

Exploring Visual Elements in the Premium Grocery Market

A Study of Fortnum & Mason, London, UK

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ABSTRACT

This study explores visual communication in the luxury grocery sector, focusing on the English brand Fortnum & Mason, a historic tea merchant established in 1707. The research aims to understand the visual strategies and elements the brand uses to convey luxury, heritage, and tradition, with the goal of maintaining consumer interest and reinforcing brand identity. The primary method of investigation is a qualitative thematic analysis of visual elements, applied to both packaging and store layout to assess how these elements contribute to a cohesive brand narrative. The sample consists of 157 visual units: 66 related to packaging and 91 to store layout. The thematic analysis identified four dominant themes and one sub-theme: Sustainability and Appreciation for Nature, Storytelling through Visual Tools, and the Colour and Thematic Celebration sub-theme, Brand Cultural Heritage and Store Experience and Interior Atmosphere. The study highlights a need for further research into heritage storytelling within the luxury grocery market, especially in categories such as tea, confectionery, and artisanal goods where a notable gap in academic literature has been identified.

KEYWORDS: Luxury Grocery Products, Customer Experience, Heritage Marketing, Communication Strategies

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1. Introduction

The United Kingdom, renowned for its rich tea culture, has transformed tea drinking into a globally recognized ritual, dominating breakfast menus, cafés, and hotels' Afternoon Tea experiences (Klauß & Scander, p. 81; Bohne, 2024). Tea was always an important part of English culture, with the first tea-room in London being established in 1650 (Krieger, p. 47; Bohne, 2024). This event started a trend in England, and many merchants followed suit by incorporating tea into their business models: opening tea shops, importing rare blends, and developing refined serving rituals; this included Fortnum & Mason, renowned today for its luxurious teas and biscuits, which was founded in 1707 on Piccadilly Street and located on the same spot ever since (Selter, 2017). More recently, Fortnum & Mason opened multiple other locations in the UK and abroad, including a store in Hong Kong, while some of their most popular products can be found on the shelves of the food sections of upscale department stores, such as Brown Thomas in Dublin, Ireland or Le Bon Marché in Paris, France. This fact already adds the brand of Fortnum & Mason a layer of exclusivity, as usually department stores will only sell high-quality, premium products in their nourishment's sections. Perhaps a reason for which this brand is so valued and still manages to maintain its popularity throughout centuries is because Fortnum & Mason managed to build their identity around the concept of English heritage, positioning themselves as purveyors of luxury and tradition (Rahman, 2023). More than just a retailer, Fortnum & Mason embodies a blend of heritage and luxury into their communication strategies, leveraging its historical significance to craft a distinctive brand identity. This longstanding legacy not only defines Fortnum & Mason's historical roots but also informs the visual and spatial strategies the brand employs to evoke heritage, luxury, and English tradition in the modern retail landscape.

Visual communication plays a pivotal role in shaping consumers' perceptions of luxury brands, particularly those rooted in cultural heritage. In the case of Fortnum & Mason, the integration of packaging design, visual merchandising, and in-store aesthetics forms a unified visual strategy that is essential to how the brand expresses its identity. This paper, therefore, has the goal to dive deeper into Fortnum & Mason's strategies; through carefully curated visual elements, such as packaging design, visual merchandising, and in-store aesthetics, Fortnum & Mason constructs a holistic brand experience that extends beyond product consumption, reinforcing exclusivity and storytelling. By combining the elements of heritage, luxury, and authenticity into its visual presentation, the brand cultivates the perfect

narrative that aligns with its prestigious identity. This research will examine how colour, product titles, imagery, and spatial organization communicate Fortnum & Mason's distinctive brand values. Further, the visual sample collected from various sources will be subjected to a thematic analysis which will reveal the elements and patterns used by Fortnum & Mason to create a holistic and immersive brand experience that communicates heritage, luxury, and connection to culture.

1.2. Research question

By exploring the interplay between historical legacy and branding strategies, this study will focus on the communication strategies used in packaging design and in-store presentation, analysing their impact on the brand's long-standing reputation while seeing how they build memorable customer experiences. This leads to the central research question that guides the analysis: How does Fortnum & Mason use visual elements in packaging and product presentation within its stores to portray luxury and tradition while reinforcing brand identity?

The main concepts of the research question, which are visual elements in packaging and product presentation, luxury, tradition and brand identity give depth to the research process by guiding the theoretical and analytical focus of the study. This research explores how these concepts intersect to shape brand communication and perception within the context of Fortnum & Mason, a British premium grocery retailer renowned for its historical legacy and strong cultural identity. Visual elements in packaging refer to the language, design, colours used in packaging, while the product presentation concept is related to how the product is presented in the store to the consumer. These concepts are essential to understanding how Fortnum & Mason visually communicates its brand values and creates a distinctive consumer experience in the premium grocery sector. At the same time, the concept of luxury can be closely related to the materials used in packaging, as well as the language, which can help classify certain products as luxury. The concept of tradition is linked to the ways in which Fortnum & Mason highlights the "Britishness" of their products – this aspect plays an important role in the consumer decision-making process (Misiura, 2006, p. 188). Lastly, brand identity is the concept which comprises the elements mentioned earlier while also incorporating other aspects which make Fortnum & Mason the brand it is today and the ways in which it presents itself to the consumer.

1.3.Academic contribution

Many academic journals have touched upon the topic of luxury from a commercial perspective, discussing luxury in food items or packaging of food and its effects on the consumer. Curcio (2024), Michael and Fusté-Forné (2022), Shukla et al., (2022) and others have addressed the topics of luxurious foods and packaging strategies while also touching upon concepts such as the symbolic and experiential dimensions of luxury food or the influence of creative packaging. Each paper proves how important packaging, presentation and environment can be not only simply in creating a memorable grocery experience which has a powerful impact on perceiving the products, but also attribute a brand to the luxury framework, which completely shapes how the brand is perceived. Curcio (2024) explains in his findings how in modern times, grocery items have become an experience centred around pleasure (p. 22), while Shukla et al. (2022) discuss how packaging is a tool that brands can use to attract attention and stand out of the competition (p. 338). This creates the foundation for examining how Fortnum & Mason, a premium British retailer, uses visual elements in packaging and in-store presentation to communicate luxury and tradition. Additionally, a valuable research item is provided by Cho and Suh (2020), who have conducted an experiment to prove the effects spatial colour efficacy in luxury retail environments has on the consumers. However, much of this existing literature either focuses on consumer perception in abstract or experimental conditions, as the work of Cho and Suh (2020), or approaches food packaging and retail space in isolation, similarly to Curcio (2024) or Shukla et al. (2022); the goal of this paper is different. It aims to offer a holistic, real-world analysis of how packaging, spatial design, and visual storytelling are put together by Fortnum & Mason to build a luxury brand experience focused on heritage. Also, authors like Misiura (2006) have discussed heritage marketing in broader cultural or tourism contexts, however their work has not addressed how heritage values are embedded in the visual communication of luxury grocery brands. Furthermore, the literature provides limited insight into visual packaging indicators of luxury and heritage, and no consistent patterns have been established regarding store layout or merchandising in this sector. This paper, on the other hand, will investigate those concepts and uncover the strategies applied by Fortnum & Mason that make the brand associated with luxury and heritage.

The contribution of this thesis to the academic conversation is by taking a more integrated and contextual approach which offers a thematic analysis coded in a visual manner

of how luxury, heritage, and culture are communicated through the combined use of packaging design, spatial arrangement, and storytelling. The concept of integrated marketing communication will be helpful in uncovering how the brand combines elements across various touchpoints, with a focus on packaging and interior ambiance, to shape Fortnum & Mason's communication. Each concept will be analysed in detail to discover exactly what strengthens the luxury, heritage and culture attributes in Fortnum & Mason's identity, making the brand prestigious and exclusive. The integrated marketing communication perspective is valuable in this context because it takes into consideration every opportunity a brand can leverage to its advantage, including its retail space, as it can work as a medium to advertise the brand's own products (Percy, 2023, p. 282), as well as packaging, and anything else that helps the brand create visibility (Percy, 2023, p. viii). This paper, thus, focuses on packaging design and retail space for a holistic understanding of brand communication and it builds on the previous findings, while focusing on Fortnum & Mason, the iconic British retailer; this study explores how visual strategies shape consumer experience and brand perception in the premium grocery market. In doing so, it addresses a notable gap in the literature: the research gap regarding the integrated brand communication (IMC) in the luxury grocery sector from a heritage perspective.

From an academic perspective, this study contributes to existing research on luxury brand identity, semiotics, and visual marketing strategies. Although there is substantial literature on luxury branding which has a strong focus on the fashion and accessory sectors, there is a noticeable lack of research directed towards luxury grocery products; there are some relevant research items, like the paper by Curcio (2024) or Shukla (2022), which focus on grocery items packaging, however the gap in regards to the luxury grocery retail spaces still exists. Specifically, the intersection of heritage and luxury in the context of premium grocery brands such as Fortnum & Mason remains underexplored. This study aims to address that gap by examining how visual branding elements such as packaging design and in-store layout communicate luxury and tradition. The IMC perspective will be the foundation to research Fortnum & Mason's strategies used in packaging and store layout for creating a holistic strategy that contributes to a positive customer experience.

1.4.Societal relevance

From a perspective of societal relevance, despite the thesis focus being directed towards Fortnum & Mason only and its ability to provide a memorable customer experience rooted in

tradition, its findings can be highly relevant for businesses in the hospitality and premium retail industries, as well as industrial designers who design packaging and marketing specialists. Curcio (2024) mentions that consumers are increasingly seeking hedonic experiences in various industries, including the food sector (p. 6) and those experiences can be determined by unique packaging, as purchases are highly influenced by visually appealing designs (Curcio, 2024, p. 24).

The companies who are looking for ways to incorporate an integrated marketing communication approach into their brand and focus on communicating the richness of tradition their brand provides to the consumer would also find the contents of this study useful. Mainly, it could help them understand what makes a brand's heritage and history be perceived as strong and respectable, and that can create a level of authority amongst competitors. By analysing the brand's integration of visual design with narrative and symbolic cues, this study provides valuable insights for marketers who want to implement the element of heritage into their own brands, as well as for cultural scholars interested in how commercial spaces can impact the way in which production is perceived.

Mainly, the goal of this research lies in uncovering how visual branding within the luxury grocery sector can effectively communicate both heritage and exclusivity – values that are increasingly sought after by today's consumers. Therefore, as the demand for hedonic and premium experiences grows (Curcio, 2024, p. 6), understanding how brands like Fortnum & Mason visually construct and maintain their identity offers valuable insights for marketers, designers, and scholars interested in the evolving dynamics of luxury consumption beyond the fashion industry.

Therefore, the focus is to understand how premium grocery retailers such as Fortnum & Mason leverage visual elements in packaging, such as illustrations, colours, shapes, etc., and store layout, which implies the ambiance inside retail space(s), colours used in interior decorations, visual merchandising strategies, and other elements, in order to communicate brand values, particularly heritage, luxury, and culture, in the high-end grocery market sector. Recognizing how visual storytelling enhances perceived value and customer loyalty can help commercial enterprises effectively position their brands to attract consumers who appreciate high-quality products and the cultural attributes surrounding them. The power of visual branding lies in its ability to convey deeper narratives that evoke emotion, tradition, and

exclusivity, making it a crucial tool for premium brands such as Fortnum & Mason (Teal, p. 646; Machin, 2014).

1.5. Outline of thesis structure

This thesis is structured in a way which guides the reader into the exploration of Fortnum & Mason's communication of luxury, heritage, tradition through an integrated marketing communication lens with a focus on visual strategies in its retail environments and the packaging design of their products. The following chapter (2), Theoretical Framework, contains a collection of academic literature which is highly relevant in building a solid foundation for the analysis. It introduces key concepts such as integrated marketing communication from Percy's (2023) book, and the aspects it entails. Following, heritage marketing from Misiura (2006), perception of luxury retail environments in an experimental setting by Cho and Suh (2020), traditional English interior style and lastly, the role of packaging in grocery items. All mentioned literature presents relevant concepts that have been researched from an academic perspective. Together, they help unpack the communication used by premium grocery retailers. These theories will serve as key elements throughout the case study of Fortnum & Mason.

The third chapter (3), the Method section, explains the research design of the thesis, the type of analysis which was seen as the most fit for the type of data that needs to be collected and all aspects of data collection. For this study, a qualitative, thematic analysis of visual content was considered as the suitable method to examine the visual elements within Fortnum & Mason's retail environments and the packaging design of its most iconic products. This approach allows for a deeper interpretation of how meaning is constructed and communicated through visual elements.

The chapter that follows (4), the Results section, contains an overview of the analysis results and their interpretation in relation to the research question and the theory discussed in the second chapter.

Lastly, the Conclusion section (5), ties together all previous chapters to provide the answer to the research question. This section also contains the theoretical implications of the research findings, as well as a discussion of societal implications of the findings. Finally, this section ends with information regarding the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

2. Theoretical framework / literature review

This section provides an overview of existing literature that dives into the topics of heritage and English tradition, the emergence of luxury packaging in the grocery industry, traditional English interior style, perceived luxury in retail environments, all tied together by the concept of integrated marketing communication (IMC), which will be reviewed below. The combination of academic literature helps understand the choices implemented by Fortnum & Mason in spatial and visual design, the packaging design and how those elements can have a direct influence on the customer perceptions, allowing the brand to relate itself to the luxury framework. IMC plays a defining role in this context and below can be found an explanation of what IMC is and how it helps the brand shape its image.

2.1. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

IMC has many definitions, and it plays a variety of roles within a company, which is a consequence of its relatively recent widespread use and popularity, thus it still has a lack of a concrete meaning and understanding (Holm, 2006, p. 24). Nonetheless, IMC plays a crucial role for a company's growth and some of the things it targets are stakeholder relationships, brand communication, and strategic planning (Percy, 2023, p. 4). One more recent definition of IMC from Percy (2023) emphasizes that its core lies in planning and delivering a consistent brand message. Effective IMC revolves around developing a well-integrated communication program that aligns specific communication goals with the desired behaviours of a target audience which helps in fostering strong and lasting customer relationships through intentional, strategic coordination (pp. 4-5). However, according to Kenyon (2020), the main scope of IMC is to deliver a unified and seamless experience to the consumer across various channels. Thus, no matter the channel that the consumer is using, integrated marketing helps in delivering a clear message which will cut through all the clutter of today's marketing channels.

University of Mumbai (2023) states that IMC uses a synergy of marketing communication tools in a way that they complement each other and deliver the perfect message to the target group (p. 2). One strength of IMC is that nearly every marketing communication task presents an opportunity to apply IMC principles. Recognizing the key elements of communication starts with understanding how consumers make decisions within a specific product category. This understanding is central to the strategic planning process,

which involves analysing the marketing plan from a greater perspective, defining the target group, mapping out the brand decision-making journey, determining the most effective brand positioning, setting the communication strategy, and choosing media channels that align with that strategy to ensure the message is delivered effectively (Percy, 2023, p. 18). IMC, thus, can help brands build a consistently positive brand image – something that any brand wants and needs; appropriate application of IMC can gain stronger marketing, tailored communication, and a consistent brand image (University of Mumbai, 2023, p. 2). This process becomes particularly relevant in the context of luxury brands, as the customers of this field seek seamless experiences in engaging with the brand, thus companies must focus on creating a positive journey for the customer, especially the ones involved in the luxury field (Kenyon, 2020).

