and fashionable objects stimulating the imagination of viewers to exercise their taste as the mannequins embody good design and communicate style and meaningful content (Christopoulou, 2011).

In most situations, the elements in visual merchandising, e.g. layout, theme, light, and color, are also taken into window displays. Different combinations of these items in window display function differently to the shoppers. For example, mood windows convey the spirits of a holiday season (e.g. Christmas gift shopping), whereas fashion message windows carry the new fashion trend as well as suggestions for dressing, and direct-sell windows present the most popular items with tempting bargain prices (Frings, 1987, p. 234). In window displays, visual elements are intertwined to create an impact on customers as well as attract media attention, moreover, to tempt passersby to enter the store and purchase merchandise (Diamond, 2006, p. 353; Taskiran, 2012). Park et al. (1986) also emphasize that the window display, as a mix of art, fashion, design, and marketing, is similar to advertising in the sense of creating the overall image and identity of the retailer.

However, most studies emphasize on how window displays affect customer behaviors

namely entry decision, concerning sales as the prior responsibility of window displays (e.g. Sen et al., 2002; Mishra & Agnihotri, 2012; Mower et al., 2012; Lange et al., 2016). Some researchers illustrate the links between window displays and store images. Cornelius et al. (2010), the pioneers who investigate the impact of different types of window displays on store image, suggest that the window display is an effective tool for transferring image components to a retail store, and more creative displays earn better image evaluation. Oh and Petrie (2012) find that window displays with situational variables such as motives (purchase or recreational) and cognitive load levels (low or high) will affect shoppers' perceptions of the store image. However, much less attention is paid to how the window display works as a channel for companies and their retailing stores to communicate corporate identity. This thesis project, focusing on the window play and corporate identity, will contribute more findings in this area.

Subchapter 2.1 has discussed the aspects of fashion marketing communication relating to this study, in which the brief introduction of the fashion market and fashion stores has been provided. Further, it has illustrated visual merchandising and its crucial component window display. The following subchapter, subchapter 2.2, will clarify the key concept of corporate identity by reviewing earlier research and literature.

2.2 Corporate identity

This subchapter concentrates on the concept of corporate identity. By reviewing prior research, it aims to define the concept of corporate identity in the corporate communication field. Moreover, it discusses the relations between corporate identity, fashion stores and window displays.

Corporate identity, as one of the central topics in the corporate communication field, often confuses readers when other concepts such as corporate brand, image, and reputation are mentioned together. According to van Riel and Balmer (1997), the research and exploration in corporate identity have developed through three main

stages. The first stage is the graphic design paradigm, in which corporate identity refers to company logos and other visual identifications. It is followed by the stage of integrated communication paradigm, requiring consistency in formal corporate communication. The third stage is the interdisciplinary paradigm, where the concept of corporate identity is broadly discussed in terms of behaviors, communications, and symbolism (pp. 340-341).

As corporate identity has multiple dimensions, the official definition of corporate identity has not been given by International Corporate Identity Group (ICIG) which includes academics from Strathclyde, Erasmus, and Harvard Business Schools as well as leading consultants (van Riel & Balmar, 1997). But individual scholars provide brief definitions of corporate identity for understanding. Markwick and Fill (1997) define it as the presentation of a company to its various stakeholders which means the company can distinguish itself from other competitors. They emphasize that one can know the company's business as well as its strategies through corporate identity communication (Markwick & Fill, 1997). Cornelissen (2014) further emphasizes that besides communicating profile to all stakeholders corporate value is also a crucial component in corporate identity (pp. 6-8).

In most situations, corporate brand and corporate identity are interchangeable. For example, Ind (1997) defines that a corporate brand is not only about the outward manifestation of a company – its name, logo, visual presentation, but also the core of value that defines it. His definition of the corporate brand is similar to Cornelissen's (2014). But Balmer and Gray (2003) critically highlight the differences that not every company has or is in need for a corporate brand (e.g. monopoly company), but every company is in need for corporate identity. They further illustrate that the values of the corporate brand are concise, well-defined and distinct. However, the values of corporate identity are amorphous (Balmer & Gray, 2003).

In communicating corporate identity, a company may utilize a variety of cues, planned

or unplanned, to represent how the company would like to be perceived (Markwick & Fill, 1997). Markwick and Fill (1997) illustrate that deliberately sent messages such as advertisements, promotions, dress code and customer policies are delivered to target stakeholders; unplanned messages such as an accident and a crisis may have a negative impact on communicating corporate identity. As for fashion companies, their fashion stores are the channels to communicate with consumers. Moreover, the window displays can be deemed as the planned messages.

These cues of corporate identity will shape images in stakeholders' minds at a single point, and the set or the totality of a stakeholder's perception of these cues and messages sent by the company is defined as the corporate image (Markwick & Fill, 1997; Cornelissen, 2014, p. 7). The difference between corporate identity and corporate image is that identity is on the sender's side while the image is on the receiver's side (Kapferer, 2008, pp. 174-175). Some scholars investigate the fashion store images (e.g. Birtwistle, Clarke, and Freathy, 1999). However, how the fashion store communicates the corporate identity is still lacking research.

Over time, experiences and the impact of corporate identity cues have accumulated through corporate communication, and this kind of individual's collective reflection of the company formulates corporate reputation (Markwick & Fill, 1997; Cornelissen, 2014, p. 7). Because favorable corporate reputations company is likely to achieve great success since customers will purchase products and services, suppliers will maintain the stable contract, and investors will offer more support (Cornelissen, 2014, p. 8).

The reason why communicating corporate identity is extremely vital to a company is that through the communication of corporate identity the company's competitive advantage can be generated, as shown in Figure 1 (Gray & Balmer, 1998). In this operation model, Gray and Balmer (1998) emphasize that it is crucial for a company to have comprehensive and consistent communication of a strong corporate identity to stakeholders, and the ultimate survival of a company may rely on the whole

communication process which integrates all possible communication resources.

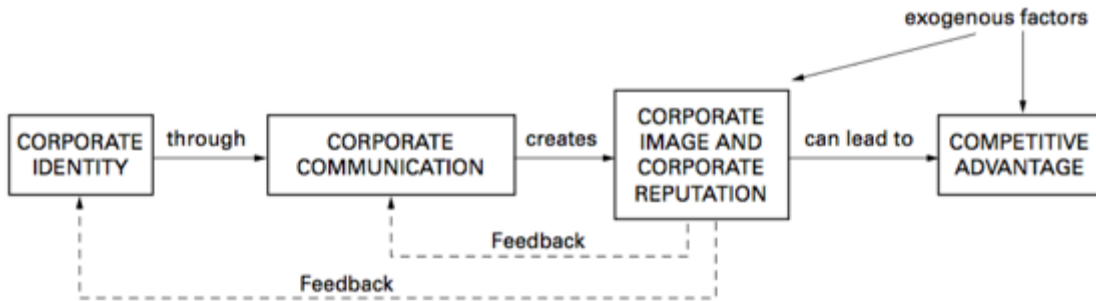


Figure 1. Operation model (Gray & Balmer, 1998, p. 696)

Applying Gray and Balmer's (1998) model for fashion companies, the retailing fashion store is one of the ways for fashion companies to communicate corporate identity to stakeholders especially customers. During the communication process, window display in fashion stores is the visual message sent from the fashion company, and the consumers are the message receivers.

Researchers have addressed the importance of visual messages in communicating corporate identity. Simoes, Dibb and Fisk (2005) underline that the visual system plays a key role in corporate identity management. Visual presentations can consistently bridge the corporate mission and corporate identity (Westcott Alessandri, 2001). The visual message can potentially convey the organizational features to corporate stakeholders (Van Riel and Van den Ban, 2001). It supports effective corporate communication as it comes with the deep understanding within the company in terms of what the corporation is and what the corporation stands for (Topalian, 1984). Furthermore, Van den Bosch, De Jong and Elving (2005) argue that visual messages in corporate communication benefit the organization in the visibility, distinctiveness, authenticity, transparency, and consistency of corporate identity. Thus, window displays with various visual messages of the corporation are assumed to have the responsibility of communicating corporate identity. However, few studies have explored in this area.

It is important to ensure that window displays communicate the right visual message of corporate identity in the right way. From the semiotic perspective, this kind of communication is visual communication, which will be elaborated on the next subchapter.

2.3 Visual communication

The theories of semiotics provide us with a perspective to look into the communication of corporate identity through window displays as window displays containing multiple visual messages. This subchapter elaborates the semiotic theories related to this study. The first section justifies that window display can be regarded as a semiotic resource in communication. Then the following section focuses on visual communication, aiming to provide the theoretical basis for analyzing window display as visual presentations.

