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## **Gentle Monster's Approach and Strategy for Innovative Commercial Retail using Interactive Installation Art**

Jiang Yaping<sup>1,2</sup>, Muhammad Zaffwan Idris<sup>1\*</sup>  
\* Corresponding Author

<sup>1</sup> Department of Art and Design, Faculty of Art, Computing and Industry Creative, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup> Jiangxi College of Construction, Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, China

P20232003021@siswa.upsi.edu.my, zaffwan@fskik.upsi.edu.my  
Tel: +0135961008

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### **Abstract**

At present, the rapid development of online retail has brought huge business pressure to offline physical retail. Under this background, major companies are seeking new marketing breakthroughs. For example, with the help of innovative technology, through art cross-border, thinking innovation and other ways, to create customers' favorite immersive new retail experience space. The combination of art and technology allows consumers to experience the product and enjoy personalized, interactive shopping fun, greatly enhancing brand charm. This paper analyzes Gentle Monster's offline retail marketing strategy through installation art and spatial atmosphere cases, providing marketing ideas for similar Chinese stores.

**Keywords:** Interactive installation art; Store Design; Customer experience; New retail

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### **1.0 Introduction**

The intersection of art and commerce has undergone significant transformation in contemporary retail environments. Combining the history and theory of art with theories of contemporary culture and marketing, Maria Slowinska proposes three analytical angles—space, object/experience, and persona—to bridge present and past, aesthetic appearance and theoretical discourse, and traditional divisions between art and commerce (Slowinska, 2014). Similarly, Pine and Gilmore's seminal work *The Experience Economy* conceptualizes the shopping process as a "performance" where the entire commercial space becomes a "stage" for merchants and consumers to co-create value (Pine and Gilmore, 2008). In this experience-driven era, creating memorable experiences and meaningful interactions has become essential for maximizing the value of products and services while generating lasting impressions on consumers (Lai, 2021).

Traditional luxury retail has historically emphasized conspicuous consumption, wherein the ownership of high-priced goods functions as a marker of social status. However, the rise of "experiential luxury" signals a paradigmatic shift from material possession to immersive encounters. Korean eyewear brand Gentle Monster epitomizes this transition by constructing highly immersive retail environments that foreground customer engagement through interactive installation art. Rather than presenting products as the sole focus, Gentle Monster transforms the act of shopping itself into an aesthetic experience—effectively redefining luxury as an experiential, artistic, and

participatory process. This approach reframes the retail space from a transactional environment into a culturally resonant destination where commerce and contemporary art converge.

Despite growing scholarly attention to experiential retail, current research has not sufficiently examined the strategic role of interactive installation art within contemporary commercial environments. Existing studies tend to focus on general consumer experience, store atmospherics, or brand aesthetics, yet seldom analyze how installation-based artistic interventions actively reshape retail space, influence consumers' meaning-making processes, or contribute to brand differentiation in the luxury sector (Guo, 2023; Qing, 2025). Additionally, HE (2024) analyzed how Gentle Monster leverages cross-media narratives to attract and engage Gen Z consumers. Sun (2024) explored the role of experiential marketing in establishing and communicating brand identity. A literature review reveals that scholars have examined Gentle Monster's interactive installation art from perspectives such as media and enhanced customer engagement, yet no systematic exploration exists on how the brand strategically employs interactive installation art.

Therefore, this conceptual paper addresses this gap by examining how Gentle Monster strategically employs interactive installation art to innovate contemporary commercial retail. Instead of conducting empirical measurement, the study synthesizes theoretical perspectives from art theory, design studies, consumer culture, and experiential retail to develop a conceptual framework for understanding the brand's approach. Specifically, this research aims to:

- 1) Identify the core experiential and artistic elements embedded in Gentle Monster's retail installations and examine how these elements distinguish the brand from traditional luxury retail models.
- 2) Analyze how these installations contribute to the brand's overall retail strategy, narrative storytelling, and customer engagement mechanisms.
- 3) Conceptually examine the role of interactive installation art in shaping consumer perception, enhancing the experiential value of luxury retail, and facilitating the convergence of art and commerce.

