Retail branding through sensory experience: local case-study at Chocolaterie Stam

Ahmed Mohammed Alawadhi
Iowa State University

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Retail branding through sensory experience: local case-study at Chocolaterie Stam

by

Ahmed M. Alawadhi

A thesis outline submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Program of Study Committee:

Ji hyun Song, Major Professor

Lois Warme

Debra Satterfield

Iowa State University

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ABSTRACT

In the retail business storeowners, marketers, and retail designers are all concerned with the successful branding of a store where people come to visit, shop and stay longer to entertain themselves. Studies have shown that there are factors that affect visitors’ perception of the store and their preference over other places. Store location, atmosphere, emotional attributes, sensory stimulation attributes, and visual merchandising are contributing factors to the visual perception and behavioral responses of the visitors and customers. Few of these studies were concerned with the overall experience of a store through customers’ sensory perception. Customers’ sensory experience provides a positive influence on their shopping experience. The basis of this thesis is that branding in retail design is important and can be primarily induced by sensory experience. The retail store as a branded environment extends the experience of a brand through three-dimensional space.

In a store, customers come to see, hear, touch, smell, and taste products on display as well as their environmental surroundings. Sensory experience in a retail store plays a significant role in consumers’ perception and their purchasing behavior because of its positive influence on the brand image. Ultimately, the need to create a unique brand experience through sensory stimulation is essential to the practice in the field of interior design. Research questions related to sensory experience in the retail environment are followed. The questions are (1) what kind of sensory experience occurs in the retail environment, (2) how can retail brands communicate with the human senses to create positive sensory feelings, (3) what are the retail design components, and (4) how can they
create a positive sensory effect on customers? These research questions will guide the case study.

The second part of the thesis is to propose a retail brand that illustrates graphic identity, sensory devices and their placement in three-dimensional space. The purpose of using the case is to design a prototype by analyzing, developing, and visualizing a newly developed space for an existing retail store. A specific case, Chocolaterie Stam, located in Ames, Iowa is used to suggest a design guide for practitioners, marketers, and designers who strive to create a memorable, successful, and attractive store environment. A literature review, an interview, site analysis, and observations were held to study the case specific to customer’s sensory experience related to the brand and its presentation. The research method is supported by the notion that the study is exploratory, and little has been written about the topic before this time. The design analysis and design development focuses on the branding vision. Sensory perception is considered key determinant of the users’ perception in the retail environment. Design visualization of the space is mainly focused on vision as the dominant human sensory stimulus and its connection with the other human senses.

The prototype might be useful as a design guideline for store designers and marketers when creating a new brand identity through the application of environmental graphics, brand logo, typography, brand color, package design, and other graphic system components. The design approach encourages the close relationship of incorporating graphic design principles and their application to interior design. The successful design of a retail store would affect visitors and customers’ positive experience over the brand and increase the client’s business for their brand expansion. The final design shows the potential use of the prototype in other design applications that are essential to the positioning of a brand and its perception through
sensory experience. This thesis suggests new research possibilities toward studying the relationships among branding, the human senses, and the store environment. Hopefully it offers new insights and starting points for future studies and design applications in the field of interior design, graphic design, as well as marketing and retail business.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

When people plan to travel, they often add well-known shopping places to their to-do list, places like the Rain Forest Café at Mall of America, the ESPN Zone at Downtown Disney, and NASCAR Café at Universal Studios Citywalk. Do they prefer to visit such places because they need to purchase a particular product? Why do people prefer to shop at one place instead of another (Figures 1-1 and 1-2)? Why do people visit these places when they can order their products online at the convenience of their home? These are some of the common questions asked among storeowners, marketers, and store designers. Academic research have shown that there are factors that affect visitors’ perception of the store and their preference over the other places, e.g., store atmosphere, location, emotional and arousal attributes, and visual merchandising.

Figure 1-1. Well-known brand store

Figure 1-2. Unknown coffee place

One of the outstanding factors influencing people to enter and use a retail establishment is its environment. In a retail environment, a total brand identity can be created, communicated, and strengthened by positioning its connotative meanings with the
program of the space. Since the environment involves customers’ interactions, it should be functionally effective and visually attractive while positively reinforcing their in-store experience. Because these actions are processed through in-store communication, it can be thought of as the strongest medium to any retailer. The stronger the message is communicated from the store, the longer the customers may stay in the store to be constantly informed, inspired, and influenced by the branded environment.