2.3.1 Window display as a semiotic resource

This section turns to the stems of semiotic theories to justify window display as a semiotic resource, which formulates the base of further analysis in this study.

Semiotics is a branch of communication studies since it deals with languages, meaning creation, and interpretation. More specifically, it focuses on the study of how signs and symbols convey meanings. There are two dominating models in semiotic theories respectively by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) (Chandler, 2007). Chandler (2007) also summarizes that Saussure considered ‘semiology’ as the ‘studies of the role of signs as part of social life’ while Peirce deemed that ‘semiotics’ was close to logic in which it was the ‘formal doctrine of signs’ (p. 2-4). Although Saussure and Peirce hold diverse views toward semiotics, their theories are seen as the foundations of semiotics we talk about nowadays (Chandler, 2007).

Saussure (1957) focuses on linguistic signs and defines that a sign is a combination of signified and signifier (respectively sound and concept originally). Taking the word “sale” as an example, when you are in a shopping mall and see a notice with the word “sale” on it, then the word “sale” becomes a sign consisting of:

- A signifier: the word “sale”;
- A signified concept: there are some products on sale.

Saussure (1957) also points out two principles of the linguistic sign. First, ‘the linguistic sign is arbitrary’ (Saussure, 1957, p. 67). He underlines that there is no necessary or inevitable connection between the signifier (the sound of the word) and the signified (the concept) (Saussure, 1957, p. 67-70). ‘The linear nature of the signifier’ (Saussure 1957, p. 70) is another principle, in which he stresses the fundamental feature that auditory signifiers present in a chain not simultaneously.

Being different from Saussure’s model, Peirce adopts a view that a sign is consisting of three parts (Chandler 2007, p. 29):

- The representamen: how it is represented;
- The object: what is represented;
- The interpretant: how it is interpreted.

Take the toilet sign as an example. Usually, there is letter ‘W’ on the door of lady’s room. The letter ‘W’ is a representamen, the object of it refers to the woman, and the interpretant of this sign is ‘here is the lady’s room’. This whole process is the semiotics defined by Peirce.

Models from Saussure and Peirce form the foundation of semiotic theories. Barthes (1986), not limited in linguistic field, develops Saussure’s theory by arguing that semiotics can be applied to garment system, where fashion clothes or garment can be regarded as ‘a systematized set of signs and rules’ (Barthes, 1986, p. 26). The clothes

people are wearing are another kind of language that people use in communication. A complex system such as cinema and television consists of subsidiary languages of sounds, images, and texts. Calefato (1997) indicates that how people dress themselves is the way people relate themselves to the whole world, in which those dressing decorations are signs as well as communicating languages. By using the clothes' language, fashion can be expressed in a certain context in the world (Calefato, 1997).

Chandler (2007) further explains that signs can be in various forms such as words, images, sounds, odors, flavors, acts or objects. However, it is us, the meaning-makers, who enable those things to become signs by creating and interpreting meaning of them.

According to the semiotic theories mentioned above, the elements such as a window display, inner decorations, layout, lights, colors, texts can be recognized as a sign system of fashion stores. The semiotic study in the Sydney Olympic Store by Ravelli (2000) is a representative sample of applying semiotic analysis to store investigation. In her research, she explores certain semiotic resources such as layout, color, and language of the store to figure out how the store creates meaning. She found that the Sydney Olympic Store contains meanings from ideology and socio-culture, which make the store is not just a place for shopping (Ravelli, 2000).

Based on the traditional semiotic theories, window display can be regarded as a semiotic resource in the sign system of fashion stores. While window display, usually including light, color, textile, decoration, and texts, etc., is a semiotic resource not only in linguistic but rather visualized, the next section narrows the discussion of semiotics down into visual communication, an important branch of semiotic field, to further illustrate the theoretical basis of this research.

2.3.2 Visual communication

Visual communication integrates visual elements and addresses visual messages and cues to the receivers. These elements appear as an image in the viewer's eyes, and

information produced by the image will generate at a mental level (Jamieson, 2007, p. 11). In this manner, window display can be defined as visual communication. By utilizing multiple visual resources such as light, colors, mannequins, dressings, and text, window displays create images in the customers' eyes, and customers then perceive the images in their mind.

Many scholars underline the importance of visual communication. Kress (2010) argues that a sign consisting of writing, image and color can maximum the effect and benefit since image contains much information which would take long text to be written, writing names the keywords which would be hard to show in an image, and color highlights and frames the overall message (p. 1). Visual messages sent within commercial advertising are deemed to be affective to customers in terms of attracting their attention (An, 2007). Besides reaching target customers, Arning's (2009) semiotic study in the advertisements of Diesel points out that visual communication in advertising helps the company to build and communicate their brand's ideology.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), by investigating the sign-producing by children, underline that in order to reach successful communication, in which the receiver gets and digests the message as the sender expects, the participants should make their messages maximally understandable and choose the expression form as most apt and plausible in the given context (p. 13). Further, they believe that the visual design also has three metafunctions which are limitedly applied to language by Micheal Halliday: the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 15).

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the ideational metafunction represents the objects and their relations to the world outside the representational system are represented (p. 47). It refers to the content of in terms of representation, the expression and construction of experience (Ravelli, 2000, p. 497). The interpersonal metafunction represents a particular social relation or interactions between the producer of a sign, the viewer, and the object represented (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 42). The textual

metafunction means to cohere the complexes of signs both internally with each other and externally with the context in and for which they were produced (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 43). Details in these three metafunctions are discussed in Subchapter 2.4, which demonstrates the analytical framework of this research.

In terms of analyzing window display from the visual communication perspective, Guimaraes (2011) applies Roman Jakobson's (1896-1982) view to her study. She argues that in window display's communication, in which the window display designer is the message sender, and consumer is the addressee; location, brand, and trend form the context; the shop window functions as contact; the three-dimensional image of the shop window is the message; the acknowledgement of shop window works as common code. Based on this, she further underlines that the identification of a common language is fundamental and easier if it is close to reality and daily life of the shoppers (Guimaraes, 2011, p. 755).

Some scholars elaborate on detail visual elements such as colors, lights, and shapes. By using the Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance emotion model, Valdez and Mehrabian (1994) argue that colors of different saturations and brightness have different impacts on human emotions. In more detail, they found that blue, blue-green, green, red-purple, purple, and purple-blue were the most pleasant hues, whereas yellow and green-yellow was the least pleasant. Green-yellow, blue-green, and green were the most arousing, whereas purple-blue and yellow-red were the least arousing. Green-yellow induced greater dominance than red-purple (Valdez & Mehrabian, 1994). In the commercial field, Cyr et al. (2010) point out that to symbolize the corporate image corporations would try to use certain color(s) as a symbolic color that can influence viewers' attitudes and expectations towards the brands. In their cross-cultural study, they examine the relationships between color appeal and online viewer loyalty that consists of online trust and satisfaction and confirm that color appeal is influential for viewers' trust and satisfaction. Caivano (1998) further underlines that since color works as a

system of signs the semiotic perspective provides the best and most complete framework for the study of colors.

This subchapter has elaborated the semiotic theories related to this study and formulated the theoretical basis for analyzing window display from the semiotic perspective. Next subchapter will address the analytical framework of this research.

2.4 Analytical framework

This subchapter focuses on the analytical framework of the study. Based on the earlier literature mentioned above, the window displays of fashion stores can be seen as three-dimensional images as well as a semiotic resource. In light of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) theory of the grammar of visual design, this research utilizes the three metafunctions of semiotic modes illustrated by the two scholars: the ideational metafunction, the interpersonal metafunction, and the textual metafunction.

2.4.1 The ideational metafunction

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), ideational metafunction refers to the representation of the objects and their relations in a world outside the representational system (p. 47). For better understanding and precise analysis, they use the term "participant" instead of "object" or "element". Moreover, the "interactive participant" refers to the image-producers and -viewers and the "represented participant" refers to the subject of communication (pp. 47-48). In terms of connection patterns of represented participants, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) categorized them into two major types: narrative and conceptual (p. 59).

2.4.1.1 Narrative structure

In narrative patterns, the participants are connected by one or more vectors which refer to the process that participants are doing something to each other. In narrative images,

main participants are interacting with each other in a particular process(s), but in some narrative images which contain secondary participants which have no salient impact on the basic narrative pattern. (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 59.) These secondary participants, connecting the primary participant by other means instead of vectors, are defined as circumstance (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 72).