By investigating Gentle Monster as a pioneering case study, this research seeks to contribute to the broader understanding of how interactive installation art can serve as a strategic tool for brand differentiation, value creation, and consumer engagement in the contemporary retail landscape.

## 2.0 Gentle Monster: A Pioneer in Luxury Experimentation and Immersive Experiences

Gentle Monster, a South Korean eyewear brand, has rapidly grown into a major player in the global fashion industry. Gentle Monster continues to achieve success worldwide, boasting a large and loyal fan base. In the Chinese market, the Gentle Monster eyewear brand has consistently been the most popular. Gentle Monster maintained the top market share in China's sunglasses market throughout 2021 and ranked among the top 5 in both 2022 and 2023 (36Kr, 2024). As an eyewear brand, Gentle Monster has achieved remarkable success. Its interactive installation designs and customer experience concepts in physical stores offer valuable insights for others to learn from. The brand gained popularity through creative, immersive retail spaces and collaborations with high-profile designers and celebrities, including Jenny from Blackpink and brands like Fendi and Marine Serre. Gentle Monster maintains its commitment to creativity and innovation, which sets it apart in the competitive luxury market.

Luxury experimentation is a key philosophy of Gentle Monster, and this goes beyond conventional product design. They aim to create memories through immersive environments and to create a new generation of shopping experiences by engaging consumers emotionally and aesthetically. As Slowinska (2014), in contemporary culture the boundaries between art and commerce are increasingly being redefined through marketing strategies, a concept that is obvious for Gentle Monsters approach. The label combines luxury fashion with experimental art experiences that shift the focus from blind buying to customisation. It is part of the more significant trend towards customer experiences among newer generations who favour experiences over traditional status symbols such as money (Design4Retail,2020).

Boustani & Zielinski (2023) further substantiated through research on Parisian fashion boutiques that immersive design enhances the experiential pleasure through social and sensory dimensions, propelling Gentle Monster's leadership in sustainability and cultural integration.

## 3.0 Interactive Installation Art in Retail Spaces

Interactive installation art has blossomed into an enthralling artistic expression, blending technological innovation with creative prowess to bestow viewers with an immersive and participatory encounter (Stallabrass,2010; Qi & Zhang, 2024).

Interactive art installations transform the traditional shopping experience by creating immersive environments that engage customers on multiple sensory levels. These installations often incorporate technologies such as projection mapping, motion sensors, and Augmented reality (AR), allowing consumers to interact with the art and, by extension, the brand itself. This engagement fosters a sense of participation and personal connection, making the shopping experience more memorable and impactful. Tiwari et al. (2023) show that advances in immersive and interactive technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) will have a significant impact on the retail industry. Traditional retailers will need to invest in the creation of these interactive experiences to increase customer satisfaction and engagement, supported by interactive installation art and multimedia technologies that allow commercial brick-and-mortar stores to remain competitive in an ever-changing. The incorporation of interactive art in retail spaces, such as virtual showrooms, transforms how customers perceive and interact with products. This interactivity fosters a deeper emotional connection between the consumer and the brand, potentially increasing customer loyalty and encouraging repeat business. Retailers can utilize these

technologies to create memorable experiences that distinguish their offerings from competitors, ultimately enhancing customer satisfaction and engagement (Interactive Art Installations –Online lab, 2024).

Gentle Monster, exemplifies the integration of interactive art into retail. Their flagship stores are designed not just as retail spaces but as artistic experiences. The stores feature large-scale installations that invite customers to engage with the art, blurring the lines between consumer and participant. For instance, installations may include kinetic sculptures or interactive displays that respond to customer movements, creating a dynamic environment that captivates and retains visitor attention. These installations, which may incorporate imagery, tactile materials, motion, scents and sounds are designed to create a multi-dimensional experience that captivates the senses and leaves a lasting impression.