A relevant aspect discussed by Percy (2023) in the context of this research is branding from a perspective of nostalgia, which can be a very effective IMC strategy. Nostalgia usually comes in 2 forms – personal and historical. Personal nostalgia is connected to personal memories of previous experiences, while historical nostalgia connects to the people’s feelings that things seemed better in the past (p. 204). The reason why this aspect is relevant in the context of this research is because Fortnum & Mason often draws on historical nostalgia through both visual and textual cues, reinforcing their image as a timeless and authentic British institution. Brands can benefit from this information and trigger positive memories and feelings amongst consumers by using visual and textual tools that will evoke positive responses linked to memories and past experiences (Percy, 2023, p. 204). The following concept of the Theoretical Framework, Heritage marketing and English tradition, dives deeper into this subject, but it will be explained from a slightly different point of view.

Another important point made by Percy (2023) is that marketing communication is the link between the brand and the market, and this includes packaging, business cards, signs inside and outside the store, newsletters, and so much more; it is not only about promotion and advertising (p. 21). For brands such as Fortnum & Mason, which rely heavily on visual storytelling to evoke heritage and exclusivity, these elements serve as both communication tools and brand touchpoints. This makes IMC crucial for a brand’s communication and messaging, as the management of those elements can be a defining step.

Along with the elements mentioned earlier, a brand can deliver their message through more innovative ways and can generate more interest from the consumers. Those can be

experiential marketing, sponsorship and events, all of which help in strengthening brand awareness and building a beneficial brand attitude (Percy, 2023, p. 148). In Fortnum & Mason's case, the brand uses various visual aids to create a strong bond between them and the consumer, for example theme store decorations and exclusive products with self-explanatory packaging for all national holidays (Christmas, Easter, Halloween, holidays related to the Royal family). Embracing English tradition is also part of the brand's nature, which includes organizing afternoon tea parties, hosting English award events and other types of ceremonies.

Furthermore, IMC also involves company's integration of various communication channels – advertising, promotion, public relations, and product packaging (University of Mumbai, 2023, p. 3). Percy (2023) states that packaging can reinforce a positive brand attitude as well as being an ongoing reminder of the brand in the case when packaging must be kept for a product (p. 140). At Fortnum & Mason, packaging plays a crucial role, especially for products like teas and biscuits. For their biscuit range, the brand has developed a strategy where customers can initially purchase an elegant aluminium tin, and for future refills of the same product, they can opt for a more sustainable, disposable cardboard package to restock the original tin. Generally, this packaging strategy is especially applicable to luxury grocery items, where premium packaging reinforces perceived quality and tradition, even post-purchase. This way, the role of the packaging is to operate as a post-purchase advertisement (Percy, 2023, p. 140).

Overall, packaging offers the brand an opportunity to reinforce brand awareness and the benefits the brand provides (Percy, 2023, p. 148). As part of this process, brand awareness and brand attitude strategies play a key role in IMC planning. Percy (2023) highlights the importance of distinguishing between recognition and recall in brand awareness. When consumers make brand decisions at the point of purchase, a recognition strategy is needed, meaning that advertising must depict the brand as it will appear on shelves. In contrast, when a consumer first experiences a need and then recalls a brand that meets it, a recall strategy is more appropriate. In these cases, communication must first present the need and then link it clearly to the brand, ensuring that the brand comes to mind when the need arises (p. 87). Fortnum & Mason's iconic packaging design which features consistent colours, typography, and emblematic visuals not only aids in brand recognition on retail shelves but also reinforces recall by evoking associations with heritage, quality, and indulgence when consumers think

of premium tea or gifting options. Their ability to balance both strategies makes the packaging a central element of their integrated communication approach.

2.2. Heritage marketing and English tradition

According to Misiura (2006), foods and beverages play a dominant role in shaping national heritage around the world, making them culturally significant elements. Certain culinary products such as tea, wine, or traditional pastries can become so deeply embedded in a nation's identity that they retain their emotional and symbolic value across generations, regardless of societal changes or shifting consumer trends (pp. 235-236). A wonderful example which also links perfectly to the topic of this research would be tea in a country like England; it arrived there around 1653, gained popularity around 1660 becoming a fashionable drink (Misiura, 2006, p. 233), and by the 1880s, ladies were wearing their tea gowns for the Afternoon Tea occasion, a concept started by Anna, the 7th Duchess of Bedford (Misiura 2006, pp. 196–197). And to this day, afternoon tea is a staple of English tradition and can be experienced in the most upscale hotels and dining establishments where the most notable public figures are present on a regular basis, such as The Ritz; there, a wide range of teas is being offered in a luxurious setting – silver teaspoons, milk jugs and tea strainers, along with a three-tier stand of a selection of home-made jams, fresh cream cakes, a variety of pastries, tea sandwiches (Misiura, 2006, p. 196). Tea, therefore, as well as other products that could be considered part of a nation's heritage, can be elevated in perception through various presentation tactics, like the ones mentioned, with the use of fine silverware, elegant packaging, and refined service rituals. These elements enhance the product's perceived value, transforming it into an exclusive and luxurious experience in the eyes of the consumer.

Yet, Misiura (2006) mentions that the concept of heritage is not only about the preservation of tradition or exclusivity, but also about the feelings of aspiration and nostalgia it evokes. These emotional associations, such as the longing for elegance, refinement, or a connection to the past are highly valued across different consumer groups and therefore become powerful drivers in marketing, a fact which was also discussed earlier regarding the concept of IMC. This connection is especially strong in the luxury sector, where brands often rely on historical cues and rich cultural symbolism to reinforce their message consistency across channels. Such a service that plays with the concept of history and heritage must address the needs, aspirations and motivations of their regular and potential visitors, reinforcing consumer sovereignty (pp. 81-82).

Heritage, therefore, according to Misiura (2006), can be used by organizations to reinforce brand identity to highlight aspects of the culture and the country they are associated with. Heritage branding must be present in the organizational communication activities to create a long-term bond with their consumers. Some of the main descriptors of a heritage branding strategy can be tradition, familiarity, quality, trust, value and history (pp. 248-251). People who work in the heritage industry (one such role can be English Heritage Custodian) must maximize the positive associations experienced by visitors and customers through effective communication, high care for the customer and excellent product/service knowledge (Misiura, 2006, p. 172). All in all, heritage workers, whether the ones engaged in the tourism, food/beverage, hospitality, sporting sectors, must appeal to consumers' aspirations and desires and all the activities they conduct must be done with great attention to detail (Misiura, 2006, p. 6). In the context of grocery products, heritage marketing can be identified through clear visual and thematic cues, such as the use of specific colour palettes and traditional symbols on packaging. Similarly, the physical store atmosphere can be considered luxurious through the use of furniture and decor that evoke a sense of sophistication and authenticity (Michael & Fusté-Forné, 2022, p. 828).

In the current UK context, Misiura (2006) states that a popular strategy is to combine historical heritage with modern elements to create a memorable and impactful consumer experience. This fusion emphasizes cultural uniqueness while also aligning with contemporary consumer needs and desires. As part of this approach, country branding often draws from various heritage components to shape national identity and appeal to both locals and international visitors. These components can include celebrated historical figures such as Dylan Thomas or Mahatma Gandhi, national contributions to global events, such as wars, literature, or sports, iconic architecture, natural landscapes, regional cuisines and beverages, language, folklore, and even commemorations or re-enactments of significant historical moments. All these elements play a vital role in reinforcing a sense of place and cultural value that enhances brand storytelling and consumer engagement (pp. 168-169).

Building on the IMC strategies that focus on brand awareness and attitude, emotional attachment is a powerful tool for connection. Thus, an effective way to achieve this is mainly through cultural heritage, which taps into consumers' memories and sense of identity. In sectors like food and beverage, tradition and symbolic relevance offers strong opportunities for brands to communicate authenticity and value. Therefore, heritage becomes not just a

communication element but a strategy in delivering consistent and meaningful brand storytelling.

2.3. Perceived luxury in retail environments

Perception of luxury in the commercial aspect is embedded in a variety of factors, one of the most influential being the physical retail environment. That includes a pleasant atmosphere, fitting decor, furniture and lighting. In the context of brand values, such an environment plays a central role in communicating exclusivity, status, and authenticity, all of which are core attributes associated with luxury. These elements are not merely aesthetic; they serve as strategic brand touchpoints within a broader Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) framework. As Spence et al. (2014) highlight, store atmospherics are inherently multisensory, and environments must be understood as a combination of visual, auditory, tactile, and even olfactory cues (p. 472).

In their experiment of spatial colour efficacy, Cho and Suh collect responses regarding participants preferences and perceptions of different colour combinations in retail spaces. Their research demonstrates that dark brown colours in an interior combined with an appropriate contrast of colours can increase the level of comfort for customers, increasing the level of perceived luxury for the space. Small amounts of green paired with a dark wood interior create an even more luxurious environment, according to the participants of the experiment. On the other hand, too much contrast in a retail space creates discomfort and distraction due to a lack of harmony between shades. One example of such a colour combination is bright orange and green, which made participants unwilling to stay in such a space due to feelings of discomfort (Cho and Suh, 2020, p. 7). This research is particularly relevant when analysing how Fortnum & Mason crafts its store environment – the company makes strategic use of dark wood tones, warm lighting, and eau-de-nil (blue green) accents. This aligns closely with the findings of Cho and Suh – Fortnum & Mason create a store atmosphere which communicates luxury and tradition through strategic use of colours and furniture elements. By visually analysing the spatial design and brand presentation of Fortnum & Mason, this thesis adopts a visual approach, analysing the role of colours, layout, and packaging in strengthening the luxury and tradition brand theme. These design choices will be interpreted as part of a broader brand narrative that reinforces the company's heritage positioning and aligns with its IMC strategy, reinforcing consistent messaging across visual and spatial brand touchpoints.

Additionally, the study highlights how large areas filled with darker hues, especially on floors or main walls, can enhance perceptions of luxury, while wooden coloured tones create a warm and inviting environment that sparks a desire for customers to stay longer. Small accents of green can amplify the sense of luxury when paired with dark backgrounds, but excessive use of green or orange, especially on larger surfaces, tends to distract and lower the perceived luxury of the space. An important role is also held by the level of contrast among spatial elements, as too much or too little contrast can reduce the pleasurable experience and desire to remain in the store. These findings suggest that a balanced sense of spatial enclosure, which would not be too open nor too confining can create a psychologically secure and aesthetically pleasing environment (Cho and Suh, 2020, p. 13). Furthermore, even subtle adjustments in how colours are distributed throughout a space can significantly impact how customers perceive and emotionally respond to the environment. As noted by Spence et al. (2014), consistency across sensory cues may offer more optimal levels of stimulation for customers, making them more pleasant (p. 480). Experimenting with different spatial arrangements of the same three-color palette during the design process will help in deciding which combinations can create the most inviting and luxurious atmosphere, highlighting the importance of thoughtful and strategic colour planning in retail interior design (Cho and Suh, 2020, p. 12). This study conducted by Cho and Suh is important in building the framework of this thesis as it provides a foundational understanding of how spatial and visual design choices such as those employed by Fortnum & Mason can directly influence perceptions of luxury, which helps to analyse the strategic choices which influence the branding of high-end grocery retail.

In addition to what is mentioned above, Michael and Fusté-Forné (2020) point out that highlighting the luxurious atmosphere (even the environment around the store, like a unique view) can also attract customers. Customers themselves, when seeking engagement with luxury environments, look for uniqueness, hedonic values, and creativity (p. 828). Therefore, experiences around the food industry must be curated in a way that they promote uniqueness, evoking an intimate and slow atmosphere for the visitors – this allows them to be immersed in an environment of prestige and sophistication (Michael and Fusté-Forné, 2020, p. 834). Fortnum & Mason, for instance, carefully curates an immersive in-store atmosphere which associates traditional British elegance with a calm, carefully organized space where customers are encouraged to slow down and enjoy the experience. From the grand staircase

to the placement of fine teas and handmade confections, the retail layout and decor speak for the brand's focus on refinement and heritage.

To conclude, when thoughtfully designed, the elements of spatial colour combinations, lighting, and decor can elevate customers' emotions and behaviours and increase the perceived exclusivity and prestige of a space, encouraging customers to engage more deeply with the brand and its products. In the case of Fortnum & Mason, this is not only about decoration, but a strategic form of brand storytelling that visually communicates heritage, quality, and exclusivity. A well-curated atmosphere that evokes comfort, elegance, and uniqueness is essential in shaping memorable and desirable luxury experiences in high-end grocery retail environments.

2.4. Traditional English interior style

Michael and Fusté-Forné (2022), state that commercial venues are a key element in attracting customers and communicate a luxurious environment through visual narratives (p. 833). Cho and Suh (2020) also recognize the importance of the offline retail spaces, stating that their purpose goes beyond simply selling products; nowadays, the retail spaces can be leveraged for creating environments that positively influence the customer's shopping experiences (p. 2). This is why a section which uncovers the interior elements of royal and/or traditional English style is necessary, as it will help understand Fortnum & Mason's intentions to decorate their retail spaces in the ways that they do, enhancing the customer experience while maintaining their ties to the English culture and history.

Savage and Friedmann state that English interior style has seen various changes and fluctuations since the beginning of the 18th century, many of which were based on trends coming from France, Italy, even Greece and China (2025). For instance, Greek-style vases and house ornaments were commonly used in Wedgwood wares by Josiah Wedgwood, an English potter and innovative designer of the 18th century, an inaugural figure in the Industrial Revolution (2022). This Revolution has brought changes in England, as machinery was slowly taking over the production of interior decoration items, which made them cheaper and more available to new markets. This way, the middle class became one of the largest consumers of such items, which led to manufacturers catering the production to their style and taste (Savage and Friedmann, 2025).

The beginning of the 19th century new concepts started to take shape – eclecticism – which led to the idea of combining styles together – Greek style, Italian style, Elizabethan style, Tudor style, Baronial style. Decorations became very elaborate, ornaments had to cover every surface of the interior. This ultimately led to a loss of refinement, and English designers slowly started to recognize that and advocate for craftsmanship in all aspects of the interior, such as furniture, wallpaper, textiles and so on. One notable figure in this movement was William Morris, a furniture designer who opted for high-quality production, old style decorations, natural patterns; he refused to implement machinery in creating his produce, preferring to look at the past for inspiration.

All in all, Misiura (2006) touches on the fact that historical establishments in London will always opt for elegance and the interior will be presented in a manner that evokes a WOW-effect. For example, the Ritz hotel, which is located on the same street as Fortnum & Mason, was extremely appreciated at the time it opened its doors to the public for how refined it was and for the amount of detail that went into decorating the interior and the exterior of the building. The facade of the hotel resembles an exquisite French castle, while the interior features incredible chandeliers, marble, combinations of refined tones of green, golden and pink. This combination created an environment which almost looks like an invitation to the hotel's guests to celebrate the time spent there (pp. 194-195).

Similarly, Fortnum & Mason's flagship store layout, with each floor offering a curated sensory experience, aligns with the grandeur and ceremonial nature of Georgian spatial planning. It embodies a richly layered interpretation of Georgian-inspired interior style, reflecting the evolution of English design tradition (Rahman, 2023). Georgian interiors did not follow a single unified style but rather transitioned through Palladianism, Rococo, Neoclassicism, and Regency throughout the 18th century, each emphasizing symmetry, balance, and ornamentation in distinct ways (Booyens, 2025). This eclectic legacy is visible in Fortnum & Mason's store through its refined architectural details, including elegant wood panelling, gilded mouldings, and sparkling chandeliers that evoke the Rococo and Regency periods. It is nestled in the heart of London's Piccadilly, and the store's design, with its opulent interior features and timeless eau de nil palette, blends historical homage with contemporary luxury. This reinforces the brand's image as a custodian of British heritage and sophistication (Rahman, 2023).