In an action process, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the active participant is the actor who emanates the vector, and the passive participant is the goal at which the vector is directed (p. 74). To identify the actor, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) underline that actors are usually the most salient participants through size, composition, contrast against the background, color saturation, and sharpness, etc. (p. 59). When there is only one actor in the image and with no goal to aim at, it is called non-transactional action process; when actor and goal are both represented in the image, it is called transactional action process; when the image only has the goal and without any actors, it is called events (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 74-75.)

In a reactional process, when the vector is formed by an eyeline or glance, the active participant is called reactor instead of actor, and the passive participant is called phenomenon instead of goal (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 67). It is a transactional reaction when the reactor and the phenomenon both exist; it is non-transactional reaction when the reactor does not look at another participant in the image (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 74-75).

Although circumstance does not have a salient impact as the main participant's, they facilitate to give supportable information. There are three kinds of circumstance: setting, means, and accompaniment. Setting is often drawn or painted in less detail; means usually form the vector; accompaniment usually gives more information about the main participant instead of an action (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 72-73).

2.4.1.2 Conceptual structure

In conceptual patterns, participants are represented in terms of their generalized and stable features such as class, structure or meaning. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the conceptual processes are categorized into three types: classificational, analytical and symbolical.

Classificational processes represent the taxonomical relation between participants, which contain at least one subordinate participant with respect to at least one superordinate participant (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 79). When a set of subordinate participant is arranged symmetrically in the picture, it forms a cover taxonomy structure, which is often used in advertisement; when the superordinate participant is connected to two or more subordinate participants through a tree structure with two or more levels, these participants form a cover taxonomy structure (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 79-87).

In analytical processes, participants are represented by a part-whole structure: the whole is referred as a carrier and the parts as possessive attributes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 87). Two types of analytical process are reviewed for this research: unstructured analytical process and exhaustive analytical process. In unstructured analytical process, the possessive attributes are interpreted as the set of parts of a whole while the carrier is not shown; while in exhaustive analytical process, the carrier is depicted as made up of a number of possessive attributes, showing the whole (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 104).

Symbolical processes represent what the participant means or are (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 105). There are two types of symbolic process: symbolic attributive, in which the participant's meaning or identity is established in the relation between the carrier and the symbolic attribute, participant which represents the meaning or identity itself; symbolic suggestive, in which the carrier is the only participant and the symbolic meaning is established in another way (*ibid.*). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) further underlines that in symbolic attributive process human participants usually pose for the

viewer rather than represent a certain ongoing action. Symbolic suggestive processes only have the carrier and de-emphasize the detail to construct the mood and atmosphere (p. 106).

The ideational metafunction focuses on the content of representation and how they connect to others, by which analysis can go through the basic visual grammars of the image. The next section turns to the interpersonal metafunction and discusses the relationship between the participants, the image producer and the viewer.

2.4.2 The interpersonal metafunction

The interpersonal metafunction represents a particular social relation or interactions between the represented participants in the image and the interactive participant (the producer of the image and the viewer) (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 42). According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), images can interact with viewers through gaze, frame size, and perspectives.

2.4.2.1 The gaze

Represented participants, in some images, look at the viewer, in which the vector is formed by participants' eyelines connecting the participants with the viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 117). Moreover, sometimes there might be an additional vector – a gesture in the same direction as the gaze (ibid.). The eye contact as well as the gesture directly address to the viewers, creating a visual “you”, furthermore, they, the eye contact and gesture, form an “image act”, by which the producers utilize represented participants to create impact on viewers, demanding the viewer to enter into the imaginary relation with the represented participants (pp. 117-118). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) underline that this kind of relation can also be signified by other means such as facial expression and gestures.

In other cases, the represented participant indirectly address the viewer, in which the viewer is no long an object to be looked at by the represented participant but the subject of the look, and these participants are offered by the image to viewers for information and contemplation (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 119).

Kress and van Leeuwen (2009) argue that the human participants in images must have a choice between “offer” and “demand” to suggest the relation with others, and what is more, to engage with the viewers or make them remain detached.

2.4.2.2. Frame size

Images can also utilize the size of frame, e.g. close shot, medium shot, and long shot, to suggest the relations between represented participants and viewers since social distance determines the physical distance (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 124). That is to say, besides choosing to make represented participants to look at viewers or not, the image-producers also have to choose to depict them as close to or far away from the viewers (ibid.). Taking human participants as an example the close shot shows the head and shoulders, suggesting close personal distance; the medium shot extends the frame to knees, suggesting close social distance; and the long shot frames the whole figure half the height of the image, suggesting far social distance (ibid.). That is, the closer the shot is, the closer is the social distance. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) underline that this system of social distance can also apply to objects, buildings, and landscapes representations (p. 127).

2.4.2.2 Perspective

Images, besides selecting gaze and frame size, involve the selection of an angle, a perspective, which enables the relations between represented participants and the viewer: subjective, objective. (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 129). Subjective image is with a central perspective and a “built-in” point of view, whereas objective images are without (p. 130). In subjective images, the viewer can see the participants only from a

particular angle, and in objective images, the viewers can see everything about the represented participants (ibid.). In the window displays' three-dimensional images, these two kinds of perspectival images are usually both adopted.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) further illustrate two different angles in subjective images: vertical and horizontal. According to them, the vertical angle reveals the power position of the represented participants: the interactive participant has power over the represented participant when the represented participant is seen from a high angle, whereas it is opposite when the represented participant is seen from a low angle, and power equals when the view point is at eye level. (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 140). Horizontal angle shows the involvement of the participants in the image: a frontal angle, aligning with one other, suggests involvement, while an oblique angle, diverging from one another, suggests detachment (p. 134).

This section has introduced the interpersonal metafunction which concentrates on the interactions between the represented participants and the image-producer and -viewer. The next section sheds light on the textual metafunction which focuses on the composition of an image.

2.4.3 The textual metafunction

Textual metafunction reveals the composition of the image that is, how representational and interactive elements are interrelated to create a meaningful whole (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 176). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) illustrate that the composition relates the representational and interactive meanings through three interrelated systems: information value, salience, and framing (p. 177).

2.4.3.1 Information value

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that elements are entailed with specific information value when they are placed in various zones of the image: left and right, top and bottom, center and margin (p. 177).

In terms of the placement left and right, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) find that the elements placed on the left are presented as given, something the viewer already knows, whereas the elements placed on the right as new, something which is not yet known or need to be paid special attention to (p. 181). The left and right (or given and new) horizontal structure is ideological in the sense that it may not correspond to what is the case either for the producer or the viewer (*ibid.*).

Vertical placement top and bottom, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), form the ideal and real information value in the image, in which the upper section of the image usually visualizes the ideal, the generalized essence information (e.g. “what might be”), whereas the lower section shows the real, more specific and practical information (e.g. “what it is”) (p. 186-187).

The placement of center and margin is another way to structure visual composition, in which the one element placed in the central is referred to centre, the nucleus of the information, whereas the elements placed around the central are referred to margin, the similar or identical subservient of the nucleus (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 196).

2.4.3.2 Saliency

Saliency refers to the hierarchy of importance or “weight” among elements, which results from a complex trading-off relationship between a number of factors of elements: size, sharpness of focus, contrast of tones and colors, visual placement, perspective, and cultural factors (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 201-202). Moreover, the greater the weight of an element is, the greater its saliency is (*ibid.*). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) further illustrate that the salient visual element can cause the viewers to

draw more attention to themselves than others (p. 203). For example, advertisements often use salient elements to attract more customers.

2.4.3.3 Framing

Elements of the composition may be strongly or weakly framed, that is, they are connected to different degrees (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 203). When an element is strongly framed, it is presented as a separate unit of information to signify its individuality and differentiation, whereas no framing or weak framing stresses group identity (ibid.). The framing can be achieved by multiple ways such as actual frame lines, white spaces between elements, discontinuities of colors, etc.; the connectedness can also be visualized in many ways such as vectors, depicted elements, abstract graphic elements (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 204).

Table 1: The analytical framework of the thesis

Ideational	Narrative structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes • Circumstances
	Conceptual structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classificational • Analytical • Symbolical
Interpersonal	The gaze	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand • Offer
	Social distance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal • Social • Impersonal
	Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subjective • Objective
Textual	Information value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given-new • Ideal-real • Centre-margin
	Saliency	(Maximum/Minimum)
	Framing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate

		• Connected
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Table 1 integrates the three metafunctions consisting of the ideational, the interpersonal, and the textual to guide the analysis of window displays which can be regarded as three-dimensional images. Section 2.4 has reviewed the metafunctions of semiotics by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) to utilize them as the analytical framework for this research in the analysis of window displays of fashion stores.