According to Fig. 1, in the Gentle Monster exhibition, which is one of the offerings at the TRX shopping centre in Kuala Lumpur, shows customers another interesting, intriguing and captivating artwork that catches the eye of even a busy passerby. At the entrance of the shop are two large statues that turn out to be bison. One is white or cream-coloured, the other dark brown or black, representing the contrast between light and dark, between natural and artificial. The bison are placed geometrically as on the gates. They have unique mechanical parts that allow slight and slow movements of their heads to give the installation more realism. This installation articulates a principle of the unity of living and non-living things by incorporating sculptural works of the figures and machines. This in turn contradicts ecological tendencies such as anthropomorphism with technology, which is constantly at the centre of Gentle Monster.

The mechanically appropriate movements of the bison lend the installation an additional appeal through the life-affirming dynamism they bring with them. Although they have an inanimate sculptural form, the carefully controlled movements of their heads give the sense that they are real animals calmly observing. This feature enriches the experience for customers and encourages them to continue the fascinating journey - an aspect that characterises the Gentle Monster retail experience.

In the background, the calm, elegant and uncluttered décor of the shop outshines the crude and primitive imagery of the bison. With its monochrome, industrial character, the shop's layout is quite simple, clean and modern and goes well with the wild and almost primitive looking bison that take centre stage. It is this contrast between the raw and wild nature on the one hand and the cultivated and civilised space of the shop on the other that fits into the story of Gentle Monster.

The bison are flanked by vast works of art featuring models wearing Gentle Monster eyewear, integrating the company's products into the artistic exhibition. In this way, the glasses are not only displayed but also embedded in a more art-oriented worldview, which is why the shop looks more like an art centre than a shop when you enter.

In general, the installation in the TRX shopping centre demonstrates the company's intention to expand traditional marketing and interior design practices, namely to use art and technology to tell customers an experience rather than just a story. The Bison mobile animation directly contributes to the brand's positioning as strong and creative, engaging the consumer from the initial stages of the shop experience. The general feeling of an art gallery attracts more customers to participate in the interaction and take photos. Thus having a good brand promotion. As with many of Gentle Monster's other flagship stores, the aim is not just for the customer to shop, but to visualise the brand in an artistic and associative environment.



Fig. 1: Gentle Monster branch, TRX, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
(source: Photo by author)

In collaboration with SKP-S in Beijing, Gentle Monster created a "Digital-Analog Future" concept that foresees a world where the boundaries between the digital and human realms are blurred. According to Fig. 2, The theme of the retail space is 'Future Farm', which echoes the 'Digital-Analog Future' theme through the restoration of farm scenes such as sheep, meadows, sheep pens and farming tools, combined with interactive installations to bring visitors into a future world.



Fig. 2: SKP-S x GENTLE MONSTER : Digital-Analog Future  
(source:Photo by BBART)

Summarized through the analysis of the Gentle Monster case study, Gentle Monster's integration of art installations into its retail spaces is inspired by several key factors that align with its brand philosophy and the evolving landscape of consumer expectations.

### 3.1 Philosophy of "Luxury Experimentation"

Gentle Monster embraces a philosophy centered around "luxury experimentation," which emphasizes not only innovative eyewear design but also the creation of unconventional retail experiences. This approach aims to captivate consumers and encourage them to return to witness the ongoing evolution of the brand and its offerings. By transforming retail spaces into immersive environments, the brand seeks to communicate its identity and engage customers on a deeper level (Stratten, 2018).

### 3.2 Creating Unique Shopping Experiences

The brand recognizes that traditional retail experiences may not suffice in attracting consumers, especially in an era dominated by e-commerce. Gentle Monster's stores are designed to resemble contemporary art galleries rather than conventional shops, providing an engaging and visually striking atmosphere. This strategy not only enhances the shopping experience but also encourages customers to explore and interact with the space, making their visit memorable (Retail Spatial Design: Art Meets Commerce, 2023).

### 3.3 Storytelling Through Art

Gentle Monster leverages the art of storytelling to weave narratives into its store designs. Each installation and sculpture is carefully curated to reflect the brand's themes and aesthetics, inviting customers on a journey that transcends mere shopping. This narrative-driven approach incentivizes shoppers to spend more time in the stores, fostering a connection with the brand that goes beyond transactional interactions (Callan, 2021).