2.5. Luxury packaging in the grocery industry

Luxury brands recognize that people seek unique marketing, attractive packaging, novelty experiences – luxury is no longer defined by price only (Curcio, 2024, pp. 1-2). In relation to the grocery sector, there are no universal items that are considered luxury, it all depends on the society, the time and the place (Hartmann et al., 2016, p. 1977). However, there are some criteria which indirectly place items into the luxury framework, such as price, quality, authenticity and marketing. The authenticity factor is particularly important for the consumer, and it refers mainly to scale of production and artisanal produce (Hartmann et al., 2016, p. 1977), which can be transmitted through packaging design, colours or language; yet this research will have a stronger focus directed towards other aspects rather than authenticity which will be described in the Method section. Shukla et al. (2022) mention how one of the most important factors which plays a crucial role in the way people perceive products is packaging. After all, packaging is what mainly influences customer purchase decisions and helps in communicating the standard and quality of the product to the consumer (p. 338).

Within the IMC framework, selecting between an informational or transformational brand attitude strategy can also be a tactic. Depending on the approach, brands must tailor their media and design choices to either allow consumers time to process meaningful messages or to present striking visual content that evokes emotional identification. This alignment of strategy and medium is especially relevant in luxury branding, where emotional resonance and image recognition influence perceived value (Percy, 2023, p. 264).

According to Shukla et al., (2022) the time brands get to make an impression on the customer through packaging is an average of 7 seconds, therefore brands must get creative in how they present packaging in retail environments. Creative packaging has the potential to capture customer attention and positively influence buying behaviour by stimulating curiosity and motivating consumers to engage with the product. According to optimal arousal theory, highly creative packaging increases arousal, which leads to exploratory behaviours and deeper processing of product information. However, while many studies emphasize the benefits of highly creative packaging, real-world retail environments feature varying levels of creativity, and overly complex designs may backfire if they require too much emotional or cognitive effort from consumers. This highlights the importance of balancing creativity with clarity and customer expectations in packaging design (pp. 338-339).

Together with everything mentioned above, Romeo-Arroyo et al. (2023) states that packaging has the power of influencing consumers perceptions and behaviours. Through the sensory information presented by an item, such as visual symmetry or colour, marketers can signal superior quality which influences the perception of premiumness (pp. 1-2). Marketers see colour as a tool to influence packaging and product perception as it not only helps in establishing a position amongst competition, it can also draws the attention of the consumer and conveys meaning. In the context of foods and beverages, colour even has the power to set anticipation for consumers regarding taste, texture, and health benefits of products. Certain colours used in packaging, such as purple or blue, can lead to higher price estimations (Romeo-Arroyo, 2023, pp. 2-3). These colours are notably prevalent in Fortnum & Mason's packaging design. Given that colour choices in branding are rarely arbitrary, their deliberate use of such hues can be interpreted as a strategic effort to position their products within the luxury framework. Shapes also have an important role in influencing product perceptions: products can be seen as more elegant and premium when the design contains square shapes, vertical straight lines, symmetry. Asymmetry in package design can lead to a perception of messiness and untidiness, making it unsuitable for premium products (Romeo-Arroyo et al., 2023, pp. 3-9). Attention to detail in packaging, therefore, plays a definitive role in setting expectations about a product and contributes to the overall perception of its' premiumness.

All in all, the elements discussed above, product heritage, spatial design, and packaging collectively contribute to shaping the consumer's perception of luxury. When strategically aligned through an IMC approach, these elements enhance brand coherence and help deliver a unified, immersive retail experience. The role of heritage in the grocery sector is to connect products to cultural identity and emotional value. Spatial elements such as colour and layout shape customer perceptions of exclusivity and comfort. Packaging also has a role to play in signalling quality and arousing consumer interest. Finally, as mentioned earlier, IMC connects all those elements and adds aspects which strengthen the communication and create links across different areas of the brand. Connecting these elements offers a solid foundation for exploring how premium grocery brands combine visual and sensory factors to shape the concept of tradition and sophistication in their branding strategies.

3. Method

This chapter explains the steps that were taken in the analysis process to uncover the ways in which Fortnum & Mason use visual elements in packaging and product presentation within its stores to portray luxury and tradition, reinforcing their brand identity. The Method, thus, will uncover how Fortnum & Mason conveys heritage marketing and English tradition in their retail space and packaging design, and the elements that put their retail space(s) and packaging in the luxury and tradition framework. The Method section contains a research design, the sampling strategy and the validity and reliability of it; following is the operationalization of the terms: heritage marketing, luxury grocery products and visual storytelling. Lastly, the Method section contains the data collection and processing part. Together, these elements shape the analysis process, making the answer to the research question more tangible.

3.1 Research design

To analyse the packaging design of Fortnum & Mason, as well as their space management, a qualitative thematic analysis of the brand's visual choices in packaging design and store layout will be performed, which will help to discover connotations that are there for the consumer to perceive. Although this research will not be run through a semiotic lens, it will contain similarities to it – semiotic analysis, known as the language of signs and symbols, communicates to the reader not only through text, but also through visual choices (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p. 49). The reason why it is similar is because the thematic analysis will help retrieve themes and patterns observed in Fortnum & Mason's packaging and layout visual choices to respectively interpret the brand's message. Through the process of denotation, it is possible to see what is illustrated on the packaging or observe the elements of the layout and describe them, while connotation dives into the symbolic meaning of those visual representation (Aiello and Parry, 2020, p. 10). This makes it possible to analyse the brand's choices and interpret them in relation to the research question.

A qualitative approach was seen as more fitting for this style of research – the flexible nature of the qualitative methods and the smooth integration of human touch to it (Mwita, 2022) will allow the entire process to develop in an organic, yet structured manner. Thus, qualitative methods, particularly a thematic analysis of visual elements, is ideal for the development of this research as it enables an in-depth exploration of the visual strategies

employed by Fortnum & Mason luxury, heritage and tradition-driven communication. Analysing Fortnum & Mason's visual communication allows the researcher to systematically interpret and deconstruct the elements of design, such as colour, typography, imagery, and layout, to uncover how these components work together to create a cohesive brand narrative (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p. 49). This method is suitable for examining the symbolic and cultural meanings embedded in packaging, as it focuses on both the overt (denotation) and covert (connotation) messages conveyed through visual media. Although semiotic analysis could have also been suitable for conducting this type of research, the goal is not limited at exploring the denotations or the connotations of the visual communication. Thematic analysis is more fitting, as it allows to uncover the brand's values and narratives. Focus groups were not taken into consideration, as the goal of this research does not align with the result a focus group would provide (such as explore people's interaction with the brand). Interviews could have been helpful in gaining information from professionals related to the luxury grocery industry or the hospitality sector. However, the thematic analysis of the brand's packaging design and layout strategies was seen to be better aligned with answering the research question and increase the generalizability of the results, making them applicable to brands related to the luxury grocery sector or the heritage marketing industry. By concentrating solely on the visual elements, the study can provide a nuanced understanding of how Fortnum & Mason leverages aesthetics to shape consumer perceptions and enhance their communication, making it a fitting method for addressing the research question. Building on that, the thematic analysis will help in identifying the patterns that keep recurring in the data and interpret their meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 6). The value of the thematic analysis for this research is highlighted in its ability to help find ways in which Fortnum & Mason repeatedly apply certain visual aids which leads to patterns in their packaging or the way their stores are being organized and decorated, and the presentation of the brand's merchandise. The analysis will reveal the types of themes they choose to focus on to create a stronger feeling of luxury and tradition around their brand.

An inductive approach will be perfect to explore the data without predetermined categories. The themes will emerge inductively from the visual data itself, such as the packaging designs and in-store presentations. This will allow the analysis to remain grounded in the material and uncover how Fortnum & Mason strategically employs visual cues to communicate luxury, heritage, and tradition.

From an ethical viewpoint, the research design is adherent to all ethical guidelines; for gathering empirical data, the research process only involves images withdrawn from public mediums which can be accessed by any physical individual. No people were harmed, disturbed or involved at all in the information gathering process, as the research method only requires collecting secondary visual data.

3.2. Sampling strategy

A thoughtful sampling procedure shapes the entire research journey – from the beginning of the process to the final steps, thus this stage must be conducted with special diligence (Flick, 2014, p. 49). For this study, the sampling method is purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling strategy commonly used in qualitative research which implies a deliberate selection process of materials that are relevant and have the potential to help in building the research question answer (Ahmad and Wilkins, 2024 p. 1462). The sample will consist of two components – packaging and store layout – them being analysed in a unified approach to form a holistic understanding of Fortnum & Mason’s visual communication strategies. The two elements complement one another and contribute to a unified brand narrative that is conveyed through both packaging and in-store presentation. Thus, the sample will contain images of the staple products of Fortnum & Mason, which includes teas, biscuits, jams, hampers, as well as images that portray the ways in which the retail is arranged, the colours that persist in the interior design, the type/style of furniture in the store(s), the ambiance. Analysing the two components will guide the research towards understanding the overall communication strategy used by Fortnum & Mason to portray luxury, culture and heritage.

The packaging sample, therefore, incorporates images of tea (22) and biscuit packaging (28) of Fortnum & Mason, jam jars (5), and the famous Fortnum & Mason hampers (11). The hampers come in numerous sizes and variations of contents – sometimes it is items for tea-time, such as tea, biscuits, jams, and confectionary; similarly, the hamper content can include everything needed for a picnic, and those are items such as blanket, tableware, thermos and much more. All in all, these product categories were selected based on three specific criteria. First, their centrality to Fortnum & Mason’s historical and cultural brand identity. Second, their frequent and prominent visual representation in official brand communication channels, such as the website and marketing materials. Finally, their strong visual association with themes of luxury, tradition, and British heritage, as discussed in the Theoretical Framework. Each item included in the corpus had to meet at least two of these

criteria to ensure relevance and alignment with the research question. The chosen items were confirmed to be central to the brand's heritage and luxury appeal. A key limitation of the sample lies in the disparity between the extensive product variety available in Fortnum & Mason's physical flagship store and the more limited selection presented on the brand's international website, thereby constraining the representativeness of the sample.

The analysis of the retail space mainly targets visual merchandising strategies within Fortnum & Mason's flagship store in London (20), as that space is a representation of the brand's most iconic and comprehensive retail environment, communicating the clearest expression of its heritage and luxury positioning. The analysis will also images from the brand's stores in other locations (20), such as their store in Hong Kong, Hamburg, Heathrow Airport, the Royal Exchange (London), and Pancras Station (London), selected according to the same criteria of relevance, visibility, and representational value. The examined elements were store layout, product placement, furniture (type, colour, material), colour scheme. Analysing those elements can help understanding how each element contributes to a luxury shopping experience while also reinforcing the overall brand identity. These locations were selected using purposive sampling as they allow to compare of how Fortnum & Mason adapts or maintains its brand presentation across different spatial and cultural contexts. In addition to the elements, the sample also includes Fortnum & Mason's seasonal additions, such as images of limited-edition packaging for Easter and Christmas, as well as thematic in-store decorations during these festive periods. Those were chosen, again, based on how well they portray the image of the brand, as well as cultural values, through elements such as language, colours, illustrations. Although those are only seasonal additions, they are still elements that the brand leverages to strengthen their communication and storytelling strategies.

Lastly, the sample also includes a reflection of Fortnum & Mason's historical ties with the British Royal family. This includes visual elements where members of the Royal family are shown interacting with the brand products like hampers, Fortnum & Mason bags, or their fresh produce, during official visits. These types of visual materials were included based on their relevance to the concept of heritage branding, as they visually reinforce the brand's alignment with British tradition, national identity, and prestige. These images were chosen prior to the analysis procedure as they have the potential to reveal recurring themes related to symbolic association with royalty, which will be explored in the coding and thematic analysis phase. Thus, to conclude, in order to include a visual element in the sample,

the main consideration was the representativeness of each visual of the overall imaging of Fortnum & Mason.

The source for collecting the sample for product packaging was the website of Fortnum & Mason which contains the pictures of the brand's merchandise. They are available for public display, and because all the products are still actively being sold on the official Fortnum & Mason website, the sample gains stronger reliability. As it was mentioned earlier, for the sample were selected the visual materials that best reflect the communication of the brand, and that included the majority of website display, however not every single one. For instance, the items that are very prominent in the flagship store are all present in the sample, such as signature teas or biscuits. Yet, samples of coffee packaging items were excluded, as it is not central to the brand's product lines.

For the product presentation and stores layout, one of the sources was YouTube videos made by independent creators. The videos which were selected are public and visible for anyone. When selecting videos, it was taken into consideration the date when each video was posted – no video which was used for analysis is older than 6 months. The creators filmed the interior of the Fortnum & Mason flagship store and for the analysis, screenshots of visible angles of the stores were taken and utilized for the sample; this is important, as it allows to observe the ambiance of the store in recent times, the spaciousness, the colours that are included in the interior design, the type of furniture. YouTube was selected as a sample source to increase reliability by providing recent, unedited, real-world representations of the store environment that are not staged by the brand itself. These creators filmed the interior of the Fortnum & Mason flagship store, and for the purpose of this study, screenshots capturing various in-store angles were extracted from the footage and used as visual data. While videos served as the initial medium, the analysis was conducted on still images derived from them.

Another source for selecting samples were articles made by journalists and writers who focus on content for tourists who want to explore London. Some of the articles are Visit London (Official Visitor Guide), London33, a blog that covers news, reviews, historical facts related to places in London, or the journal Town & Country. One of the samples included contained photos of Fortnum & Mason published in 2012, however, the store presentation and layout pictures remain relevant, as the store still looks the same way (personal last visit in November 2024 is the reference). When selecting sample from these articles, it was again taken into consideration the connection of the sample to the culture, heritage and luxury

framework that Fortnum & Mason portrays in their communication. Such sources were selected because they offer curated and context-rich imagery from reputable travel and culture publications, adding diversity and credibility to the visual dataset. Among the variety of available digital articles, only high-resolution images and those that most accurately and comprehensively reflected the current appearance of the store were selected for building in the sample. Lastly, Pinterest was also a useful source for extracting samples, which is a beautiful social media network focused on visual content presentation, where each Pinterest “pinboard” is shared with the world (Carr, 2014, p. 1). Pinterest is a social media which focuses on visually appealing images, and because this analysis, although thematic, has a visual character, Pinterest was seen as a perfect tool to look for samples. It was particularly used for finding photographs of Fortnum & Mason’s stores in the festive seasons, such as Easter or Christmas. Many customers find the charming atmosphere of the store and the limited editions of packaging designs especially enchanting to share with other Pinterest users. Again, the samples that were included were the ones that represent the brand image of Fortnum & Mason best, meaning the ones that include imagery, styles, text and designs that mirror the brand’s style. Also, because the Christmas and Easter packaging and visual merchandising is only seasonal and not available for purchase all year round, Pinterest contained images of the products and retail spaces that could be used for sampling. The images that were seen as unfit or irrelevant were close-up pictures of store décor, images of employees, or images that were too unclear. The final selection of samples from Pinterest was thus guided by their relevance to the research themes (luxury, tradition, brand identity, consumer engagement), their visual clarity and richness, and their ability to reflect key brand elements such as colour use, product arrangement, and symbolic storytelling. This ensured that the selected images were both analytically useful and representative of Fortnum & Mason’s core values and visual communication strategies. Once the sample selection process was completed, the sample consisted of 66 images featuring the packaging and merchandise elements of the brand and 91 elements of the store layout and product presentation, a total of 157 components.

3.3. Sample reliability and validity

The sample reliability is strengthened by the fact that the images of the brand’s packaging were mainly sourced from the brand’s official website, which is a direct confirmation that the items are being produced and sold at the present time. Additionally, because part of the

sample consists of supplementary sources, such as articles, YouTube, Pinterest, which feature publicly accessible and visually rich representations of the store and its products, the sample benefits from triangulation of data sources, enhancing its credibility, contextual depth, and alignment with the brand's current visual identity. Each YouTube video used to extract visual samples is not older than 6 months, and, although some supporting materials were older (some from 2012), their inclusion was justified due to the consistent store layout and design confirmed through a recent personal site visit in November 2024.