This chapter has addressed the key concepts and former literature relating to this research. Based on the prior literature, it has also elaborated the analytical framework of this study. In the next chapter, the data and methods will be discussed.

3 Data and methods

This chapter discusses data and methods of this research. Subchapter 3.1 elaborates on the data collection, and then subchapter 3.2 clarifies the analysis methods, followed by subchapter 3.3 the trustworthiness of this study.

3.1 Data collection

This subchapter aims to clarify that what kind of data is chosen for the research and how the data is collected. This study chooses the window display, an important component of fashion stores, as the analysis data. Although online marketing such as online shopping nowadays is expanding rapidly, retailing fashion stores remain a vital channel of marketing communication since they directly provide goods and service to customers.

As this study investigates how fashion stores' window displays communicate corporate identity, the chain stores of fashion companies are chosen for the study as a result of representativeness. In terms of the types of fashion stores mentioned in Chapter 2, the chosen chain stores fall into the stand-alone units stores. First of all, these chain stores are operated by comparatively larger fashion companies, and their visual merchandising designs are mostly instructed by the headquarters, which means in comparison to those independent boutique stores the chain stores are more systematically organized for the corporate communication. Moreover, chain stores have rather holistic window displays when compared to the concessions in department stores which often only provide limited spaces for overall displays.

Moreover, the reason why the chosen fashion stores are from the two main categories, ready-to-wear and mass-market, is that firstly the writer has not found an Haute Couture located in Helsinki. Secondly, the chosen fashion companies of ready-to-wear fashion and mass-market fashion have relatively larger scales of business. Consequently, these fashion companies have systematical position in corporate identity and operate standard

window display for the retailing stores, findings of which would give more applicable implications in general.

The data is collected through taking pictures of the window displays of fashion stores located in Helsinki. The details of chosen fashion stores are listed in Table 2, the pictures of which are all taken by the writer during March 2016.

Table 2. List of fashion stores

Fashion stores	Window display pictures
<p>Marimekko</p>	
<p>Hugo Boss</p>	

Tiger of Sweden



Sand



Diesel





Filippa K



Ivana Helsinki



Zara



H&M



Monki

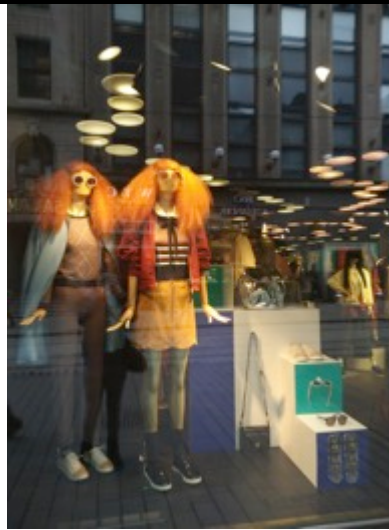


Table 2 shows the window display photos of 10 chosen fashion stores. Since the space limitation of the table, the bigger and clearer photos are demonstrated in the findings part of this research.

Besides the pictures, the information of corporate identity is necessary for the study as well, the data of which is gathered from the company's websites in English, e.g. content of corporate profile and value in the websites (see. Cornelissen, 2014, p. 6).

Table 3. List of corporate identity

Fashion stores	Key words of the corporate identity
Marimekko	Original prints and colors, high quality (Marimekko, 2016)
Hugo Boss	Confident, sophisticated, luxury, refined, businesswear (Hugo Boss, 2016)
Tiger of Sweden	Innovative, business casual suit (Tiger of Sweden, 2016)
Sand	Passion, creativity, innovation, life style, balance (Sand, 2016)
Diesel	Innovative, premium, passion, individuality, self-expression (Diesel, 2016)

Filippa K	Sustainability, clean design, high quality, simplicity (Filippa K, 2016)
Ivana Helsinki	Art, Scandinavian moods, romance, pure beauty (Ivana Helsinki, 2016)
Zara	Responsible, passion, fashion across a broad spectrum (Zara, 2016)
H&M	Wide-ranging, design, quality, sustainability, best price (H&M, 2016)
Monki	Self-expression, responsibility, environmental (Monki, 2016)

Table 3 provides the information of chosen fashion store's as well as its fashion companies corporate identity, which is found on the company's official website. Since there is no direct definition of each fashion company's corporate identity, the writer has extracted the illustrative key terms from the descriptions of corporate profile and values.

This subchapter has described how the data for this research has been collected. The next subchapter will discuss the methods adopted for analysis.

3.2 Methods

This study adopts a mixed research method which is combining semiotic analysis with qualitative analysis.

As it is justified in section 2.3.1 that window display can be viewed as a semiotic resource which includes multiple semiotic signs, semiotic analysis is feasible for this research. According to Saussure's (1957) semiotics model, a sign is a combination of signifier and signified. From this standing point, semiotic analysis can be applied to analyze linguistic signs as well as visual signs (Chandler, 2007).

The purpose of semiotic analysis is to figure out the meaning behind those signs. In this research, primarily the semiotic analysis aims to examine the meaning conveyed through window displays, specifically whether these meanings successfully fit in the communication of corporate identity. This semiotic analysis is doable with the support

of the analytical framework adapted from Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) semiotic metafunction model for analyzing images. This framework enables the concrete analysis of visual signs of window displays.

In this manner, the research project is positioned in deductive tradition, in which the study is seeking to use existing theory to shape the approach. According to Lewis et al. (2007), it is suitable to adopt the qualitative research method (p. 487). Being different from quantitative research which emphasizes on the quantification of data collection and analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 68), qualitative research addresses on understanding through looking closely at people's word, action, and records (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 17). Although window displays are not obviously people's words or actions, they reflect the producer's intentions which refers to an interpretivism stance.

The communication process is rather complex since it integrates multiple unquantifiable messages. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) argue that qualitative research is often used to understand a certain complex phenomenon within a particular situation and environment (pp. 43-44). Moreover, Bargiela-Chiappini et al. (2007) also argue that when the phenomenon being studied is complicated or cannot be quantified, the qualitative method is recommended (pp. 176- 177). In light of their theories, the qualitative method is an applicable way to gain insights about communication processes and meaning conveyed through window displays.

3.3 Trustworthiness of the study

This subchapter illustrates the trustworthiness of the study, that is, to which degree this study is credible in terms of academic research. According to Bryman and Bell (2003), it is broadly acknowledged by scholars that the assessing criteria of quantitative research consist of reliability and validity. However, its relevance to qualitative research has received much discussion (pp. 286-287). Based on previous literature, Bryman and Bell (2003) address that the trustworthiness of qualitative research consists of four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (p. 288), and

Shenton (2004) further elaborates on the strategy of each criterion respectively.

Credibility refers to that researchers should ensure their study measures what is intended, which involves the well-established research method, triangulation, peer scrutiny, thick description, and examination of previous research findings (Shenton, 2004). This study reviews the previous literature and research and forms an analytical framework adapted from Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). Moreover, the writer collects multiple window displays photos from a wide range of fashion companies and illustrates a concrete and detailed analysis under the guide of the analytical framework. The study will be available in the library of Aalto University for review.

Transferability stresses the contextual uniqueness of qualitative research, which lies in showing that the findings of the research can be applied to other situations (Bryman & Bell, 2003, p. 289; Shenton, 2004). In this research, the thick description and analysis of window displays of fashion stores can help readers to have a deep understanding of how these window displays communicate corporate identity, and similar findings or analysis can also be applied to other kinds of corporate communication such as advertising.

To evaluate the dependability is to demonstrate that similar findings would be found if the research were repeatedly conducted in the same way (Shenton, 2004). Further Bryman and Bell (2003) and Shenton (2004) both suggest researchers to record the study in detail. In this study, the crucial steps are reviewed and described in detail, for example justifying window displays as semiotic resources, building the analytical framework based on earlier literature, and selecting the window displays of fashion stores as data for this study.

Confirmability relates to the objectivity in the research, that is, make sure that the findings are not a result of the researchers' characteristics and preferences (Shenton, 2004). In this study, the analysis of semiotic signs inevitably involves the researcher's interpretations, but the analytical framework guarantees the basic logic behind the

interpretation, and moreover the analysis tries to integrate multiples theories to analyze under common sense and not based on personal experience of the writer.

This subchapter has examined the trustworthiness of this study in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In spite of the bias such as writer's interpretations of the signs, the trustworthiness of this research is identified.

This chapter has elaborated on the data and research method of this study. The next chapter will shed light on the findings of this research.

4 Findings

This chapter presents the findings of analysis based on the analytical framework introduced in Subchapter 2.4. The findings are elaborated according to the three semiotic metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal and textual, and the tables of the summary of each metafunction analysis can be found in Appendix 1.