### 3.4 Capturing Attention and Encouraging Social Sharing

Incorporating interactive art installations serves to capture the attention of consumers, making the retail space a destination for both shopping and social media engagement. The visually captivating designs encourage customers to take photos and share their experiences online, effectively promoting the brand through organic word-of-mouth and social media visibility. Gentle Monster's stores have become known as "selfie heavens," attracting a significant amount of social media traffic (Da xue Writing, 2024).

### 3.5 Adapting to Consumer Preferences

As consumer preferences shift towards experiences rather than products, Gentle Monster has adeptly adapted its retail strategy to meet these expectations. The brand's focus on creating artful and immersive experiences aligns with the contemporary consumer's desire for unique and engaging shopping environments, positioning Gentle Monster as a leader in the retail space (Retail Spatial Design: Art Meets Commerce, 2023).

## 4.0 Visual Expressions of Brand Identity in Gentle Monster's Marketing

Khan et al. (2020) examine the considerable impact that store layout has on consumer purchasing behavior, underscoring the critical nature of visual merchandising elements such as displays in windows and the use of mannequins, as well as the encompassing store environment. These factors are essential in capturing customer interest and significantly influencing their selection and buying patterns. Contrastingly, the research indicates that although aspects like store lighting, the color palette used, and ambient music do play a role in shaping the store's atmosphere, they are not directly influential to the same extent on the shoppers' immediate purchasing decisions. Visual displays are singled out as key elements that have a positive effect on customer impressions and their buying intentions. These



insights provide valuable guidance for retail businesses, implying that giving precedence to practical design elements can increase profits and improve the overall shopping experience, leading to higher sales volumes.

The study highlights the strategic importance of concentrating on visual merchandising and the ambient experience of the store as effective means to sway consumer behavior. They stress the vital influence of store design on consumer purchasing choices, spotlighting the significant effects of visual merchandising, including window and mannequin displays, in enticing shoppers and fostering purchase behavior through engaging visual environments.

From a marketing perspective, Gentleman Monster takes visual art to the next level with unusual exhibitions/artist collaborations and colourful space decorations. According to Figure 3, It is the official poster design for 2024, and the overall style is dominated by a metallic silver color scheme, reflecting a sense of technology and futuristic feeling.



Fig. 3: Gentle Monster 2024 collection campaign  
(source: shot by Elizaveta Porodina)

1. Color Palette:

- The image uses a limited, soft color palette focusing on pastel tones. The dominant colors are pale, cool shades, including off-white, silvery gray, and light pink.
- The contrast is enhanced by the juxtaposing of a figure with a dark, metallic blue skin tone against another figure with a pale, almost translucent complexion. This interplay of light and dark adds depth and drama to the composition.

2. Composition:

- The two figures are placed close to each other, both leaning forward, which creates a sense of intimacy and connection between them.
- The symmetry in their positioning and posture gives the image a balanced and harmonious feel. Their long, flowing hair leads the eye horizontally across the composition, framing their faces and drawing attention to their eyewear.
- The placement of the Gentle Monster logo in the lower left quadrant provides branding without overwhelming the visual narrative.

3. Lighting:

- The lighting is soft and diffused, creating a glowing, ethereal effect around the figures. This illumination highlights the contours of the faces and bodies, emphasizing the sleek, glossy texture of their skin.
- Light reflects off the metallic surfaces, particularly on the figure with the darker complexion, enhancing the futuristic, otherworldly vibe of the scene.

4. Texture and Material:

- The texture contrasts are notable, with the metallic, reflective skin of the darker figure versus the smooth, matte finish of the lighter figure's skin. These textural differences add a tactile dimension to the visual experience.
- The eyewear, a key product of Gentle Monster, has a polished, modern look, drawing attention as the focal point in the image.