Past in-person store visits also strengthen the analysis, as they provided a level of reliability regarding store layout and product presentation/shelf-placement. For instance, if a sample found online is older than one-year, past store visits and of knowledge of their product collection can help in understanding the relevance and reliability of the sample (i.e. for a packaging item – does Fortnum & Mason still produce such an item (not all items they sell in their stores appear online)? Or does their store product presentation look the way it is presented in a photograph? Some parts of their store remain unchanged for decades, while other parts vary in the way they are decorated). Lastly, the sample size, which is 157 items, strengthens the richness of the dataset.

At the same time, the validity of the sample consists in the fact that Fortnum & Mason is very consistent in communication strategies through both packaging and store layout, managing to portray the brand identity in both aspects. Therefore, since the aim of this research is to analyse the brand's portrayal of luxury, tradition and heritage, these two aspects are perfect for doing that.

3.4. Operationalization

To clarify the analysis, this thesis includes an operationalization of the key concepts discussed. The first operationalized concept is heritage marketing, which will investigate the use of brand history, tradition, and storytelling through packaging visuals (text, colours, illustrations), and in-store design to reinforce a sense of brand identity and history.

Operationalizing this concept will help transform abstract ideas like tradition, history and luxury into observable elements that can be systematically analysed. This process makes the concept measurable and researchable by identifying how it is visually communicated through packaging design, logo usage, and in-store aesthetics. By doing so, the research gains a concrete foundation for assessing how effectively Fortnum & Mason conveys its heritage to

consumers. Moreover, heritage marketing is directly relevant to the research question, as it encompasses key themes such as luxury, tradition, and brand identity.

The next operationalization will be conducted on the term of luxury grocery products, which involve premium food and beverage items that emphasize exclusivity, high-quality ingredients, and artisanal craftsmanship. This concept is helpful to operationalize as it can clarify what elements make grocery products luxury, but also how does this add value to the brand image.

Lastly, the final term which will be operationalized is visual storytelling, which can be a strategic use of design elements such as colour palettes and imagery to evoke emotions and communicate brand values. Operationalizing this concept will allow identifying how specific visual choices contribute to brand communication and will help the analysis gain precision in evaluating how Fortnum & Mason crafts an integrated marketing communication strategy through its packaging and in-store design.

Below is the codebook which contains the broader themes, main codes, and the elements they are associated to. Some of the codes can be relevant to both packaging and store layout (such as FC (focus on colour)), while others are only relatable to one concept (like IS (in-store statements)), which is only linked to layout.

The coding table

Theme	Main Codes	Associated Elements
Theme I: Sustainability and Appreciation for Nature (stronger link to packaging)	NE HS IA SP	Natural elements (stronger link to packaging) Hampers as staple (stronger link to packaging) Interior ambiance (linked to layout) Sustainable packaging (linked to packaging)
Theme II: Storytelling through Visual Tools Sub-theme: Colour and Thematic Celebration (linked to both layout and packaging)	VM IA EP Sb VM FC PM	Visual merchandise (linked to both layout and packaging) Interior ambiance (linked to layout) Engaging packaging (linked to packaging) Symbolism (linked to both layout and packaging) Visual merchandising (linked to both layout and packaging) Focus on colour (linked to both layout and packaging) Patterns and motifs (linked packaging)
Theme III: Brand Cultural Heritage (linked to both layout and packaging)	PM IA RN Tr IS	Patterns and motifs (linked packaging) Interior ambiance (linked to layout) Royal names (linked to packaging) Tradition (linked to both layout and packaging) In-store statements (linked to layout)
Theme IV: Store Experience and Interior Atmosphere (linked to layout)	VM CP IA	Visual merchandise (linked to both layout and packaging) Customer pleasure (linked to both layout and packaging) Interior ambiance (linked to layout)

Figure 1 - Coding table

3.4.1. Heritage marketing

Misiura (2006) states that heritage marketing in its essence is a focus on the past and celebrating it can appeal better to the target market (p. 14). Culture and heritage may be a key factor to attract attention and generate trust (Fierro and Aranburu, 2018, p. 3). In Fortnum & Mason's case, examples include the use of royal titles, references to its 1707 founding (Selter, 2017), and its ties with the British royal family. To translate the theoretical concept of heritage marketing into measurable indicators, specific visual elements will be identified in both packaging and in-store design.

Heritage marketing will be operationalized through the following codes:

- RN (royal names): a textual element which reference royalty through product names (Queen Anne, Royal Blend). This indicates heritage marketing because it connects the product to British royal history and reinforces cultural references.

- HS (hampers as staple): the Fortnum & Mason hampers are directed towards celebrating English tradition and are one of the first products that the brand started selling. This code suggests continuity with historical traditions and reflects cultural heritage, and it is mainly linked to the portrayal of hampers and their dominance in the media linked to Fortnum & Mason.
- IS (in-store statements): phrases or slogans displayed in-store that refer to the company's legacy (Fortnum's famous tea). Such statements communicate longstanding reputation and brand history, central to heritage branding. As mentioned earlier, this code does not refer to packaging.
- Tr (tradition): use of symbols, colours, or typography that evoke historical time periods, such as checkered patterns or golden tones. These elements signal a brand identity grounded in the past.
- PM (patterns and motifs): imagery of animals, fruits, flowers, or other elements portrayed on the packaging of the brand (elephant on biscuit tin). These visual elements contribute to building a cultural narrative that connects the brand to history and tradition.

An element will be considered relevant if it appears more than once across packaging or the retail space, indicating purposeful use rather than coincidence. This structured coding approach allows for a consistent and objective analysis of how Fortnum & Mason visually communicates heritage.

3.4.2. Luxury grocery products

Curcio (2024) points out a significant shift in the way consumers approach grocery shopping from a practical, need-based act to a curated, emotionally engaging experience. Consumers today actively seek pleasure and personal satisfaction in everyday purchases, including food items (p. 22). Thus, to translate the concept of luxury and consumer engagement into measurable indicators, the following visual and thematic cues will be identified in the packaging and in-store experience at Fortnum & Mason:

- NE (natural elements): use of visual elements of nature, such as flowers, fruits, or plants, often tied to the flavour or ingredients of the product. This links to a delicate product experience that ties to the concept of luxury perception.

- FC (focus on colour): prominent use of elegant or symbolic colour schemes such as gold, pastels, brighter tones, or culturally significant shades. Colour is used strategically to evoke certain emotions and associations of quality but also to communicate flavour, which is tied to the previous code.
- SP (sustainable packaging): visible cues or labels indicating the use of environmentally friendly materials. Sustainability is often incorporated into modern luxury as part of ethical consumer engagement.
- CP (customer pleasure): design elements that clearly appeal to customer enjoyment, such as store presentation or which motivates the customer to immerse himself/herself into the hedonic world of Fortnum & Mason, such as store cafe/restaurant.
- IA (interior ambiance): elements of the store environment that contribute to a luxurious sensory experience, such as furniture and spatial layout. These features are designed to immerse the consumer and support emotional engagement with the brand.

An element will be marked under one of these codes if it appears prominently and consistently across the packaging or in-store setting, indicating intentional design choices rather than arbitrary ones. This structured approach allows for an understanding of how luxury is visually communicated.

3.4.3. Visual storytelling

In the context of luxury grocery retail, visual storytelling helps build perceptions of exclusivity and tradition. That can consist of visual elements, symbolism, and aesthetic consistency that set luxury products apart. Percy (2023) explains that packaging and signage can convey exclusivity, heritage, and the brand's cultural identity (p. 21). At Fortnum & Mason, this includes visual cues such as British royal symbols (Royal Blend title), historical references to English heritage, and representations of cross-cultural links, such as exotic animals tied to colonial history.

The brand's store design also plays a role in the brand's storytelling practices, with luxurious visual elements (chandeliers, grand staircases) reinforcing the emotional and aesthetic experience of the brand.

This study operationalizes visual storytelling through the following observable codes:

- Sb (symbolism): use of culturally or historically significant visual symbols, especially related to the British monarchy or colonial ties. These elements express tradition, prestige, and national identity.
- VM (visual merchandising): in-store design elements such as layout, furniture, and product presentation that create a coherent visual narrative of luxury and heritage. These support the sensory and emotional experience of the brand.
- EP (engaging packaging): visually rich packaging that incorporates illustrations, typography, and colours (bright or pastel) that are designed to draw attention and create emotional engagement. Packaging becomes a storytelling platform itself, representing both product and brand values.

Each code will be applied when visual elements clearly contribute to a consistent brand story, emphasizing luxury, culture, and heritage. By identifying these elements across Fortnum & Mason's packaging and store design, the research will assess how visual storytelling is employed as a strategic communication tool. The three concepts described provide more clarity on the analysis stage, and while it is acknowledged that there may be moments of overlap between the concepts due to their interconnected nature and shared visual elements, each has been defined and operationalized distinctly to ensure analytical precision and consistency.

3.5. Data collection and processing

In the Sampling Strategy part, it has already been mentioned that the analysis will involve a data collection procedure, which will be images of Fortnum & Mason's packaging and store layout/in-store product presentation, mainly from their official website, but also photos from articles about London (London33, Visit London, Town & Country) as well as Pinterest and YouTube from which screenshots were drawn from videos posted by independent creators. All those elements combined allow to draw results from the holistic communication of Fortnum & Mason, which will help to provide an answer to the research question.

Once the sample has been collected, the images will be stored Canva under the Photo Collage setting. This was seen as the most fit software for an analysis of visual materials, due to the user-friendly settings that Canva provides for managing images. The sample will be broken into 11 categories (packaging of teas, packaging of biscuits, biscuits and jams, hampers, layout of F&M flagship store, F&M Easter, F&M Christmas, F&M and the royal

family, layout (YouTube), layout of F&M store (Hamburg, Hong Kong, St. Pancras, Heathrow) and layout of F&M store (Royal Exchange)). Those locations were chosen due to their dominant online presence as well as their ability to portray Fortnum & Mason's values of heritage and luxury across different retail spaces. The analysis will involve different store locations to identify visual consistencies or deviations.

The next step is to assign each image with a tag or a descriptor (focus on colour, sustainability, hamper, etc.). This step will help to create broader categories, which will ultimately lead to creating the themes. According to Dumitrica and Pridmore (2019), thematic analysis is a very iterative practice, thus after the immersion in the data, the initial code generation phase, and the merging of similar codes, the analysis will be revisited and refined repeatedly to obtain every nuance of each theme.

The analysis will have a thematic approach in searching for recurring themes and patterns within language and visual elements, such as colours or symbols used; they will help in identifying broader themes that reflect luxury and tradition. To create the themes in the analysis process, the approach is inductive, where all pre-existing theories are being put aside and trying to allow new categories of themes and ideas to be born (Flick, 2014 p. 284) The results will offer a nuanced understanding of how visual branding contributes to building the premium grocery experience, as well as show connection to culture through the heritage marketing framework. This is strongly linked to the research question.

In the analysis process, there will be several elements which will be considered to create the broader themes, such as colours, materials, illustrations, wording, as they convey numerous messages from the brand to the consumer (Vyas and V., 2015, p. 96). Successive readings of the visual data will be conducted to deepen familiarity and allow for iterative identification of recurring motifs. This process will refine initial codes and themes, ensuring they reflect the data's depth. Another important aspect to mention is the validity of the themes – the frequency of reoccurrence across different aspects of the brand, their prominence and repetition.

No special coding software was used in the process – any notes, codes, patterns that emerged during the analysis process were noted in Miro board, a digital tool helpful for brainstorming, project planning, process mapping or visualizing concepts (Lee, 2024). However, due to the app's limited free trial use options, the Microsoft Word software was

used further, as this helped store all the remaining information regarding the analysis that was needed to build the Results section.

Ultimately, thematic analysis allows for a flexible and detailed identification of recurring patterns and meanings within both visual and linguistic data which is present on packaging and the stores of Fortnum & Mason. This method aligns well with the study's aim to uncover ways in which the brand portrays luxury and tradition in their packaging and stores while reinforcing brand identity. Identifying this will bring this study closer to answering the research question posed in the Introduction section. The sampling strategy was built in a manner that includes multiple segments of the brand which will be able to show a representative portrayal of Fortnum & Mason's communication, while the Reliability and Validity section explains the sample's strengths. Operationalizing the terms Heritage marketing, Luxury grocery products and Visual storytelling creates a link across the Theoretical Framework and Method section of this thesis. Following, the Results section will uncover the details of the thematic analysis – the themes and their interpretation, which will help answer the research question.

4. Results

The thematic analysis performed on Fortnum & Mason's packaging design and store's layout design reveals the brand's goal to communicate a specific message to its clientele. The thematic analysis thus revealed four main themes and one sub-theme, which are: Storytelling through Visual Tools with the sub-theme Colour and Thematic Celebration (with the codes: FC (focus on colour, reoccurred four times), PM (patterns and motifs, reoccurred four times), IA (reoccurred four times), VM (visual merchandise, reoccurred four times), Sb (symbolism, reoccurred four times) and EP (engaging packaging, reoccurred three times)) This theme and sub-theme has a strong focus on the patterns, colours, illustrations and visuals used by Fortnum & Mason to reinforce their brand identity and it has a stronger link to the packaging element, however it still is present in the visual merchandising aspect of the store layout. Second theme, Brand Cultural Heritage, (with the codes PM (patterns and motifs), IA (interior ambiance, reoccurred four times), RN (royal names, reoccurred two times), IS (in-store statements, reoccurred 3 times) and Tr (tradition, reoccurred two times)) is related to the elements used by the brand to create a link to the English culture and the rich history of both England and the brand Fortnum & Mason. The third theme, Store Experience and Interior Atmosphere (with the codes VM (visual merchandise), IA (interior ambiance), CP (customer pleasure, reoccurred three times)) is linked to the layout of the store(s), and it reflects how the brand subtly applies storytelling and communication strategies through the management of its retail spaces. The brand builds a stronger connection with its clientele through pleasant ambiance and all aspects linked to a memorable offline shopping experience. And final theme, Sustainability and Appreciation for Nature, (with the codes NE (natural elements, reoccurred twice), HS (hampers as staple, reoccurred four times), IA (interior ambiance) and SP (sustainable packaging, reoccurred once)) is linked to the brand's use of sustainable, reusable materials, as well as portrayal and admiration of natural elements shown on the packaging as well as store design (wooden tones). Through these themes, the study gains more structure, as it becomes clear how the brand leverages both retail space and packaging elements to reinforce brand identity through portrayal of values and visions, while creating a pleasurable shopping experience. Below can be found the coding tree, which shows the axial coding and themes – they provide shape to answering to the research question. Following can be found a detailed interpretation of each theme.