4.1 The ideational metafunction

The ideational metafunction explores how the represented participants and their relations are demonstrated. Following the analytical framework, the ideational metafunction of window displays is read through three dimensions: the represented participants, their narrative structures, and their conceptual structures. The dimension of the represented participants focuses on what kind of participants that window plays are utilizing, and the narrative structures and conceptual structures show how these participants are connected.

Table 4. Findings of the ideational metafunction analysis

	Ideational							
	Represented participants			Narrative structure		Conceptual		
	Mannequins	Products (No mannequins)	Image	Processes	Circumstances	Classifi- cational	analytical	Symbolical
Marimekko	/	new season clothes and accessories	x texture	/	/	covert taxonomies	unstructured	/
Hugo Boss	gray	/	/	/	golden background	covert taxonomies	exhaustive	/
Tiger of Sweden	white	x	x	/	pic background	covert taxonomies	exhaustive, unstructured	/
Sand	6 black	/	x	reactional in image	artificial tree on the left	covert taxonomies	exhaustive	/
Diesel	3 white	/	x	action between 2	green background (metaphor)	covert taxonomies	carrier and possessive exhaustive	/
Filippa K	/	one dress and one bag/ nothing but the colthes inside the shop	/	/	/	covert taxonomies	unstructured	/
Ivana Helsinki	1 white	(a tv)	/	/	/	covert taxonomies	exhaustive	/
Zara	white/kids	/	/	hand carries sunglasses	/	covert taxonomies	exhaustive	/
H&M	white	with plants	x	/	image frame as background/price tags in front	covert taxonomies	exhaustive	/
Monki	mannequins with same hand gestures	/	x	hold the slogan "be a shero"	image behind/no background	covert taxonomies	exhaustive	/

* “/” means no findings is found, “x” means findings are found.

Table 4 presents the results of the ideational metafunction analysis. In the following sections within this subchapter, findings of each aspect of the ideational metafunction will be illustrated and explained.

4.1.1 Represented participants

In terms of represented participants, there are three main participants or ways that window displays of the ten fashion stores utilize to present the clothes/products: mainly using mannequins, no mannequins, and using images, ways of which sometimes are combined.

Eight out of the ten fashion stores are applying mannequins, whereas Marimekko and Filippa K are the two stores which do not use mannequins at all. The window displays with mannequins choose different types. For example, in Figure 2 Hugo Boss adopts

gray mannequins, Sand adopts black ones, and Monki has some interesting hand gestures. The rest 5 fashion store's window displays all utilize white mannequins. Moreover, Hugo Boss, Tiger of Sweden, Sand, and Diesel adopt both male and female mannequins in the chosen window displays, and Zara is the only one also has kid mannequins in its window displays.

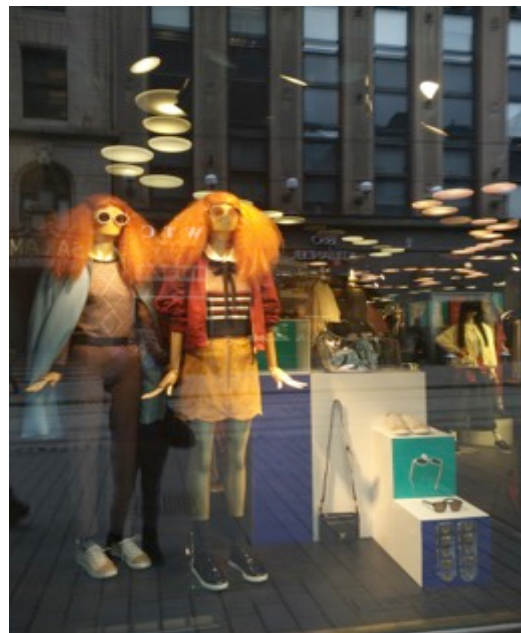


Figure 2. Window displays of Sand (up central), Hugo Boss (left), and Monki (right) (Photo by the writer)

Different from the eight fashion stores, Marimekko and Filippa K have no mannequins but the clothes and accessories (see Figure 3). Marimekko makes use of clothes hangers to demonstrate its new season products and places the accessories on the ground shelf. Filippa K utilizes the same strategy but in a much simpler way, in which Filippa K only shows one dress and one bag.



Figure 3. Window displays of Marimekko (right) and Filippa K (left) (Photo by the writer)

Fashion stores that have more than one window display may use two strategies, with or without mannequins at the same time. For example, Tiger of Sweden and H&M have different demonstrations in different window displays (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. Window displays of Tiger of Sweden (up) and H&M (down) (Photo by the writer)

Besides mannequins and products, images are another kind of represented participants found in the window displays. As we can see from Figure 2 and Figure 4, Sand and Tiger of Sweden both utilize images. Also, Figure 5 shows that Diesel, H&M, and Monki integrate image in their window displays as well.



Figure 5. Window displays of Diesel (up central), H&M (left), and Monki (right) (Photo by the writer)

Other participants are also found in the window displays. In Figure 4, besides the clothing in H&M's window display, the plants on the shelf are salient represented participants as well. In Figure 5, the slogan board held in the highest mannequin is one of the represented participants. Moreover, Ivana Helsinki utilizes a rather different participant, a screen (or television), in its window display. Marimekko, in its another window display, hangs two pieces of texture as decorations (see Figure 6).



Figure 6. Window displays of Ivana Helsinki (left) and Marimekko (right) (photo by the writer)

This section has illustrated how the window displays utilize different represented participants, and the next section will shed light on the narrative structures of these participants.

4.1.2 Narrative structures

Narrative presentations are found in the window displays. In the picture of Sand's window display, a reactional process has occurred when the male model is looking at the female model (see Figure 2). Action process is formed in the image of Diesel's window display through hanging off the arm and leaning on another figure (see Figure 5). Also in Figure 5, the mannequin in Monki's window display is holding a slogan board. Zara's one male mannequin has a pair of sunglasses in his hand (see Figure 7).



Figure 7. Window display of Zara (Photo by the writer)

Regarding circumstances, one of the window displays of Hugo Boss has a golden background, whereas Diesel's is green. Tiger of Sweden, H&M, and Monki utilize the image as background. Moreover, mostly the price tags in the window displays are placed in the foreground or next to the mannequins. However, window displays such as Hugo Boss and Diesel do not show the price tags.

This section has introduced the narrative structures in the window displays. Then the next section will present the findings of the conceptual structures.

4.1.3 Conceptual structures

Conceptual structures are widely used in window displays. Regarding classificational processes, convert taxonomies are found in every window display as they show the products, clothing or accessories, of the brand with or without mannequins. Moreover, window displays use mannequins to present the products in the analytical process, specifically in the exhaustive analytical process, in which the mannequins are the whole carriers and the outfits are the possessive attributes. The window displays which are not

using mannequins such as Marimekko and Filippa K, the analytical processes are unstructured.

This subchapter has discussed the ideational metafunction of window displays, indicating how the fashion stores utilize mannequins, products, images, and other elements as represented participants in their window displays. The findings of interpersonal metafunction of window displays will be presented in the next subchapter.

4.2 The interpersonal metafunction

This subchapter focuses on the findings of interpersonal metafunction of window displays which explores how the represented participants interact with the viewers. Findings are presented from the following sections: gaze, social distance, and perspective.

Table 5. Findings of the interpersonal metafunction analysis

	Interpersonal						
	Gaze		Social distance			Perspective	
	Demand	Offer	Personal	Social	Impersonal	Subjective	Objective
Marimekko	/	/	/	x	/	little high/45 side angle	/
Hugo Boss	x	x	/	/	x	side/high	/
Tiger of Sweden	mannequins without head/ image demanding		/	x	x	front/side/high	/
Sand	x	x	image	/	x	front/high	/
Diesel	all demand		/	image	mannequins	front and side; high	/
Filippa K	/	/	/	/	x	front	/
Ivana Helsinki	no head	/	/	/	x	front, high	/
Zara	combine both from different angles/ eyelash on the woman face/kids are demanding		/	/	mannequins	high	/
H&M	x	x mannequins	/	/	x both	high/side angle of products	/
Monki	demand (cannot the eyes/ or with sunglasses)	image looks at somewhere else	image	/	mannequins	high	/

* “/” means no findings is found, “x” means findings are found.

Table 5 presents the results of the interpersonal metafunction analysis. The following sections within this subchapter will illustrate and explain the findings of each aspect of the interpersonal metafunction.