5. Visual Style and Themes:

- The image evokes a sense of futuristic elegance and otherworldliness, suggesting a blend of high fashion with a sci-fi aesthetic. This aligns with Gentle Monster's reputation for innovative and avant-garde design.
- The portrayal of two contrasting figures—one with a more traditional human appearance and the other with a metallic, alien-like quality—suggests themes of duality, diversity, and the blending of organic and artificial.

6. Emotional and Conceptual Impact:

- Image's mood is serene yet slightly unsettling, with an ethereal calmness contrasting the unearthly appearance of the figures.

- It communicates a sense of innovation and boundary-pushing in fashion, challenging traditional norms of beauty and human representation.

#### 7. Branding and Aesthetic Strategy:

- The inclusion of the brand's logo in a subtle yet prominent position ensures brand recognition while allowing the image itself to be the primary focus. This approach fits Gentle Monster's strategy of associating its products with cutting-edge art and design.
- The overall aesthetic aligns with Gentle Monster's brand identity, which often merging fashion with artistic, avant-garde, and surreal elements.

According to Fig.4, these interactive installations and visual elements work together to create a cohesive and aesthetically pleasing experience, aligning with Gentle Monster's branding of luxury, minimalism, and contemporary style.

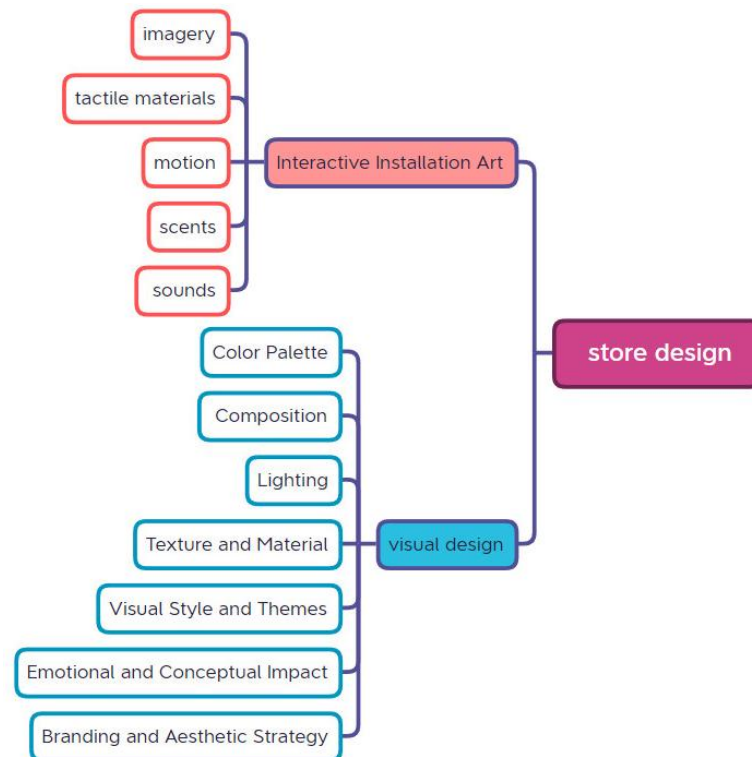


Fig. 4: Artistic expression of store design  
(source: Author's own drawing)

### 5.0 Gentle Monster's approach and strategy for maintaining uniqueness

Gentle Monster's integration of art installations into its retail spaces is inspired by several key factors that align with its brand philosophy and the evolving landscape of consumer expectations. How does Gentle Monster ensure that each store feels unique yet part of the brand's overall aesthetic?

Gentle Monster collaborates with artists, galleries and exhibitions to attract attention and showcase its brand personality. Meanwhile, through installations and store designs tailored to reflect local culture and contemporary art trends, each retail space becomes a unique experience while still aligning with the brand's overall aesthetic. (Battat, 2023).

According to Fig. 5, this chart visualizes the way Gentle Monster creates a unique store in each city, providing consumers with an exceptional shopping experience.



Fig. 5: Gentle Monster's Approach and Strategy  
(source: Author's own drawing)

### *5.1 Art Gallery Concept*

Each Gentle Monster store is designed to resemble a contemporary art gallery rather than a traditional retail space. This approach allows the brand to showcase its eyewear alongside themed sculptures and installations reflecting the local culture and artistic trends. The use of art in retail creates an immersive experience, making each visit feel like an exploration of creativity rather than just shopping (Daxue\_Writing, 2024).