The coding tree

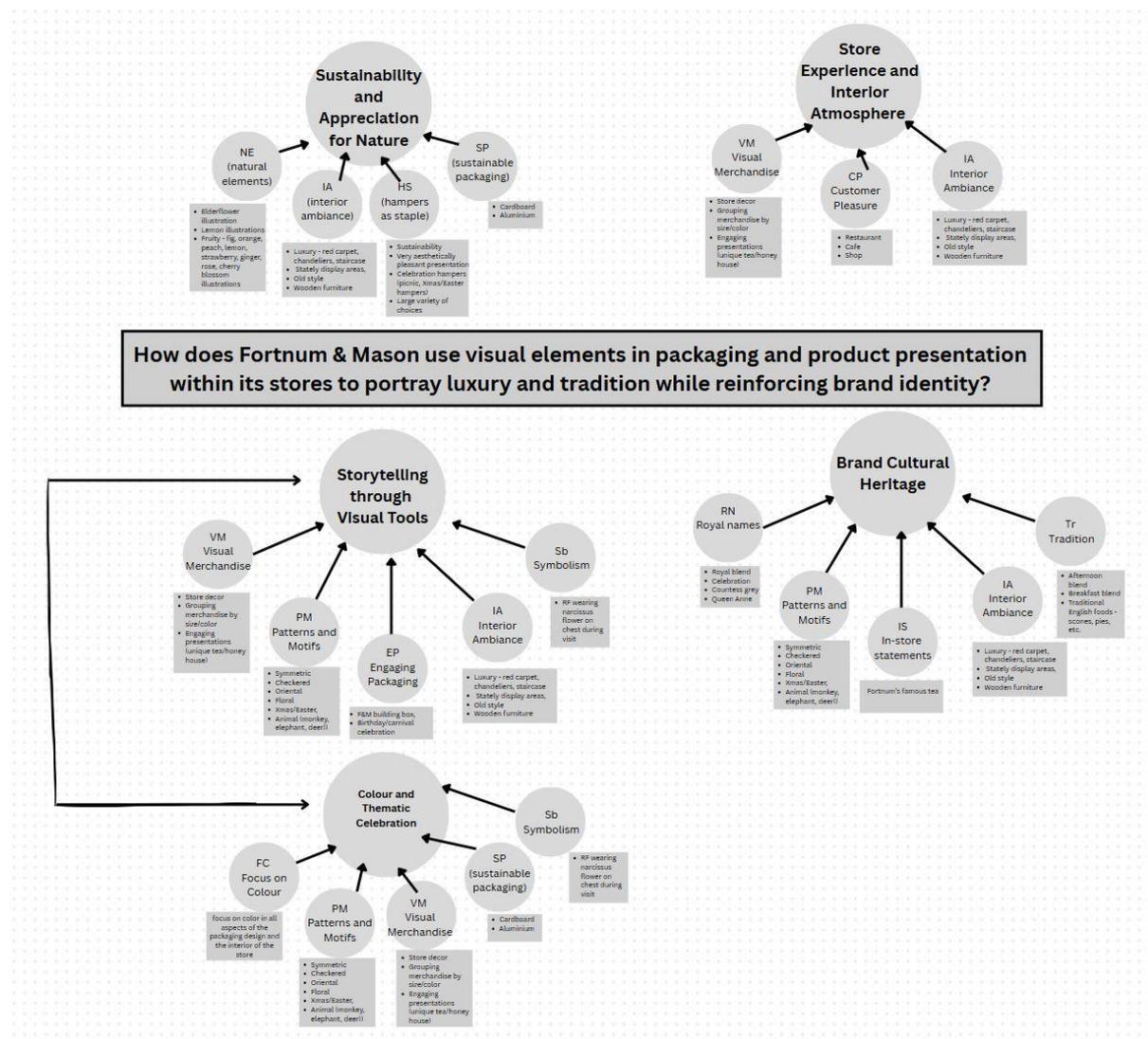


Figure 2 – Thematic analysis. Coding tree. Image created by Ana Mogîldea in Canva.

4.1. Sustainability and Appreciation for Nature Theme

When the process of collecting the sample began, Fortnum & Mason's packaging and interior design reflected the brand's emphasis on communicating sustainability to its target audience. The packaging of the brand's production is durable, made to be reused, or biodegradable – their tea and biscuit products are mainly made of aluminium or cardboard. Indeed, through materials, illustrations, and text, the brand portrays sustainable values and an appreciation for natural ingredients.

Interestingly, the cardboard packaging of the brand actively motivates the consumer to refill the durable aluminium tins with the contents of the cardboard box by using a “Tin top-up” statement next to the opening section of the package (as showed in images below), which can be a way to engage the consumer by creating an interacting strategy. Additionally, the hampers, which are one of the star products of Fortnum & Mason, are made of natural materials, such as wicker and are also filled with the products mentioned earlier, such as sustainably packaged teas and biscuits or ceramics dinnerware; no single-use plastic is used. The brand also uses minimal amounts of plastic in their production, which is visible both in online product visuals and during physical store visits – only as a sticker seal, and not as the primary package container. This already serves as an important indication of the brand’s sustainable values, proving that Fortnum & Mason propels the action of reusing packaging and using sustainable, reusable containers. This, and more aspects of the sample which will be discussed below, have led to the emergence of the theme Sustainability and Appreciation for Nature.



Figure 3 - Fortnum & Mason (2025). Toffolossus biscuits (aluminium). Fortnum & Mason: <https://www.fortnumandmason.com/toffolossus-biscuits-600g>



Figure 4 – Fortnum & Mason (2025). Toffolossus biscuits (cardboard). Fortnum & Mason: <https://www.fortnumandmason.com/toffolossus-biscuit-tin-top-up-600g>

Nonetheless, the thematic analysis revealed that the theme of Sustainability and Appreciation for Nature, although present across various brand expressions such as packaging design, product illustration, and retail space interior, is not the most dominant theme. This category refers to visual strategies that signal environmental consciousness, such as the use of recyclable packaging materials, depictions of natural ingredients, and natural wooden furniture in store layouts, as well as lifestyle associations that imply harmony with nature (picnic hampers, floral designs).

Four codes were assigned to this theme, and some of the initial coding phase codes which are part of this theme are Sustainable packaging (cardboard, aluminium), Traditional natural furniture (wooden, old traditional look), Hampers (sustainability, tradition), Celebration hampers (sustainability, tradition), and Natural elements (elderflower illustration, lemon illustrations, fig, fruity - orange, peach, lemon, strawberry, cherry, rose, dairy). Thus, the four codes assigned to this category indicated a relatively lower frequency compared to other themes. Some of the codes, such as SP only occurred once, or NE occurred just twice.

Further, the codes went through a refining process and the mentioned codes were grouped into the Nature and sustainability category, and some of the codes were clustered to create more universal codes, such as Hampers as staple (sustainability, very aesthetically pleasant presentation, celebration hampers (picnic, Xmas/Easter hampers, large variety of choices)). Followingly, the codes that emerged in the analysis process that were relevant to this category were NE, HS, IA and SP.

The reason these codes were attributed to the theme Sustainability and Appreciation for Nature is because NE refers to Fortnum & Mason's illustrations of flowers or fruits, which are elements found in natural settings, on their packaging. For example, rose flowers, lemon, ginger flower, elderflower, mint leaves – all of these are the primary ingredient of the product that is being sold. This is linked to Fortnum & Mason's broader brand narrative that reflects an appreciation for nature and its role in the creation of their high-quality products. The inclusion of floral and botanical imagery on the packaging serves as a visual homage to the natural ingredients featured in the product, reinforcing the brand's appreciation to the environment, authentic flavours and aesthetic refinement. The next code, HS, is relevant to the broader theme because the hampers, which are among Fortnum & Mason's most iconic and best-selling products, are not only crafted from sustainable, natural materials but also evoke and promote outdoor leisure activities such as picnicking. In doing so, they

symbolically reinforce a lifestyle that values engagement with nature and aligns with the brand's overarching narrative of sustainability and an appreciation for the natural environment. The code IA is relevant to the theme Sustainability and Appreciation for Nature using natural, wooden furniture in Fortnum & Mason's retail spaces, which not only reflects a commitment to environmentally conscious design choices but also creates a warm, organic atmosphere that reinforces the brand's connection to nature and tradition. Lastly, the code SP relates to the theme as the brand applies sustainable practices of creating durable, reusable packaging, avoiding or minimising the use of plastic.

Thus, Fortnum & Mason not only uses environmentally friendly materials in their production – the visual motifs on the packaging, such as fruits and flowers, the way the store is arranged using vintage looking natural, wooden furniture – they all lead to the idea that the brand has a love and appreciation for nature which is being shown through the mentioned elements. Parallel to that, the brand often uses fruity, natural flavours in their teas and biscuits, which is always being mentioned on the packaging – not just in the title, but also as a self-explanatory illustration. For instance, Fortnum & Mason's Elderflower green tea has an elderflower illustration on the packaging. This links back to Curcio's (2024) findings, which state that today's consumer is motivated by visually appealing packaging, and an important criterion for the shoppers now is beauty, along price and quality (p. 24).

This theme, therefore, contributes to the research question as it illustrates how Fortnum & Mason uses visual elements, as for instance nature-inspired illustrations or store furnishings made of natural wood. Also, the hampers' presence in the store and website is very prominent – their relevance to the theme is in the fact that they are made of sustainable materials and are reusable, made to last for years. This not only reinforces a sense of tradition but also to subtly signal brand values. Fortnum & Mason prove their sustainability values into its visual and material design choices through the brand's presentation of itself as both timeless and conscientious. These elements strengthen the perception of Fortnum & Mason as a luxury brand that respects heritage while also engaging with modern consumer values like environmental responsibility (Guzenko, 2024). In doing so, the theme supports the idea that sustainability is not just a functional aspect of the product, but also part of the broader storytelling strategy that motivates consumer interaction and emotional connection with the brand. Following will be interpreted the theme related to the visual strategies employed by Fortnum & Mason.

4.2. Storytelling through Visual Tools Theme and Colour and Thematic Celebration sub-theme

The preliminary phase of sample collection suggested that Fortnum & Mason strategically employs visual elements in both their product packaging and retail environments by using colours, illustrations, golden tones and other visual tools to enhance both their packaging and the overall look of their store(s). Initially, when analysing the visual sample it is noticeable how thought-through are the visual details and how much the brand likes to use eye-catching colours when it comes to the design of the Fortnum & Mason products packaging. During the actual process of thematic analysis, this assumption was confirmed by the findings.

Once the phase of generating initial codes from the sample was complete, the next step was refining and grouping the codes. As it has been mentioned, the initial step already clarified that colour is a very important aspect of Fortnum & Mason's visual elements, and a lot of the initial codes are related specifically to colour, some of which were: Golden Tones, Pastel Colour, Eau de Nil, Playful Colours (bright yellow, bright orange, red, blue, dark pink, orange) and others. As mentioned by Romeo-Arroyo et al. (2023), brands can use certain colours, such as purple and blue, for the design of their packaging to increase the product price (pp. 2-3), colours frequently used in the package designs of Fortnum & Mason. Indeed, Fortnum & Mason actively communicate to their customers through colour, which gives their products more life and makes them more engaging through their eye-catching nature. For example, for their variety of biscuits, the brand uses colour to give hints to the consumer regarding the flavours of the product, such as bright yellow for lemon curd biscuits, or magenta shaded tins for biscuits flavoured with rose petals; the sample contains ten images where packaging is descriptive for the flavour or main ingredient of the product.



Figure 4 - Fortnum & Mason (2025). Lemon curd biscuits. Fortnum & Mason: <https://www.fortnumandmason.com/piccadilly-lemon-curd-biscuits-200g>



Figure 5 - Fortnum & Mason (2025). Rose biscuits. Fortnum & Mason: <https://www.fortnumandmason.com/rose-biscuits-tin-250g>

The codes that were assigned to this theme are VM, IA, EP, Sb, PM. These codes helped in identifying overarching patterns that formed the basis of more abstract thematic categories. They were instrumental in shaping the dominant theme of Fortnum & Mason's communication strategies – Storytelling through visual tools. This theme highlights how visual elements are used by the brand for the aesthetic attribute– making the packaging more appealing and the adding more colour to the store - but also as a cultural narrative and festive associations.

The theme Storytelling through Visual tools helped bring to light an important sub-theme, which is Colour and Thematic Celebration, which is closely connected to Storytelling through Visual Tools. The thematic celebration of the sub-theme includes a few things related to Fortnum & Mason's strategies. The analysis revealed that the brand uses visual cues in their packaging to build patterns with a cultural or holiday/celebration aspect. Some codes from the initial coding phase that strengthen this statement are Cultural Designs (oriental), (exotic) Animal Motif (monkey, elephant, deer) or Limited Edition (Xmas packaging). A

different set of preliminary codes that add weight to the element of Thematic Celebration are Christmas Motifs on Packaging and in Store (ribbons, stars, tree) and Easter Eggs (edible and inedible – as decor in store). These images that fit within the holiday and celebration patterns were included in the sample because they looked festive, but mainly because they reflect a consistent seasonal strategy by Fortnum & Mason to align product presentation with culturally significant moments, such as Easter and Christmas, key events in the British calendar. These visual motifs are not arbitrary decorations but purposeful branding elements that help reinforce Fortnum & Mason's image as a luxury British heritage brand that celebrates tradition. These codes relate to Fortnum & Mason's merchandise and illustrate how the brand leverages seasonality as a strategic visual tool. For instance, while selecting Christmas and Easter-themed packaging was a purposeful part of the sampling strategy intended to explore how visual storytelling adapts across seasons the analysis shows that these seasonal editions are not merely decorative. Fortnum & Mason's teas with oriental origins, such as Lapsang Souchong or Assam, are packaged in boxes that combine exotic motifs with classic holiday cues like rich red, green, and gold colour schemes and illustrations such as mistletoe leaves, ribbons, or sugar canes. These limited-edition designs create a sense of exclusivity, reinforcing the perception of Fortnum & Mason as a premium brand. Moreover, the festive visuals connect with traditional British holiday practices (gifting, tea at Christmas), contributing to a broader narrative of cultural heritage and luxury. This aligns directly with the concept of heritage marketing, where brands draw from tradition to evoke emotional resonance and strengthen customer loyalty. By transforming regular grocery items into festive artefacts, Fortnum & Mason uses seasonal packaging to reinforce brand identity, signal tradition, and enhance product desirability.

The mentioned codes, which are part of the same category, have been incorporated into clusters which ultimately created richer codes. These codes, therefore, as well as other codes, have become part of the following codes that were assigned to the sub-theme: FC, PM, Sb, EP. The code FC is relevant to the theme and sub-theme as it highlights the central role colour plays in Fortnum & Mason's communication strategies – the packaging colours are usually selected to reflect the primary flavours of the products, while the in-store visual merchandising is curated in an aesthetically engaging and cohesive manner that enhances the overall consumer experience. This relates to the study conducted by Cho and Suh (2020), who state that colour has a strong impact on the clients' emotional states, shaping the ambiance of the overall retail space (p. 3). These findings closely align with the VM code,

which captures the brand's strategic use of visual presentation to attract and retain customer attention. The PM code shapes this theme and sub-theme, as it shows how patterns and motifs are present throughout a large variety of the Fortnum & Mason's packaging, highlighting cultural aspects and a playfulness of the design. The following code, Sb, denotes those symbolic actions carried out by Fortnum & Mason, or by distinguished visitors to the store, serve to underscore the brand's recognition and respect for the nation's cultural values and traditions. Lastly, EP relates to the theme as Fortnum & Mason's packaging contains various visual elements, such as interesting illustrations, keeping the customers interested. The code IA (relevant to the theme and not the sub-theme) highlights the brand's attentiveness in creating a pleasant store atmosphere by leveraging visual tools, turning the brand's store(s) into an embodiment of luxury and English heritage.

Both Storytelling through Visual Tools and its sub-theme, Colour and Thematic Celebration contribute to the IMC framework discussed in the Theoretical Framework. Fortnum & Mason puts a strong emphasis on their visual storytelling strategy to portray various communication themes across various touchpoints. On the surface, the brand leverages eye-catching colours in their packaging design, as well as the interior of their store(s). Going further and more in-depth in the analysis process, it is noticeable how the brand focuses on colour in their packaging and visual merchandise strategies, as well as incorporating patterns and motifs to add a festive, cultural, exotic touch to the presentation of their packaging. Specifically, the sub-theme Colour and Thematic Celebration revealed how Fortnum & Mason uses visuals to evoke associations related to culture and to various holidays and celebrations – oriental or Easter and Christmas motifs on tea packaging – holidays which are widely celebrated in England. The exotic animals showcased on the Fortnum & Mason's biscuit packaging also are related to this sub-theme – in many countries, animals can be important symbols. The elephant, which can be seen on Fortnum & Mason's "Toffolossus Biscuits" (Figure 2 and Figure 3), is a dominant symbol in India, and it can symbolise many things, amongst which royalty, status, or good fortune (Richter, 2020). The reason this is relevant is the complex, yet strong ties of England and India throughout centuries – a colonial connection where India had become integral to Britain's global economic and imperial system (Gallagher and Seal, 1981 pp. 387-414). These findings contribute directly to the research question by demonstrating how Fortnum & Mason uses visual storytelling not merely for aesthetic appeal, but to reinforce narratives of heritage, luxury, and cultural celebration that resonate with British identity and history. Through

strategic use of colour, motifs, visual merchandising and seasonal themes, the brand creates an immersive experience that connects tradition with the luxury framework. Ultimately, this reveals how visual elements can serve not simply as function tools, they can convey brand values and enhance communication in the context of luxury grocery retail.