4.2.1 Gaze

The gazes are usually formed by the mannequins and the figures in the images of the window displays. The window displays of Marimekko and Filippa K do not utilize neither mannequins nor images. Thus, they are unable to have eye contact with the viewers. Some fashion stores use mannequins without the head part. For example, when looking at the window displays of Tiger of Sweden and Ivana Helsinki, one can tell that the body of the mannequins toward to the viewers, but it is hard to tell the eye contacts. Window displays often integrate demand and offer gazes of mannequins at the same time e.g. Hugo Boss, Sand, Zara, and H&M. The pictures used in Diesel and Tiger of Sweden present the demand gaze by the model, whereas the picture in Monki's window display is offer as the model is looking at somewhere else instead of the viewers.

4.2.2 Social distance

As the mannequins utilized in the window displays aim to show the sets of clothing, the whole figures are demonstrated, which can be regarded as a long-shot, suggesting the social distance is impersonal.



Figure 8. Images in window displays of H&M (left) and Diesel (right) (Photo by the writer)

The shots of images placed in the window displays are various. As one can see from Figure 8, H&M uses a long-shot image which indicates impersonal social distance, whereas Diesel takes a middle-shot image thus the distance is social. Sand and Monki use the pictures which are pretty much close-shot, and the social distances are personal (see Figure 9).



Figure 9. Close-shot images in window displays of Monki (left) and Sand (right) (Photo by the writer)

4.2.3 Perspective

In terms of the perspective, although the window display is a three-dimensional picture and one can look at it from almost every angle, either mannequins or mere products displays mostly combine the side and front angles to the viewers and show the front view or the side view of the mannequins and products. For example, the clothing hanging in the Marimekko's window displays is presented at an angle of 30 degrees when seen from the front (see Figure 6). Both front and side angle can let the viewers check more or less the details of the products.

All these window displays are built a little bit higher than the ground which indicates that the viewers have to watch the objects from below. Hence, it is a position that the objects have power over the viewers (see Figure 10). Moreover, the involvement of viewers would change when the viewers change their viewing positions. When the viewers are walking by the window display, the viewing angle changes from the oblique angle to the parallel front angle.



Figure 10. View the window display from below (Photo by the writer)

This subchapter has demonstrated the interpersonal metafunction of window displays and revealed that the window displays interact with the viewers by gaze, social distance, and perspectives. The following subchapter will focus on the textual metafunction of window displays.

4.3 The textual metafunction

This subchapter elaborates on the findings of textual metafunction of window displays, and it explores the composition of window displays in terms of three systems: information value, salience, and framing.

Table 6. Findings of the textual metafunction analysis

	Textual						
	Information Value			Saliency		Framing	
	Left-right	Top-bottom	Centra-margin	Maximum	Minimum	Separate	Connected
Marimekko	x/price tag	x	/	x	/	/	by function: tops and pants
Hugo Boss	mannequins and bags	(no price tag) stone carved with the name	/	x	/	/	light, color, style
Tiger of Sweden	/	image-clothing	/	/	/	/	color (black and white)
Sand	/	/	x	x	image	x different styles	/
Diesel	/	text-image (no price tag)	image-manni-quins	image/background	/	/	text-image-color
Filippa K	/	x	/	x	/	/	function
Ivana Helsinki	x (tv-mannequins)	/	/	x	/	x	/
Zara	/	price tag beside the mannequins	/	mannequins and white boxes	/	/	clothing color
H&M	/	/	x	x	/	/	dressing style
Monki	x	price tag	/	x	pic	/	identical hairstyle/hand gestures

* “/” means no findings is found, “x” means findings are found.

Table 6 presents the results of the textual metafunction analysis. In the following sections of this subchapter, findings of each aspect of the textual metafunction will be illustrated and explained.

4.3.1 Information value

In terms of information value, the analysis finds that the placements of multiple elements vary in different fashion stores, and sometimes they integrate more than one form. Marimekko formulates the products and price tags as well as notice in a left-right way, in which the price tags and notice are always shown in the right corner of the window, whereas products themselves follow the top-bottom form, in which the accessories and shoes are placed under the clothes (see Figure 10). Filippa K has the same patterns as Marimekko but in a rather simple way and without a price tag. Hugo

Boss's placement also in the form of left-right, while in the top-bottom form one can find no price tag but a stone carved with the brand name on the bottom of the window (see Figure 11). The picture and clothes of Tiger of Sweden are arranged top-bottom while similar elements are allocated central-margin in Diesel's window display (see Figure 4 and 5). What also attracts attention in Diesel's display is that the text and image are drawn in top-bottom (see Figure 8). Sand composites the window display in a central-margin way, by which the image is in the center, followed by mannequins then other supportive elements such as artificial trees and shoes (see Figure 2). Ivana Helsinki put the screen on the left and mannequin on the right, between which the distance is filled with accessories. Zara mostly follows the top-bottom form, in which the price tags are put beside the mannequins on the ground. Monki adopts a similar strategy, but the price tags stand in the foreground. When involving the image and accessories, the composition of Monki's window display is also left-right (see Figure 5).



Figure 11. Window display of Hugo Boss (Photo by the writer)

These placements of the element can be tracked through three patterns according to the analytical framework. However, they do not always strictly follow the patterns. For example, in Figure 11, the window display of Hugo Boss can be recognized in a left-right form, but the information value is not give-and-new. The mannequins on the right and the bag on the right, to some extent, they are playing an equal role in the information value pattern.

4.3.2 Saliency

The saliency of elements in the window displays creates the hierarchy of importance among the elements. In most circumstances, the window displays draw high saliency on the mannequins and products and minimum the saliency of pictures and other elements, e.g. Marimekko, Zara, Monki, and Sand. However, Diesel and H&M select a different strategy by paying more attention to the image behind mannequins (see Figure 12). Figure 12 shows that Diesel and H&M both utilize a relatively bigger picture with the concrete frame behind the mannequins. Diesel chooses contrasting colors, in which yellow is the image background color, and green is the window display's background color, and black is the frames' color. H&M has much simpler color option – white in the window display regarding the picture and the frames. Moreover, H&M has a focusing light right shedding on the picture.





Figure 12. Window displays of Diesel (up) and H&M (down) (Photo by the writer)

4.3.3 Framing

Framing focuses on how the elements are connected or disconnected with each other. As in the window displays, Marimekko and Filippa K's representations rely on the functions of products. For example, one may think that Marimekko hangs a dozen of clothes in the window displays without any order. However, if taken a close look at them, those clothes are placed following their functions such as dress first then tops followed by pants, skirts, and jackets or coats (see Figure 10). Hugo Boss chooses dark colors and white as the basic color of its window displays. Moreover, although the mannequins have no action process, the lights and golden background maximize the modality and make the window display more like an integrated picture (see Figure 11). The connection of elements in the window displays of Tiger of Sweden is also achieved by adopting thematic colors black and white. The dressing style is another option to connect the elements all together, e.g. H&M. Monki realizes the connection in a different way by using the mannequins with identical hairstyle and hand gestures.

Diesel integrates a variety of signs such as text, pictures and colors. In Figure 13, the text "always turned on" is next to the button like a picture, in which the signified of the part of green color is "switched on." Then, the whole background color is green, and the

theme color of dressing style is green (a little bit darker) as well. The multiple signs within Diesel's window displays are working for the theme of "always turned on".



Figure 13. Window display of Diesel (Photo by the writer)

However, the window displays of Sand and Ivana Helsinki have comparatively weaker connections between different elements. The mannequins in Sand's window dress up in various styles and have no significant action process. The screen and mannequin in Ivana Helsinki's window have the most disconnection when compared to other window displays (see Figure 6).

The findings of textual metafunction have demonstrated how the elements are placed and related to each other to convey information or meanings to the viewers through three dimensions: information value, salience, and framing.

This chapter has presented the findings of the ten chosen fashion stores' window displays based on the analytical framework and revealed the three semiotic metafunctions, the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions, of window displays. The tables of three metafunctions analysis can be found in Appendix 1. In the next chapter, it will continue on further discussion of the findings concerning how they relate to the research question, that is, how the window displays communicate corporate identity by reviewing earlier literature.

5 Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings concerning how they relate to the research question, that is, how the window displays communicate corporate identity as well as their limitations by reviewing earlier literature.

5.1 Clothing communication

According to the findings, the most saliently represented participants are the products with or without mannequins and images of models dressing the clothes under the brands. In most situations, these elements are placed in the central position, composing the major part of window displays. Pieces of clothing represent the company and communicate the corporate identity.