### *5.2 Unique Installations and Themes*

Gentle Monster frequently changes its installations and themes, providing customers with fresh experiences each time they visit. This dynamic approach not only keeps the aesthetic engaging but also encourages repeat visits as customers return to see new artistic expressions and installations. For example, the brand's stores feature large-scale, eye-catching sculptures and interactive elements that are tailored to the specific location and season, ensuring that each store has its own distinct character while still adhering to the overall brand identity (Retail Spatial Design: Art Meets Commerce, 2023).

### *5.3 Consistent Brand Elements*

Despite the uniqueness of each store, Gentle Monster maintains a cohesive brand identity through consistent design elements such as minimalist product displays, a specific color palette, and signature scents and soundtracks. These elements create a familiar atmosphere that resonates with the brand's aesthetic, allowing customers to feel a sense of continuity across different locations. The eyewear is displayed in a way that integrates seamlessly with the art, reinforcing that the products are part of a larger artistic narrative (Stratten, 2018).

### *5.4 Customer Engagement and Experience*

The design of Gentle Monster stores is not only visually appealing but also strategically planned to enhance customer engagement. The layout guides customers through the space, encouraging exploration and interaction with both the products and the installations. This experiential focus transforms the shopping journey into a memorable event, appealing to consumers who seek unique and engaging experiences (Retail Spatial Design: Art Meets Commerce, 2023).

### *5.5 Local Cultural Integration*

Gentle Monster often incorporates local cultural elements into its store designs, making each location feel relevant and connected to its community. This cultural integration helps to create a unique identity for each store while still aligning with the brand's overarching theme of luxury experimentation and artistic expression (Daxue\_Writing, 2024).

## **6.0 Discussion**

This study highlights how Gentle Monster uses interactive installation art not merely as visual decoration but as a strategic tool for constructing immersive spatial narratives and differentiating its brand within the luxury market. The analysis suggests that such artistic interventions reshape retail space by enhancing consumer engagement, guiding meaning-making, and reinforcing experiential value. These insights extend discussions on experiential retail by emphasizing the strategic, rather than purely aesthetic, role of installation art. At the same time, the findings point to the need for further empirical research to explore how consumers interpret and respond to installation-based environments across different cultural and brand contexts.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

In short, Gentle Monster's commitment to art, creativity and experimental retail has positioned the brand as an industry leader, redefining how consumers experience luxury and how retail environments can merge art, design and commerce. Its approach has introduced a new paradigm for commercial space design and set a benchmark for experiential branding. Building on this, the present paper contributes to related studies in three key ways. First, it advances the discourse on experiential retail by conceptualizing interactive installation art as a strategic driver of spatial meaning, narrative engagement, and brand differentiation, rather than as a purely aesthetic enhancement. Second, through the case of Gentle Monster, the study integrates theoretical perspectives from art theory, design studies, consumer culture, and experiential branding, offering a cross-disciplinary framework for understanding how artistic interventions shape contemporary retail innovation. Third, the paper addresses an identifiable research gap by articulating the mechanisms through which installation-based artistic practices influence luxury retail experiences, thereby laying foundational groundwork for future empirical investigations.

This study has several limitations. First, it is based solely on Gentle Monster as a single case study, which possesses distinct brand culture and design aesthetics. Consequently, the findings may not be fully applicable to other luxury brands or retail contexts. Second, as a conceptual study, this paper did not conduct empirical surveys or behavioral experiments. The proposed analysis and framework require further validation. Third, the interpretation of Gentle Monster's strategies primarily relies on publicly available information and secondary literature, potentially introducing subjective interpretive biases that may not fully reflect the brand's internal decision-making logic. Future research could expand to include additional brand cases or conduct empirical studies on consumer experiences to further

test the findings presented herein. This would deepen both theoretical and practical understanding of the mechanisms through which interactive installation art functions within retail environments.

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