4.3.Brand Cultural Heritage Theme

Even before the start of the analysis process, it was visible that Fortnum & Mason is a brand with strong roots and an outstanding history – the brand was founded in the 18th century (Selter, 2017) and up to this day it manages to maintain popularity and desirability amongst the consumers. When the sample collection process began, that observation strengthened; Fortnum & Mason indeed use a variety of tactics and strategies to communicate the idea of luxury, heritage and tradition to their consumer from a variety of perspectives. And indeed, the Results confirmed that the present theme is the strongest one out of the four identified themes and one sub-theme.

First, the sample demonstrated that the interior design of the flagship store of Fortnum & Mason is arranged in a way that communicates luxury in a traditional manner – red carpets, crystal chandeliers, grand staircases. The other aspect which strengthens the connection between the brand and the heritage framework is the packaging of their products. Some of the names that the brand attributes to their products – Royal blend, Queen Anne, Countess Grey – are all names linked to the monarchical structure of England. Additionally, other tea names include Breakfast Blend of Afternoon blend, both of which are linked to the English tradition of savouring tea – a symbol of relaxation and gathering with friends (Backhaus, 2024), which again, links to the history and heritage concepts.

Once the sampling process was finalized and the analysis procedure begun, the thematic analysis started to reveal that the brand indeed links itself to the heritage and history framework – the packaging, the store(s) layout and the elements surrounding those concepts scream culture, luxury, heritage. In the initial coding process multiple codes linked to those concepts were identified. Therefore, the initial codes were grouped as Heritage and History, and they were Celebration (happy birthday, celebration, tea), Cultural designs (oriental) and Royal names (Royal blend, celebration). However, after the refining process, the codes were clustered and turned into final codes. In the end, the theme that emerged was Brand Cultural Heritage, which is also the strongest theme of the Results section, and it had five codes

assigned to it – PM, IA, RN, Tr, IS. Each of these codes clarify Fortnum & Mason’s actions that help in building a perception of a heritage brand with a long-standing history. To begin with, the code PM is valuable to this theme as it helps to understand the fact that the patterns and motifs used by Fortnum & Mason are not simply a way to make their packaging attractive to the target audience, even though this aspect is also important, according to Curcio (2024). Through the patterns and motifs that the brand uses to decorate their merchandise, they choose to communicate to their consumer concepts such as culture, authenticity, and even history. For example, Fortnum & Mason often chooses to represent exotic animals on their packaging – animals such as elephant, tiger, monkey – all of which are animals native to India (Gabbett and Gabbett, 2023). As it has been mentioned earlier, India and the United Kingdom share complex, yet rich cultural ties due to a history of colonialism (Gallagher and Seal, 1981 pp. 387-414), thus, cultural patterns related to this geographical area can be observed during the analysis process. Another observed motif includes boxes adorned with a checkered pattern and the image of a deer. The deer, often regarded as a mythical creature, holds symbolic significance in Celtic culture and is associated with the legend of St. Patrick (Legg, 2024). Furthermore, Fortnum & Mason retail includes biscuit tin designed in the shape of its iconic flagship store. Established in 1707, the Piccadilly location has remained in continuous operation, reinforcing the brand’s emphasis on heritage and tradition (Selter, 2017). In addition to that, by giving names to their products that are connected to the English monarchy and tradition, Fortnum & Mason manages to add a link between their brand and the concept of “Englishness” in the consumer’s mind. One such strategy gives the brand an extra layer of history and heritage, connecting it to the cultural values of the country it belongs to, and this is exactly what makes the code RN so relevant to the overall theme.

The other code attributed to this theme, Tr, has a strong link to the previous code, RN. As it was previously stated, Fortnum & Mason’s teas, Breakfast blend and Afternoon blend are both linked to the English tradition of savouring tea over the breakfast meal, as well as in between lunch and dinner – at around 4PM (hence the name) – a tradition started by Anna, the 7th Duchess of Bedford (Misiura, 2006, pp. 196–197). Such titles link the brand to the English tradition, the heritage of the English culture. It is important to note that, regardless of the geographic origin of the tea leaves, it is unlikely that they were cultivated with the explicit intent of being consumed at specific times of day. Rather, Fortnum & Mason assigns meaning and context through its branding, effectively instructing the consumer on how the

product should be experienced. This purposeful action reflects the brand's broader strategy to position itself as a custodian of tradition and a symbol of enduring heritage.

Lastly, the code IS refers to the in-store statements that can be seen inside the store(s), such as "Fortnum's Famous Tea". Such statements reinforce the brand's heritage, making it clear that Fortnum & Mason's products have been on the market for many years. Moreover, the brand carefully selects its phrasing to emphasize legacy and tradition, choosing "famous" over terms like "trendy", for example, aligning itself with notions of timelessness and enduring quality rather than fleeting consumer trends. This linguistic strategy further solidifies the perception of Fortnum & Mason as a heritage brand rooted in long-standing cultural practices.

Thus, as it can be observed, this theme is extremely valuable in providing more perspective regarding the research question answer. Fortnum & Mason implements multiple strategies to remind the consumer about the longstanding history and heritage of their brand; the titles given to products, their history, the luxurious, classic store ambiance, a cultural connection to England and to India - all these elements combined allow Fortnum & Mason to be perceived through a culturally rich, timeless lens. Indeed, Fortnum & Mason is a brand that has been around for centuries, and the fact that it manages to emphasize that is a very clever strategy which offers the brand a stronger reputation, allowing it to be positioned in the luxury framework.

4.4. Store Experience and Interior Atmosphere Theme

Fortnum & Mason pays a lot of attention to the way their store is arranged and this last theme is linked to the experience that Fortnum & Mason works to build inside their stores to create a pleasurable shopping experience. The sampling procedure demonstrated multiple samples of the Fortnum & Mason store(s) where each detail is curated in a manner that the store visitors feel at ease. Therefore, during the analysis procedure, some of the initial codes that emerged were Focus on Presentation (very aesthetically pleasing presentation), Luxury (red carpet, chandeliers, staircase), Traditional Natural Furniture (wooden, old traditional look). These codes were grouped into the Thematic Decor and Ambiance category. Once the analysis went through a refining process, the theme Store Experience and Interior Atmosphere emerged, which was defined by the codes VM, IA, CP. This theme, although defined by the least number of codes, is an important one as it defines the concept of store

atmospherics and brand attempts of creating a hospitable store environment for their clientele.

The value of this theme hides in the fact that Fortnum & Mason puts a lot of thought into the location(s) that sell the brand's merchandise – the ambiance inside the store invites the customer to slow down, savour the experience, and be part of Fortnum & Mason's beautiful story. For example, the code CP, fits perfectly into this theme as it truly motivates the customer to enjoy the Fortnum & Mason experience to the fullest. The code CP involves multiple things the brand undertakes which build an enjoyable shopping experience. The sample showed that this includes a pleasant visual management of the store(s) and large areas which allows the customer to explore the merchandise in a moderate, slow manner. In addition to that, the sample showed that Fortnum & Mason's flagship store, as well as their Royal Exchange store location provide the customer with the opportunity to sit in a cafe/restaurant on the premises of the brand. Thus, Fortnum & Mason includes multiple aspects into their strategy of keeping customers satisfied, such as providing the chance to enjoy their time in the shop's cafe or restaurant. This code, therefore, adds value to the theme, as it makes it clear that the brand focuses on more than just selling. The overall interaction of the customer with the brand is what is important – the brand wants to be sure that the customer has a pleasant experience when interacting with it – thus, providing an atmosphere of relaxation.

The other code of this theme, IA, is closely linked to the previous one, as it can relate to all the sections of the store – the shop, bar, restaurant. This code refers to the brand's interior design choices inside the store to make the store as pleasant as possible, an ambiance that makes the customer want to stay longer. The interior ambiance of the store is being made more special through the various elements inside the store that make it feel more special and historical – beautiful staircase, crystal chandeliers, red carpets, vintage-looking wooden furniture such as shelves and storage spaces for the merchandise. All these elements combined create an extremely pleasant, luxurious ambiance for the customer, which is an indirect invitation to enjoy him/herself while being a guest of Fortnum & Mason. The customer has not to worry about anything – Fortnum & Mason works hard to provide the customer with everything he/she needs for an enjoyable, luxurious experience.

The final code of the theme Store Experience and Interior Atmosphere, which is VM is very important in providing an understanding of, yet another strategy implemented by

Fortnum & Mason. This code is strongly linked to the previous codes mentioned before, because the visual merchandise can be considered one of the elements of the interior ambiance and one of the factors that contribute to an environment that immerses the customer into an enjoyable experience. The visual merchandise of the store is conducted in a thought-through manner – for example, the Fortnum & Mason biscuit tins are arranged next to each other on shelves, creating an eye-catching colourful explosion – the colours they bring on the store’s shelves are simply impossible to ignore. This relates both to packaging and the way the retail is arranged in the store, linking it also to store presentation and layout. For example, the sample contains various images of Fortnum & Mason boxes arranged next to each other – some of the colours seen together are bright purple, eau de nil, orange, golden, red and fuchsia – colours that certainly make an impact. Similarly, the rows of eau de nil-coloured boxes create a memorable, unique visual aesthetic, which may make the customer want to stop and analyse the variety that is being offered. In this way, the brand creates a colourful, special environment simply through arranging their merchandise in a purposeful, unique manner. This creates a visual impact which leaves a long-lasting impression, making shoppers want to take photos, film, and come back to Fortnum & Mason.

Finally, this theme also has a strong contribution in giving more clarity regarding the research question. Fortnum & Mason is successful in providing their customers with a memorable store experience and an interior ambiance that communicates luxury and timeless class. The strategic arrangement of merchandise, the carefully curated in-store elements designed to evoke a sense of leisurely enjoyment, and the elegant interior furnishings collectively enable customers to immerse themselves in the distinctive world of Fortnum & Mason, while simultaneously reinforcing the brand’s identity. Ultimately, those factors allow the brand to communicate to the consumer and create the possibility for Fortnum & Mason to position itself into the luxury and heritage framework.

In conclusion, it is clear that Fortnum & Mason attempts to build a luxury experience, since their brand heritage is visible even when simply visiting their store(s) or browsing on the official website. However, the thematic analysis revealed that the brand indeed uses a variety of visual elements, such as colour, packaging, store layout, symbolism, to communicate heritage, luxury, culture and even sustainability. The brand manages to leverage every aspect of the packaging and store layout, which is strongly linked to the concept discussed in the Theoretical Framework – IMC, and in combination, they maintain

the brand identity related to the British cultural heritage, while aligning with the modern consumers' expectations for luxury and sustainability. This information is a strong contribution to the research question, as it illustrates what strategies the brand uses and how it communicates to its clientele. In general, each theme is an equally strong component for constructing a tangible answer to the research question. The Sustainability and Appreciation for Nature theme shows how the brand communicates its values of sustainability through visual elements, such as packaging illustrations – either floral or fruity. The brand's choice of using reusable, sustainable materials also is an indicator of the commitment to sustainability and mindfulness towards the environment. The hampers, which are one of the main merchandises of the brand, similarly show the brand's link to nature – the use of natural materials to make them – while also portraying luxury and promoting leisure spent outdoors in natural settings. And lastly, the natural ambiance in the store which is created by the choice of classic wooden furniture is another link that points towards the brand's love for nature.

The Storytelling through Visual Tools theme and the sub-theme Colour and Thematic Celebration both create a rich understanding of the brand's means of communication – bright colours, beautiful packaging, eye-catching store layout, all of which reinforce the heritage, culture, and luxury concepts engrained in the brand's core values. The brand links itself to the British (and other) culture(s) through the designs, animals, patterns it chooses to portray on the packaging, while festive colours can often be seen as a tool to reinforce celebration. For instance, during the festive seasons such as Christmas, Fortnum & Mason will release limited edition packaging featuring Christmas-associated colours, such as green, red, or golden, while the patterns represented will be sugar cane or mistletoe. Thus, through using visual tools and colour and storytelling techniques that were mentioned previously, the brand communicates with its clientele, managing to stay interesting, relevant and successful throughout centuries. By using patterns and illustrations, the brand invites the consumer to slow down and “celebrate” a cup of tea while indulging into a tin of Fortnum & Mason biscuits, which reinforces the national identity and tradition of England and their tea-drinking culture.

The most dominant theme, the Brand Cultural Heritage, is focused on the areas of the product names and the cultural narratives. Fortnum & Mason's products often carry names linked to royalty (Queen Anne, Countess Grey, Royal Blend etc.), which reinforces the cultural aspect of the brand and shows its connection to the British Royal family and to

tradition. At the same time, the teas that carry names such as “Breakfast blend” or “Afternoon blend” create an even stronger link to the English culture of drinking tea, emphasizing the brand’s heritage and history, the connection between the brand and long-standing tradition. The flagship store’s timeless interior design also invites the customer to experience a part of English heritage, with the luxurious ambiance that consists of crystal chandeliers, classic store furniture, and a beautiful staircase. The brand portrays the English heritage and history and communicates these values to the customer, which make it more interesting and dynamic.

Finally, the theme Store Experience and Interior Atmosphere helps to add value to the research process as it becomes clear that the brand leverages its physical spaces to create a holistic sensory experience through IMC that aligns with its identity. The interior layout, rich in traditional design elements, invites customers to step into a space where time seems to slow down – every detail is curated to immerse visitors in a refined world of British elegance and ritual. This attention to atmosphere supports the brand’s storytelling by physically placing the customer within the narrative of heritage, luxury, and celebration. It highlights how Fortnum & Mason does not merely sell products but rather crafts an entire experience around its core values. In this way, the brand successfully bridges past and present, maintaining relevance in contemporary markets while remaining firmly rooted in tradition, thus offering a comprehensive answer to the research question.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Combining the findings

This thesis paper is a qualitative analysis conducted on the topic of Fortnum & Mason and the strategies applied by the brand to communicate luxury, tradition and heritage. Fortnum & Mason is a brand founded in 1707 (Selter, 2017) that is active to this day with a focus in the commercialization of varieties of tea, biscuits, and other products that can be served during tea-time. The brand opened multiple locations, however the flagship store located on Picadilly street remains the most iconic and popular location visited by large numbers of people – locals and tourists alike. The focus of the thesis, therefore, is directed towards the flagship store, however the sample includes Fortnum & Mason's other store locations (Hamburg, Hong Kong, St. Pancras, Heathrow Airport, Royal Exchange) to see if the brand communication is maintained across different touchpoints. The focus of the brand is building their identity around the English tradition, highlighting cultural heritage through combining elements such as packaging and interior design. Each detail must be considered, because the brand desires to be perceived as one with a strong heritage by their consumer.