It is argued by McCracken and Roth (1989) that clothing communication, to some extent, has well-accepted codes. In their experiment, they find that different combinations of clothing can create particular fashion meanings. For example, manipulating clothing ensembles, e.g. shoes, shirts, and jackets, can conform certain fashion images, e.g. punk, leisure, which more or less confirms that articulating different clothing signs can convey particular meanings. Although the perceptions may vary according to individual's age, gender, and cultural background, the basic applicable codes are commonly interpreted (Kaiser et al., 1987). Tseëlon (1992) further illustrates that clothing can indicate the social class. According to Mick et al. (2004), fashion can benefit from and mutually advance a foundational concept from semiotics (pp. 43-44).

Regarding the fashion stores in this research, they are utilizing the clothing communication in their window displays. Marimekko, well known by its original prints and colors (Marimekko, 2016), presents its newly designed clothes and accessories in the window displays, which constructs the symbolic cues in the three-dimensional

image. The iconic fabric and textures distinguish Marimekko's vigorous and unique identity. Hugo Boss, positioning itself as authentic and understated luxury clothing (Boss, 2016), demonstrates modern businesswear, exclusive leisurewear and glamorous evening apparel with both male and female gray mannequins. Differentiating from Hugo Boss the luxury business wears, Tiger of Sweden identifies its targeting market as affordable luxury with "a different cut" (Tiger of Sweden, 2016), which advocates for innovation in the bank suit and brings the business wears to the street. In terms of its mannequins' clothing, the clothes are much more casual than Hugo Boss's and have comparatively bolder design than traditional business clothing. For example, instead of presenting the suit wear, the mannequins wear sweaters and casual pants (see Figure 4).

In the casual wear market, Diesel is one of the leading pioneers providing premium clothes and accessories (Diesel, 2016). In its window display, the mannequins are wearing leisure jacket, jeans, and boots or board shoes (see Figure. 13), which indicates the freedom of creative dressing. Sand, advocating for various lifestyle (Sand, 2016), present mannequins with different dressing styles. To convey simplicity and style (Filippa K, 2016), the Nordic brand Filippa K chooses to show the product without mannequins. Moreover, it only demonstrates one neatly designed dress and one leather messenger bag. Filippa K advocates for sustainability, they believe the simple essential garments can be long lasting. Also being a Nordic design brand, Ivana Helsinki has a different view towards clothing and defines its style as small ballads with charming, soulful and savvy tones (Ivana Helsinki, 2016). Thus, the dress on its mannequins is much cuter and girlish with heart shape dots.

In terms of mass market, Zara and H&M both aim to share fashion with a broad range of people, cultures, and ages (Zara, 2016; H&M, 2016). In Zara's window displays, one can find that they use mannequins of male, female, and kids, and their dressing style includes formal, casual and sporty. Similar presentations are also found in H&M's window displays. As Monki values the self-expression, the mannequins in its window

displays have more dramatic accessories such as sunglasses and hairstyle, even the nifty hand gestures (see Figure 2 and 5).

The clothing that the window displays present are of the dressing styles the fashion companies have valued and the mannequins can communicate the identity of companies. For example, the mannequins are able to physically present the brand image through their style, pose, and clothes, giving a direct cue to the customers about what the fashion store is selling and whether it is suit for them (Lea-Greenwood, 2013, pp. 95-97). The mannequins embody good design and communicate style and meaningful content (Christopoulou, 2011). In this manner, we assume that clothing communication of window displays plays a vital role in communicating corporate identity, which implies that fashion companies ought to have more distinctive dressing style containing corporate identity. Other elements such as image and background also support the window displays to communicate corporate identity, which will be discussed in the next subchapter.

5.2 Image and background enhancement

Based on the findings, fashion stores may integrate image or background in window displays, which also play a role in communicating corporate identity.

Firstly, models dressed up in the pictures, compared to mannequins, form a more vivid image of how the clothing would look like when they are worn by real people, which would have direct impact on viewers' eyes as well as minds. Clothing communication is achieved by the models in pictures which function in the same way as mannequins in the window display. In images of Tiger of Sweden, Diesel, and H&M's window displays, the models straightly convey the desired dressing effect.

Further, models are more real than mannequins to viewers since they have facial expressions and real eye contact with viewers. Although one can tell mannequins are directing their posture to the viewers in front of them, they have no pupils to address a

real eye vector on the viewers. Models in the image are different, and they present the demand eye contact on viewers to engage them. Viewers who stand in front of the window displays may feel more involvement than those do not have images with demand eye contact. Some pictures are taken from the middle or close shot (e.g. Sand, Diesel, and Monki) which shortens the social distance than mannequins' between viewers.

In addition, the composition of the background of Diesel's window display, integrating background color, text, image, demonstrates the sense of innovation and creativity that they have treasured. In Figure 13, the text "always turned on" is next to the button like a picture of which the signified is "switched on." Then the whole background color is green and the theme color of dressing style, both of mannequins and figures in the picture, is green (a little bit darker) as well, of which the signified is also "turned on". The framing itself forms a little story creatively.

Images and background can enhance the communication of corporate identity in terms of vividness and engagement. Innovations in the composition of background and images present creativity the company owns. The window display is recognized as the most crucial in visual merchandising elements since it is the first point of interaction between the store and customers (Taskiran, 2012). To viewers, shop window displays sometimes become free exhibitions of beautiful and fashionable objects stimulating the imagination (Christopoulou, 2011). Image and background as enhancement have achieved both in interacting with the viewers and communicating corporate identity.

5.3 Supporting elements

Besides clothing communication, image, and background, there are some less salient elements such as price tags and plants supporting in window displays communicating corporate identity.

In the findings of window display's textual metafunction, fashion stores may place price tags in the window displays e.g. Marimekko, Zara, H&M, Monki. According to Lea-Greenwood (2013), the elements of retail environment such as price tag will stimulate in-store purchase (p. 90). Zara and H&M are targeting to the widest market among the chosen fashion stores (Zara, 2016; H&M, 2016) and offering goods with comparatively lower prices, especially for H&M, who claims to provide fashion with unbeatable value for money (H&M, 2016). Monki (2016) also have similar corporate values. Thus in their window displays, the placements of price tags are more evident and right beside the mannequins. Comparatively, Marimekko's price tags are less distinct. Thus, it is likely that price-oriented fashion companies such as Zara, H&M, and Monki would have evident price tags placed in window displays. Therefore, it can be assumed that besides promoting sales the price tags can also be the signs of corporate identity.

Other represented participants may have suggestions for corporate identity as well. In Figure 4, besides the clothing in H&M's window display, the plants on the shelf are salient represented on the shelf. H&M has been broadly advocating for sustainability (H&M, 2016), and it maybe can be assumed that the green plants to some extent stand for sustainability. In Figure 5, the slogan board held in the highest mannequin is written: "Be a shero", in which "shero", adapted from "hero", is the term created by Monki and suggests feminism. The narrative structure implies the corporate identity of Monki who values creativity and self-expression. Moreover, as Evans (1989) suggests that consumers are looking for the match between brand images and self-image, Monki's slogan is emphasized to reach consumers who also treasure feminism and individuality.

5.4 Limitations of window displays

It has been discussed how the elements in window displays communicate corporate identities, and this subchapter turns to the limitations of window displays in terms of communication of corporate identity.

During the clothing communication, according to the findings, some corporate identities are missing, e.g. affordable price (Tiger of Sweden), high quality (H&M), sustainability (H&M, Monki) which cannot be directly indicated by the clothing. Especially for H&M, which has received much discussion in terms of how the high quality and low price can co-exist (Hines et al., 2007). It has also been argued that an element such as quality is crucial in consumers' perception of fashion store image (Birtwistle and Shearer, 2001).

In general, high quality is hard for fashion companies or stores to present in their window displays since viewers, in most situations, cannot touch the products to judge the quality. Further, the physical distance between viewers and products may weaken their perception of quality too since they are not able to see the details of the design such as fabrics and cut. The only distinct indicator might be the price tag because of common sense that people tend to believe that the more expensive, the higher quality.