The Theoretical Framework of this paper covers a combination of previous literature items which were helpful in building an understanding of the relevant research that was conducted previously and is linked to the current topic. The Theoretical Framework includes an overview of the IMC concept, which explains what IMC is and what is the scope of it. Larry Percy's fourth edition of the "Strategic Integrated Marketing Communication" book (2023) has made the most valuable contribution to this section. The IMC framework, therefore, helped in understanding Fortnum & Mason's strategic actions across all its touchpoints to communicate luxury, tradition and heritage. Following, the section Heritage Marketing and English Tradition, brings light to the ritual of drinking tea in England, the concept of nostalgia, the way in which the concept of heritage can be used by brands and combining heritage with modernity, creating a fusion which resonates with today's consumer. The Theoretical Framework also contains Perceived luxury in retail environments as a section, where the main contribution was made by Cho and Suh's (2020) research, as it provided clarity in how brands can use colour in their commercial environments to increase the perception of luxury and create a pleasant atmosphere for the clientele. Additionally, Michael and Fusté-Forné (2020) highlight the importance of curating experiences in the food industry that promote uniqueness and sophistication. The section that follows, Traditional

English interior style, adds depth to the Theoretical Framework as it uncovers the interior elements of royal and/or traditional English style(s), which clarify Fortnum & Mason's interior design strategies. The following and final section of the Theoretical Framework, named Luxury packaging in the grocery industry, is also very valuable to the current research, as packaging is one of the main strategies of Fortnum & Mason. This section covers information regarding the importance of packaging, elements of packaging, such as shape and colour that help build the customer's perception, linking this finding to the concept of IMC. All in all, the Theoretical Framework provided the foundation for understanding how luxury, tradition, and brand identity can be visually communicated, shaping the lens through which Fortnum & Mason's packaging and store presentation were analysed. The Method section then outlined the qualitative and inductive Research Design, using visual and thematic analysis to explore how these concepts are reflected in practice. The Sampling Strategy clarified how the corpus which constituted Fortnum & Mason's packaging and store layouts was built and categorized, while the Reliability and Validity section explained the elements that provide strength to the sample. The Operationalization of key concepts – Heritage marketing, Luxury grocery products, and Visual storytelling – guided the analytical focus. The Data Collection and Processing section explained how visual data were gathered and coded to uncover recurring visual themes linked to luxury, tradition, and consumer engagement. Finally, the Results section uncovered four main themes and one sub-theme which were interpreted with respect to the research question. Together, these elements supported answering the research question by providing a structured yet flexible approach to interpreting Fortnum & Mason's brand expression.

5.2. The answer to the research question

The research question posed in the Introduction shaped every step of the process. This paragraph, therefore, provides an answer to answer to the question: How does Fortnum & Mason use visual elements in packaging and product presentation within its stores to portray luxury and tradition while reinforcing brand identity? To portray luxury and tradition, Fortnum & Mason employs a curated visual brand identity in an IMC manner, as it is consistently expressed across various touchpoints, such as packaging, product presentation, and store layout. For example, the use of sustainable and aesthetically appealing materials – such as embossed aluminium tea tins and pastel-coloured cardboard boxes – communicates both environmental values and a refined sense of tradition. These are often accompanied by

heritage-inspired motifs (Victorian-style illustrations, oriental patterns) and royal titles such as “Royal Blend” or “Countess Grey”, which reinforce the brand’s long-standing association with British nobility. The store interiors, featuring red carpets, chandeliers, and wooden cabinets, further contribute to a luxurious retail atmosphere that evokes timeless British elegance. As the analysis has shown, colour serves as both a storytelling and engagement tool: for instance, the dominant ingredient of a product (lemon, elderflower, or fig) is often visually represented through colour-coded packaging. Similarly, cultural motifs – such as elephants, tigers, or oriental teapots – are used not only for aesthetic appeal but to embed historical narratives and symbolic meaning into everyday grocery products. These findings directly support the theoretical concepts outlined in the framework, particularly in relation to heritage marketing (Misiura, 2006) and visual storytelling (Romeo-Arroyo et al., 2023), which highlight how brands use symbolic and emotionally resonant visuals to construct identity. By applying thematic visual analysis to these elements, this research demonstrates how Fortnum & Mason’s packaging and retail strategies are not random or decorative – they are a strategic communication of brand values, designed to cultivate emotional connections with consumers while reinforcing the brand’s status as a premium, heritage-rich retailer.

The store atmospherics create an ambiance of luxury, creating a pleasurable experience for the store visitors who are browsing through the brand’s store(s). The furniture, the ways in which the merchandise is presented, and the overall store environment is an attempt to either build a link to culture, to tradition, to history, or to luxury. Each element of the brand is curated with great care, and the research shows that none of it is arbitrary – Fortnum & Mason purposefully uses packaging and store layout to position itself into the framework of culture, luxury, heritage and tradition to increase the perception of value of their brand. This reinforces their brand identity because every visual element used is deeply rooted in the company’s historical narrative and cultural associations, allowing Fortnum & Mason to remain unique and interesting. The strong focus on the English monarchy, the tradition of the British around tea, and presentation techniques that portray a love for nature positions the brand as both prestigious and trustworthy. This insight links back to the operationalization of key concepts such as ‘heritage’, ‘luxury’, and ‘consumer engagement’, which were observed through indicators like the use of royal symbols, seasonal displays, or premium product placement.

The pleasant store environment that allows the customer to immerse him/herself in the Fortnum & Mason world, symbolic storytelling through design, engaging packaging that invites celebration, and the overall emphasis on customer pleasure are the things that the brand does to keep their customers engaged and wanting to come back to their store(s). These findings reinforce theories explored in the theoretical framework, including the use of store atmospherics and multisensory branding in building emotional loyalty and enhancing the perception of luxury. For instance, the Sustainability and Appreciation for Nature theme highlighted Fortnum's use of wooden furniture, which in Cho and Suh's (2020) study was proven to be a tactic to increase positive store experience (p. 13). Similarly, through their heritage-based values, such as quality, value, familiarity, Fortnum & Mason benefits from the possibility of building long-term relationships with their customer (Misiura, 2006, p. 249). Fortnum & Mason, therefore, leverages its marketing communication across its various touchpoints, creating an overall brand that is associated with heritage, luxury and English culture. These strategies work together to create a holistic world that encourages positive associations and brand loyalty, making Fortnum & Mason unique, desirable and a perfect representation of successful incorporation of English culture into a brand using integrated marketing communication.

5.3. Theoretical implications of research findings

Fortnum & Mason's case demonstrates that a strategic and consistent use of visual elements can reinforce a brand's identity while simultaneously evoking emotional and cultural connections with consumers. The study provides a useful model for scholars and practitioners interested in the intersection of tradition, luxury branding, and consumer engagement in the retail space. The findings of the research, thus, strengthen the argument that visual strategies can highlight a brand's cultural heritage, even when used subtly. Patterns and motifs indicate a brand's roots, while the ambiance of the store can immerse the customer into the brand's history.

From an academic point of view, this study contributes to the visual communication field as well as the marketing field with a focus on heritage. This study adds to existing literature as it demonstrates how visual elements, such as colourful packaging, symbolic motifs, and a visually curated retail environment can fulfil commercial purposes but also communicate brand values. From the themes that emerged, it becomes clear that brands can highlight themselves in saturated markets and build relationships with consumers through

communication that emanates the values of the brand, in Fortnum & Mason's case that being the elements that were uncovered by the themes: appreciation for nature, links to culture, a pleasant ambiance of the offline store(s), strong visual communication, design playfulness through colour and illustrations. This research serves as an extension to previous research on luxury grocery items and branding, customer experiences and achieving that through a multisensory, aesthetically cohesive retail environment. Additionally, this paper is valuable from a perspective of cultural symbols used in marketing as well as sustainable practices applied by brands to satisfy today's clientele's needs.

5.4. Societal implications

This research contributes to the field of marketing and communication, as it contains insights that can be highly valuable for current and potential brands that wish to apply similar strategies to Fortnum & Mason's. This paper can help the marketing specialists that activate in the B2C fields with a focus on grocery items understand how they can enhance the heritage of their brand and their products, particularly the ones who aim to strengthen the perceived heritage and cultural value of their brand through visual storytelling and design.

This paper can contain useful insights for the individuals activating in the tourism sector, as it researches heritage from a cultural perspective, which can be highly relevant for professionals working in this field. By understanding heritage-based marketing strategies, brands can influence consumer perception. This way, brands will manage to build stronger associations with tradition, culture, which in turn may enhance customer loyalty and the brand image.

5.5. Limitations of the study

This research poses a few limitations which can have an impact on the generalizability of the study. One of the main limitations is the fact that the international website of the brand Fortnum & Mason does not present the full selection of products that can be found in their physical stores. This had an impact on the sampling procedure, as the final sample did not reflect the complete range of visual materials and product presentations available in-store. This discrepancy was identified based on the prior personal visits to Fortnum & Mason's flagship store in London, where a broader assortment of items and richer visual merchandising strategies were observed. As a result, the analysis may have excluded certain packaging types, thematic designs, or merchandising techniques that could have contributed

to an even more nuanced understanding of the brand's communication strategy. Consequently, this limitation may reduce the comprehensiveness and transferability of the findings, especially when attempting to apply them to other markets or contexts beyond the observed sample.

The researcher's subjectivity may also create limitations of the study. Qualitative research is based on subjective interpretations (Flick, 2014, p. 497), and even though thematic analysis adds structure to the interpretations, the data still is interpreted from the researcher's subjective outlook. This can be influenced by personal experiences, cultural background, or aesthetic preferences which ultimately can create limitations within the study.

Lastly, a limitation of the study is the fact that this paper focuses on Fortnum & Mason's case only, which limits the ability to generalize findings to other luxury grocery retailers. Each brand operates within a unique ecosystem, and while the insights gained from this case study are valuable, they may not be universally applicable without further comparative research.

5.6. Suggestions for future research

Most research linked to the concept of heritage marketing is conducted either within the fashion industry sector or protected/conserved touristic areas. The topic of heritage marketing in the grocery products industry remains widely unexplored, and most available research conducted on this topic is directed towards the alcohol industry, most commonly wine. This situation, therefore, creates a gap, but also a platform for potential research of other food and beverage sectors, such as confectionery, tea, or artisanal baked goods; maybe even shorter-shelfed products such as dairy or fruits and vegetables, where heritage and tradition may also play a significant role in branding and consumer perception. This topic is very interesting from a marketing perspective, because strategic communication does shape consumer perception to the brand's advantage, thus brands can apply narratives of heritage, culture, and craftsmanship to differentiate themselves in saturated markets, build emotional connections with consumers, and enhance perceived product value. The sectors that can benefit from further research of this topic could be marketing, storytelling, brand communication and industrial design (for packaging design). Further research could investigate the tools that have an impact on purchasing behaviour and how narratives are integrated across different areas, from packaging to in-store experiences.

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APPENDIX A

Below can be found a link to the Canva dataset which contains the full sample (slides 1-15), the sources to the samples (slide 16), a slide which contains all codes that emerged from the thematic analysis process (slide 17), as well as slides where samples are grouped according to their categories (slides 18-22). Figure 6 (below) is a representation of how samples were grouped into one category according to common elements, each sample containing relevant codes assigned to them.



Figure 6 – Thematic analysis. Nature and sustainability group. Slide 22 [Canva]. Ana Mogildea

Canva link to full sample and analysis

https://www.canva.com/design/DAG11q9ykZg/v1Fzq_xVjIcOcxMeERUqlQ/edit?utm_content=DAG11q9ykZg&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton

APPENDIX B

Thematic analysis:

1. Generating initial codes:

Slide 1 (teas)

- Sustainable packaging (cardboard, aluminium)
- Focus on colour (eau de nil, blue)
- Natural elements (elderflower illustration, lemon illustrations)
- Golden tones (design elements which contain golden tones)
- Royal names (Royal blend, celebration)
- Symmetric patterns (symmetry on boxes, both in shape and design)
- Cultural designs (oriental)
- Pastel colours (light pink, light blue, light green)

Slide 2 (teas)

- Sustainable packaging (cardboard, aluminium)
- Cultural designs (oriental)
- Natural elements (fig, fruity - orange, peach, lemon, strawberry)
- Pastel colours (light pink, light blue, light green)
- Royal names (Countess grey, Queen Anne)
- Tradition (Afternoon blend, breakfast blend)

Slide 3 (biscuits)

- Playful colours (bright yellow, bright orange)
- (Exotic) animal motif (monkey, elephant, deer)
- Golden elements (design elements which contain golden tones)
- Sustainable packaging (cardboard, aluminium)
- Celebration (happy birthday, carnival)

Slide 4 (biscuits)

- Animal motif (tiger, elephant, cow)
- Bright colours (red, blue, dark pink, orange)

- Authenticity (rose, cow/dairy, ginger stem)
- Sustainable packaging (cardboard, aluminium packaging)
- Engaging (F&M building box)

Slide 5 (biscuits and jams)

- Traditional patterns (checkered)
- Sustainable packaging (aluminium, cardboard)
- Golden tones (golden tones in packaging design)
- Eau de nil (the traditional colour of Fortnum & Mason)

Slide 6 (hampers)

- Sustainable materials (raffia, hay)
- Variety (different hampers with different contents)
- Focus on presentation (very aesthetically pleasant presentation)
- Eau de nil (the traditional colour of F&M)
- Pleasant times (picnic, tea-time)

Slide 7 (layout flagship)

- Eau de nil (the traditional colour of F&M)
- Presented by colours (bright with bright, pastel with pastel etc.)
- Large display areas (the customer can take their time in the store to look at the merchandise)
- Special merchandise area (honey - unique presentation)
- Luxury (red carpet, chandeliers, staircase)

Slide 8 (layout flagship)

- Colourful placing (bright colors – green, pink, purple – eye-catching merchandise presentation)
- Various areas (the merchandise is distributed on bigger and smaller areas)
- Large display areas (tall shelves, big furniture items for display)
- Special merchandise area (honey - unique presentation)

Slide 9 (Easter)

- Focus on celebration (Easter – national UK holiday)
- Easter Eggs (edible and inedible - as decor in store)
- Focus on colour (eau de nil, bright colors - orange, golden, blue)
- Flowers (as a symbol of spring)
- Easter hampers (sustainability, tradition)

Slide 10 (Christmas)

- Christmas colours (red, green, golden)
- Celebration hampers (sustainability, tradition)
- Christmas motifs on packaging and store (ribbons, stars, tree)
- Limited edition (Xmas packaging)

Slide 11 (Royal family)

- Eau de nil (traditional F&M color)
- Hampers (sustainability, tradition)
- Celebration (event attended by the RF)
- Flowers as symbol (RF wearing narciss flower on chest during visit)
- Tradition (serving traditional English foods - scones, pies, etc.)

Slide 12 (Layout - YouTube)

- Hampers (sustainability, tradition)
- Purposeful colour arranging (bright with bright, eau de nil)
- Descriptive colour (yellow for honey)
- Traditional natural furniture (wooden, old traditional look)
- Engaging store arrangement (honey house, glass for hamper contents)

Slide 13 (Layout YouTube)

- Traditional natural furniture (wooden, old traditional look)
- Bright colourful corners (pink, blue, orange)
- Wooden furniture (tall, traditional cabinets)
- Visually aesthetic (boxes arranged purposefully, colours, big areas)
- Red carpet (adds depth to the store)

Slide 14 (other stores)

- Colour accents (Golden tones, eau de nil, bright colours)
- Pleasant ambiance (colors, furniture, merchandise arrangement)
- Traditional style (Wooden furniture, red carpets)
- Unique presentation (tea house)
- Statements (Fortnum's famous tea)

Slide 15 (Royal exchange)

- Eau de nil, silver tones (traditional F&M color)
- Taking it slow (Bar, cafe, shop)
- Shop – red carpet, merchandise arranged by color
- In cafe bright light, white tones

2. Grouping codes from similar categories and giving each group a name (most important ones are underlined). Grouping by color:

Group 1: Visual elements

- Focus on colour (eau de nil, blue, gold)
- Natural elements (elderflower illustration, lemon illustrations, fig, fruity - orange, peach, lemon, strawberry)
- Golden tones
- Symmetric patterns
- Cultural designs (oriental)
- Pastel colours
- Playful colours (bright yellow, bright orange, red, blue, dark pink, orange)
- (Exotic) animal motif (monkey, elephant, deer)
- Authenticity (rose, cow/dairy, ginger stem)
- Engaging (F&M building box)
- Traditional patterns (checkered)
- Focus on hampers presentation (very aesthetically pleasant presentation)
- Presented by colours (bright with bright, pastel with pastel etc.)