Moreover, the distinctiveness of window displays is found hidden in this study. Diamond (2006) argues that by following the five principles namely balance, emphasis, proportion, rhythm, and harmony in visual merchandising as well as window displays, stores are able to maximize the effectiveness of distinctive visual presentations in order to enhance the brand image as well as stimulate more consumption (p. 363). Van den Bosch, De Jong and Elving (2005) also argue that visual messages in corporate communication benefit the organization in the visibility, distinctiveness, authenticity, transparency, and consistency of corporate identity. However, this study finds that even though most of the window displays can be recognized that they are following the principles, the distinctiveness sometimes is still hidden to the viewers. In the chosen window displays, only few fashion stores have adopted creative ways for visual presentations e.g. Diesel, Monki, and Marimekko. Besides creativity, it is found that most fashion stores lack symbolism, which means the icon directly indicates the fashion company. Among ten fashion stores, Marimekko is the most salient one who owns the iconic designs as a result of well-known prints and fabric. Hugo Boss might be notable

too since it is the only one out of ten who masters in business suits. However, for some other chosen fashion stores, they can hardly be recognized that which one is from which brand when the names of the fashion stores are not shown. For example, if comparing Zara and H&M, one can hardly tell their fashion differences by viewing window displays, in which the mannequins have similar dressings. It, to some extent, proves Lea-Greenwood's (2013) argument that the declining expenses on in-store merchandising service resulting in the same look among fashion stores by broadly using safe and foolproof visual merchandising strategies.

This chapter has discussed the findings in terms of how the window displays communicate corporate identity as well as the limitations of window displays. The next chapter will conclude the study and discuss the implications for future study.

6 Conclusions

This chapter concludes the study and summarizes the research in subchapter 6.1, followed by discussions of practical implication and limitation of this study. Further, the final subchapter discusses the suggestions for future research.

6.1 Research summary

This study has investigated window displays of fashion stores in terms of how they communicate corporate identity. Earlier research has emphasized that fashion stores are important retailing channels as a result of the high rate of in-store shopping. Thus, visual merchandising of fashion stores plays a vital role in fashion marketing communication, stimulating sales as well as building brand image. Many scholars have studied window displays, a crucial part in visual merchandising of fashion stores, in the area of customer behavior and store image. However, less academic research has shed light on how window displays can communicate identity. This study aims to fill the gap by analyzing window displays of 10 fashion stores.

Further, in order to systematically analyze window displays, this research adopts the semiotic approach and utilizes an analytical framework, developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), to analyze the visual messages within window displays. In this framework, the visual semiotic resource has three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. Window displays of each chosen fashion stores are analyzed according to the framework in detail.

The results of this study demonstrate that fashion stores integrate multiple signs and elements in their window displays to communicate corporate identity. According to the findings, clothing communication is the most salient and efficient in representing and communicating corporate identity. The dressing and designs are, in most situations, representative of corporate value in fashion and its business. Images and background utilized in window displays can enhance the communication of corporate identity in

terms of vividness and engagement. Innovations in the composition of background and images present creativity that the company treasures. Moreover, there are some less salient elements such as price tags and plants in window displays communicating corporate identities. It is likely that price-oriented fashion companies such as Zara, H&M, and Monki would have evident price tags placed in window displays. Other represented participants such as plants and slogan board also have suggestions of corporate values and identity as well.

However, window displays have limitations in communicating corporate identity too. Some corporate identity markers such as affordable price, high quality, and sustainability, are missing in clothing communication. Especially, it is hard for viewers to judge whether the products are of high quality through window displays. Moreover, in the chosen window displays, only few fashion stores have adopted creative ways for visual presentations, being distinctive from other fashion stores. Some window displays, if removed the stores' name, can hardly be recognized that which one is from a particular fashion company.

By studying thoroughly these window displays, the research questions have been answered. Although there is relatively little previous research done in this area and this project is at the beginning point in the exploration of the links between window displays and corporate identity, this study has provided practical implications in terms of window displays research as well as communication of corporate identity, which will be discussed in the next subchapter.

6.2 Practical implications

This subchapter discusses the practical implications of this research regarding how fashion companies and stores can improve the communication of corporate identity through window displays.

According to the findings, fashion companies or the stores should create more symbolism of which the icon can directly indicate the fashion company and brand, differentiating from other competitors. Creativity is necessary for visual presentations in window displays to demonstrate the innovation value the company has treasured in order to engage with viewers and build a distinctive and recognizable image.

Corporate identity such as valuing high quality and sustainability is ought to be presented more clearly and distinctively, otherwise, it would remain as the written slogan on the web pages and brochures.

Further, the similar findings may also be applicable to other communication channels such as in-store displays, advertising, and online stores.

6.3 Limitations of the study

The limitations of this study are the results of the research method adopted by this study and the data collection.

The semiotic analysis involves the interpretation of signs. Although this research has utilized a commonly acknowledged analytical framework developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the detailed interpretations of multiple visual messages are conducted by a sole researcher, which may have bias and involve personal understand instead of common perception.

Moreover, this research has examined window displays of 10 chosen fashion stores in Helsinki. The quantity of data is comparatively small, and the geographical selection could be wider since the communication of corporate identity may differ in different cities and nations.

This subchapter has discussed the limitations of this study. Next subchapter will present the suggestions for future research.

6.4 Suggestions for future research

The study of the relation between window displays and corporate identity communication has received much less attention than the links between window displays and customer behaviors. Thus, there are possibilities for future research in this area.

Firstly, in terms of how window displays communicate corporate identity, this can be studied by collecting more data not limited in fashion stores but also in other kinds of stores or business such as grocery stores, department stores, etc. It would be more focused when choosing one particular case company and investigating its global window displays. Moreover, it would be worth interviewing the visual merchandisers from fashion companies and analyze how they interpret the corporate identity within window displays.

Secondly, possibilities also exist in the whole visual merchandising instead of concentrating on window displays, which means future research could study into how the overall visual merchandising communicates corporate identity.

Finally, the study of communicating corporate identity could focus on other visual messages such as advertisements and online stores by utilizing semiotic analysis.

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Appendix 1. Tables of three metafunctions analysis

	Ideational							
	Represented participants			Narrative structure		Conceptual		
	Mannequins	Products(No mannequins)	Image	Processes	Circumstances	Classificational	analytical	Symbolical
Marimekko	/	new season clothes and accessories	x texture	/	/	covert taxonomies	unstructured	/
Hugo Boss	gray	/	/	/	golden background	covert taxonomies	exhaustive	/
Tiger of Sweden	white	x	x	/	pic background	covert taxonomies	exhaustive, unstructured	/
Sand	6 black	/	x	reactional in image	artifical tree on the left	covert taxonomies	exhaustive	/
Diesel	3 white	/	x	action between 2	green background (metaphor)	covert taxonomies	carrier and possessive exhaustive	/
Filippa K	/	one dress and one bag/ nothing but the colthes inside the shop	/	/	/	covert taxonomies	unstructured	/
Ivana Helsinki	1 white	(a tv)	/	/	/	covert taxonomies	exhaustive	/
Zara	white/kids	/	/	hand carries sunglasses	/	covert taxonomies	exhaustive	/
H&M	white	with plants	x	/	image frame as background/price tags infront	covert taxonomies	exhaustive	/
Monki	mannequins with same hand gestures	/	x	hold the slogan "be a shero"	image behind/no background	covert taxonomies	exhaustive	/

	Interpersonal						
	Gaze		Social distance			Perspective	
	Demand	Offer	Personal	Social	Impersonal	Subjective	Objective
Marimekko	/	/	/	x	/	little high/45 side angle	/
Hugo Boss	x	x	/	/	x	side/high	/
Tiger of Sweden	mannequins without head/ image demanding		/	x	x	front/side/high	/
Sand	x	x	image	/	x	front/high	/
Diesel	all demand		/	image	mannequins	front and side; high	/
Filippa K	/	/	/	/	x	front	/
Ivana Helsinki	no head	/	/	/	x	front, high	/
Zara	combine both from different angles/ eyelash on the woman face/kids are demanding	/	/	/	mannequins	high	/
H&M	x	x mannequins	/	/	x both	high/side angle of products	/
Monki	demand (cannot the eyes/ or with sunglasses)	image looks at somewhere else	image	/	mannequins	high	/

	Textual						
	Information Value			Salience		Framing	
	Left-right	Top-bottom	Centra-margin	Maximum	Minimum	Separate	Connected
Marimekko	x/price tag	x	/	x	/	/	by function: tops and pants
Hugo Boss	mannequins and bags	(no price tag) stone carved with the name	/	x	/	/	light, color, style
Tiger of Sweden	/	image-clothing	/	/	/	/	color (black and white)
Sand	/	/	x	x	image	x different styles	/
Diesel	/	text-image (no price tag)	image-manniquins	image/backgroun d	/	/	text-image-color
Filippa K	/	x	/	x	/	/	function
Ivana Helsinki	x (tv-mannequins)	/	/	x	/	x	/
Zara	/	price tag beside the mannequins	/	mannequins and white boxes	/	/	clothing color
H&M	/	/	x	x	/	/	dressing style
Monki	x	price tag	/	x	pic	/	identical hairstyle/hand gestures