- Special merchandise area (honey - unique presentation)
- Easter Eggs (edible and inedible - as decor in store)
- Spring – flowers
- Christmas colours (red, green, golden)
- Christmas motifs on packaging and store (ribbons, stars, tree)
- Limited edition (Xmas packaging)
- Flowers as symbol (RF wearing narciss flower on chest during visit)
- Purposeful colour arranging (bright with bright, eau de nil)
- Descriptive colour (yellow for honey)
- Engaging store arrangement (honey house, glass for hamper contents)
- Bright colourful corners
- Visually aesthetic (boxes arranged purposefully, colours, big areas)
- Unique presentation (tea house)
- Silver tones
- Shop – red carpet, merchandise arranged by colour
- In cafe bright light, white tones

Group 2: Storytelling

- Royal names (Royal blend, celebration)
- Cultural designs (oriental)
- Royal names (Countess grey, Queen Anne)
- Tradition (Afternoon blend, breakfast blend)
- Playful colours (bright yellow, bright orange)
- Celebration (happy birthday, carnival)
- Engaging (F&M building box)
- Variety (different hampers with different contents)
- Pleasant times (picnic, tea-time)
- Special merchandise area (honey - unique presentation)
- Luxury (red carpet, chandeliers, staircase)
- Focus on celebration
- Easter Eggs (edible and inedible - as decor in store)
- Spring - flowers
- Easter hampers (sustainability, tradition)

- Christmas colours (red, green, golden)
- Celebration hampers (sustainability, tradition)
- Christmas motifs on packaging and store (ribbons, stars, tree)
- Limited edition (Xmas packaging)
- Engaging store arrangement (honey house, glass for hamper contents)
- Colour accents (Golden tones, eau de nil, bright colours, silver)
- Pleasant ambiance
- Statements – Fortnum’s famous tea
- Bar, cafe, shop
- Shop – red carpet, merchandise arranged by color
- In cafe bright light, white tones

Group 3: Thematic decor and ambiance

- Focus on presentation (very aesthetically pleasant presentation)
- Presented by colours (bright with bright, pastel with pastel etc.)
- Special merchandise area (honey - unique presentation)
- Luxury (red carpet, chandeliers, staircase)
- Large display areas - tall shelves
- Special merchandise area (honey - unique presentation)
- Easter Eggs (edible and inedible - as decor in store)
- Focus on colour (eau de nil, bright colors - orange, golden, blue)
- Christmas colours and motif (red, green, golden, ribbons, stars, tree)
- Flowers as symbol (RF wearing narciss flower on chest during visit)
- Descriptive colour (yellow for honey)
- Traditional natural furniture (wooden, old traditional look)
- Bright colourful corners
- Limited edition (Xmas packaging)
- Visually aesthetic (boxes arranged purposefully, colours, big areas)
- Pleasant ambiance
- Unique presentation (tea house)
- Statements (Fortnum’s famous tea)
- Bar, cafe, shop
- Shop (red carpet, merchandise arranged by color)

- In cafe bright light, white tones

Group 4: Celebratory heritage

- Golden tones
- Royal names (Royal blend, celebration, Countess grey, Queen Anne)
- Cultural designs (oriental)
- Tradition (Afternoon blend, breakfast blend, traditional English foods - scones, pies, etc.)
- Celebration (happy birthday, carnival, Celebration tea)
- Traditional patterns (checkered)
- Focus on presentation (very aesthetically pleasant presentation)
- Eau de nil
- Pleasant times (picnic, tea-time)
- Luxury (red carpet, chandeliers, staircase)
- Large display areas - tall shelves
- Spring - flowers
- Celebration hampers (sustainability, tradition)
- Flowers as symbol (RF wearing narciss flower on chest during visit)
- Descriptive colour (yellow for honey)
- Traditional natural furniture (wooden, old traditional look)
- Visually aesthetic (boxes arranged purposefully, colours, big areas)
- Colour accents (Golden tones, eau de nil, bright colours)
- Pleasant ambiance
- Unique presentation (tea house)
- Statements (Fortnum's famous tea)

Group 5: Nature and sustainability

- Sustainable packaging (cardboard, aluminium)
- Natural elements (elderflower illustration, lemon illustrations, fig, fruity - orange, peach, lemon, strawberry, cherry, rose, dairy)
- Authenticity (rose, cow/dairy, ginger stem)
- Pleasant times (picnic, teatime)
- Special merchandise area (honey - unique presentation)

- **Spring - flowers**
- **Hampers (sustainability, tradition)**
- **Traditional natural furniture (wooden, old traditional look)**

3. Refining codes (clustering codes into one, giving new names to some codes, removing unpopular codes):

Group 1: Visual elements

- Focus on colour (eau de nil, blue, gold, silver, pastel, bright, Xmas/Easter colors)
- Natural elements (elderflower illustration, lemon illustrations, fig, fruity - orange, peach, lemon, strawberry, ginger, rose, cherry blossom illustrations)
- Patterns and motifs (symmetric, checkered, oriental, floral, Xmas/Easter, animal (monkey, elephant, deer))
- Engaging packaging (F&M building box, birthday/carnival celebration)
- Hampers as staple (sustainability, very aesthetically pleasant presentation, celebration hampers (picnic, Xmas/Easter hampers), large variety of choices)
- Visual merchandise (store decor, grouping merchandise by size/color, engaging presentations (unique tea/honey house))
- Symbolism (RF wearing narcissus flower on chest during visit)
- Customer pleasure (restaurant, cafe, shop)

Group 2: Storytelling

- Royal names (Royal blend, celebration, Countess grey, Queen Anne)
- Tradition (Afternoon blend, breakfast blend)
- Focus on colour (eau de nil, blue, gold, silver, pastel, bright, Xmas/Easter colors)
- Engaging packaging (F&M building box, birthday/carnival celebration)
- Hampers as staple (sustainability, very aesthetically pleasant presentation, celebration hampers (picnic, Xmas/Easter hampers), large variety of choices)
- Visual merchandise (store decor, grouping merchandise by size/color, engaging presentations (unique tea/honey house))
- Interior ambiance (luxury - red carpet, chandeliers, staircase, stately display areas, old style, wooden furniture)

- Patterns and motifs (symmetric, checkered, oriental, floral, Xmas/Easter, animal (monkey, elephant, deer))
- In-store statements (example: Fortnum's famous tea)
- Customer pleasure (restaurant, cafe, shop)

Group 3: Thematic decor and ambiance

- Visual merchandise (store decor, grouping merchandise by size/color, engaging presentations (unique tea/honey house))
- Focus on colour (eau de nil, blue, gold, silver, pastel, bright, Xmas/Easter colors)
- Interior ambiance (luxury - red carpet, chandeliers, staircase, stately display areas, old style, wooden furniture)
- Symbolism (RF wearing narcissus flower on chest during visit)
- In-store statements (example: Fortnum's famous tea)
- Customer pleasure (restaurant, cafe, shop)

Group 4: Heritage and history

- Royal names (Royal blend, celebration, Countess grey, Queen Anne)
- Patterns and motifs (symmetric, checkered, oriental, floral, Xmas/Easter, animal (monkey, elephant, deer))
- Tradition (Afternoon blend, breakfast blend, traditional English foods - scones, pies, etc.)
- Engaging packaging (F&M building box, birthday/carnival celebration)
- Visual merchandise (store decor, grouping merchandise by size/color, engaging presentations (unique tea/honey house))
- Hampers as staple (sustainability, very aesthetically pleasant presentation, celebration hampers (picnic, Xmas/Easter hampers), large variety of choices)
- Interior ambiance (luxury - red carpet, chandeliers, staircase, stately display areas, old style, wooden furniture)
- Symbolism (RF wearing narcissus flower on chest during visit)
- Focus on colour (eau de nil, blue, gold, silver, pastel, bright, Xmas/Easter colors)
- In-store statements (example: Fortnum's famous tea)

Group 5: Nature and sustainability

- Sustainable packaging (cardboard, aluminium)
- Natural elements (elderflower illustration, lemon illustrations, fig, fruity - orange, peach, lemon, strawberry, ginger, rose, cherry blossom illustrations)
- Hampers as staple (sustainability, very aesthetically pleasant presentation, celebration hampers (picnic, Xmas/Easter hampers), large variety of choices)
- Patterns and motifs (symmetric, checkered, oriental, **floral**, Xmas/Easter, **animal (monkey, elephant, deer)**)
- Interior ambiance (luxury - red carpet, chandeliers, staircase, stately display areas, old style, **wooden furniture**)

CODEBOOK

Main codes:

FC - focus on colour (recurring 4 times)

PM - patterns and motifs (recurring 4 times)

HS - hampers as staple (recurring 4 times)

VM - visual merchandise (recurring 4 times)

Sb - symbolism (recurring 4 times)

IA - interior ambiance (recurring 4 times)

CP - customer pleasure (recurring 3)

IS - in-store statements (recurring 3 times)

EP - engaging packaging (recurring 3 times)

NE - natural elements (recurring 2 times)

RN - royal names (recurring 2 times)

Tr - tradition (recurring 2 times)

SP - sustainable packaging (recurring 1 time)

Obtaining the themes and assigning codes to each theme:

Storytelling through visual tools (sub-theme - the colour - FC (focus on color in all aspects of the packaging design and the interior of the store), PM (patterns and motifs are present throughout a large variety of the Fortnum & Mason's packaging, highlighting cultural aspects and a playfulness of the design), VM (the visual merchandise of Fortnum & Mason is purposefully arranged so that it catches the attention and admiration of the store visitors), Sb (through symbolic actions undertaken by Fortnum & Mason or important guests of the store, it is highlighted the respect paid for the cultural values and traditions of the nation), EP (the engaging packaging of Fortnum & Mason keeps the customers interested and eager to get acquainted with new products or interact with sustainable practices of the brand (for example moving biscuits from cardboard box into aluminium tin)).

Brand cultural heritage - PM (the patterns and motifs used on the product packaging (especially the oriental ones) give references to the culture they belong to), IA (the chandeliers, red carpet, beautiful staircase and the classy furniture inside the Fortnum & Mason store create a feeling of being inside a historical English building), RN (Fortnum & Mason likes to give some of its products royal names, such as Queen Anne tea, out of pride for the English monarchy), Tr (the traditions of the English culture which further highlight the cultural heritage of the brand can be seen in the names that the brand assigns to its products (for instance Afternoon blend or Morning Breakfast), IS (the in-store statements, such as "Fortnum & Mason's famous tea", highlight the brand's notability).

Store experience and interior atmosphere - VM (the purposeful visual merchandise inside the store provides the customer with a unique and very pleasant store experience), IA (the beautiful furniture, grand chandeliers, red carpets and historically-looking staircases inside the store help in further building the ideal atmosphere for shopping), CP (the importance that Fortnum & Mason assigns to customer pleasure is highlights in the fact that the brand provides not just a place to shop, but also to have a meal or a beverage inside the store).

Sustainability and appreciation for nature - NE (natural elements shown on packaging prove an appreciation for nature and the products that come from it), HS (natural material reusable hampers - a staple in Fortnum & Mason's products), IA (natural wooden furniture), SP (raffia, aluminium, cardboard - minimal use of plastics).

APPENDIX C

Reasons for use of AI:

- APA 7 formatting issues check
- Checking for smooth text integration
- Generating ideas
- Making text more concise
- Serving as a methodological tutor (e.g. clarifying feedback from supervisor)
- Terminology

Prompts:

- Is the APA 7 in text citations correct here? Or should they all state the author and the year: According to Misiura (2006), foods and beverages play a dominant role in shaping national heritage around the world, making them culturally significant elements. Certain culinary products such as tea, wine, or traditional pastries can become so deeply embedded in a nation's identity that they retain their emotional and symbolic value across generations, regardless of societal changes or shifting consumer trends (pp. 235-236). A wonderful example which also links perfectly to the topic of this research would be tea in a country like England; it arrived there around 1653, gained popularity around 1660 becoming a fashionable drink (p. 233), and in 1880s ladies were wearing their 'tea gowns' for the 'Afternoon Tea' occasion, a concept started by Anna, the 7th Duchess of Bedford (pp. 196–197). And to this day, afternoon tea is a staple of English tradition and can be experienced in the most upscale hotels and dining establishments where the most notable public figures are present on a regular basis, such as The Ritz; there, a wide range of teas is being offered in a luxurious environment - silver teaspoons, milk jugs and tea strainers, along with a three-tier stand of a selection of home-made jams, fresh cream cakes, a variety of pastries, tea sandwiches (p. 196). Tea, therefore, as well as other products that could be considered part of a nation's heritage, can be elevated in perception through various presentation tactics, like it was mentioned above, with the use of fine silverware, elegant packaging, and

refined service rituals. These elements enhance the product's perceived value, transforming it into an exclusive and luxurious experience in the eyes of the consumer.

- So from what I've done so far, what is still left to do about the operationalization? From what I understand it must be shortened, but what else?
- Could you turn this paragraph into one sentence: Another important point made by Percy is that marketing communication is the link between the brand and the market, and this includes packaging, business cards, signs inside and outside the store, newsletters, and so much more; it is not only about promotion and advertising. For brands such as Fortnum & Mason, which rely heavily on visual storytelling to evoke heritage and exclusivity, these elements serve as both communication tools and brand touchpoints. This makes IMC absolutely crucial for a brand - the way the brand manages all these elements will define its communication and messaging (p. 21).
- What do you call in qualitative terms a public image that was taken in the past not taken for research purpose but can be used for it?
- Does the last sentence here make sense and is it academically formulated? For a better understanding of the elements researched in the master thesis and ensure the element of clarity to the analysis, the paper will also contain an operationalization of the central key concepts discussed, a process which will be making those concepts measurable and provide a better foundation for research. The first operationalized concept is heritage marketing, which will look into the use of brand history, tradition, and storytelling through packaging, logos, and in-store design to reinforce a sense of brand identity and history. Operationalizing this concept will help transform abstract ideas like tradition, history and luxury into observable elements that can be systematically analyzed. This process makes the concept measurable and researchable by identifying how it is visually communicated through packaging design, logo usage, and in-store aesthetics. By doing so, the research gains a concrete foundation for assessing how effectively Fortnum & Mason conveys its heritage to consumers. This concept is also very important in relation to the research question, as it is directly linked to the concepts mentioned in it, concepts such as luxury, tradition and brand identity,

thus the operationalization of this concept will make the path to answering the research question less abstract.

- Does this abstract contain all key information or is anything missing that must be included? This study is an exploration of visual communication in the luxury grocery sector. The focus of the research is directed towards the English brand Fortnum & Mason, the tea merchant established in 1707 and the scope is understanding what are the strategies and visual elements that the brand employs in order to portray luxury, heritage and tradition in order to keep their consumers interested while reinforcing brand identity. The primary method of investigation was visual and thematic analysis which was performed on packaging and store layout for a unified brand narrative, with a sample that consisted of 157 units, where 66 units represented the packaging elements of the brand, while 91 units covered elements of the store layout. The thematic analysis results revealed 4 dominant themes and 1 sub-theme. Suggestions for future research is conducting more studies related to heritage narratives in the luxury grocery sector, especially teas, confectionary and artisanal goods, as there has been identified a research gap in the field.
- (limitation of study): This research poses a few limitations which can have an impact on the generalizability of the study. One of the main limitations is the fact that the international website of the brand Fortnum & Mason does not present the full selection of production that can be found in their stores. - What could be other limitations of the study?