“Storeowners invest vast amounts of money to refurbish their store environments, and researchers have put much effort into studying the effects of store environment on consumers behaviors” (Ahn, 2002, p. 2). Standards for retail environments have been changing over time. In an era of increasing competition, the bar has been raised from cleanliness and store organization, to presenting an appealing image of the retail establishment. Storeowners strive to make their stores up-to-date and create such an image to their target clients. Such actions imply the critical significance and influence of an attractive brand image and a positive shopping experience. This suggests that the emotional responses of consumers, created by significant experiences and sensational interactions within the retail environment, might influence consumers’ purchasing behavior and decision-making processes. Additionally, the
shopping experience in store environments has been gaining importance due to the expansion of convenient virtual stores selling products and services through the World Wide Web. Therefore, this thesis begins with the following question: What kind of environmental characteristics, design factors, and sensational experiences affect consumers within a retail environment?

The design and unique look of a retail store reflect the owner’s merchandising philosophy, so it is essential that the planner-designer have a sharp perspective of the top-level management’s thinking and strategic planning. There is no guarantee that the number of customers required to produce a profit will enter a store just because the store is open and sells good products. In most cases, the main problem that faces retail designers is evaluation, modification, and juxtaposition of multiple elements by the storeowners, who are usually amateurs in this regard. Moreover, there is some possibility that the store design might be outlandish, depending on the sensibilities of the decision-makers, designers, or storeowners rather than consumers. Therefore, the retail store experience should draw customers’ attention and enhance their interactions through their sensory stimulation to create positive and memorable shopping experiences.

Large retail facilities, e.g., Bloomingdale’s, consider consumer’s emotional experience during their store visit. Other retail facilities mainly consider the functional requirements of the store environment in their store design. Even for this type of store, emotions can play a significant role in consumers’ purchasing behavior. Positive emotions lead to enjoyable shopping, a longer stay, greater spending, and greater store loyalty (Figure 1-5). These emotions that can significantly impact human behavior within the space are produced though the five senses: vision, tactile, acoustic, olfactory, and taste.
“In a store, customers can see, hear, touch, smell, and taste products. These opportunities are more limited on a website” (Floor, 2006, p. 272). In a retail store customers can look and find products through sensory communications. They can hear background music and other sounds; at the same time they can smell product aromas. They can touch all kinds of products and taste or try them. All these sensory points influence the brand image, which is why stimulating all senses in a coordinated way is of utmost importance to every retail brand. A website visit is mainly a visual, two-dimensional experience while a store has a multi-sensory, three-dimensional environment. An effective store design and visual merchandising approach can trigger all the consumer’s senses. Sensory association can additionally result in a strong emotional engagement and therefore provides a retail brand with an edge over the competition. After all, all the impulses of the five senses make up the brand experience.

Designers involved in retail design should be aware of branding concepts and principles that form environmental characteristics and their interaction as they are filtered through the sensory receptors in consumers thus affecting their behavior. Therefore, developing a branding prototype is meaningful in the field, where interior designers are challenged to create sensory responses and retail environments that enhance branded experience through multi-sensory perception.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is as follows:

1. To examine the sensory experience of users, visitors, and employees within a store environment to find out if any particular sense or combination of senses is most effective in producing a positive store identity and branded environment.

2. To integrate existing theories of branding related to retail design practice.

3. To provide design guidelines with an integrated graphic system that can be applied to existing retail stores.

4. To propose a unified and stimulating prototype based on the sensory analysis model as a guide for practitioners and educators in creating a memorable, successful, and attractive store environment.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the proposed prototype model is the new insight it will bring to the interior design field. Academic research on sensory perception of retail interiors is relatively new, and most research is focusing on specific user groups in their settings. Even though many of those studies focus on the needs of specific user groups to accommodate their physical needs in their environments, not many focus their attention on people’s sensory perception in public settings. With respect to the main goals of store design, i.e., to create attractive shopping environments, the existing literature providing store design guidance is largely unfocused on the aesthetic environment of retail stores. There are research studies on the emotional and arousal attributes of retail environments but not many on the customers’
retail experience. There are case studies of sensory restaurant environments that persuade customers to stay longer in the restaurants but not many in retail stores since the objective of retail owners is to sell products, not to encourage customers to spend more time in the store. This thesis suggests new research possibilities directed toward determining relationships between the human senses, branding, and the store environment. In addition, this study provides a starting point and new insight for evaluating creative work in terms of sensory perception. It might possibly also represent a new evaluation tool to be used in design critiques and a new perspective with respect to comprehending retail environments.

**Research Questions**

The following questions will guide the research.

Questions related to sensory experience in the retail environment:

- What kind of sensory experience occurs in the retail environment?
- How can retail brands communicate with the human senses to create positive sensual feelings?
- What are the retail design components? And how can they create a positive sensual effect on customers?

Sub-questions related to the client and users with respect to their sensory experiences:

- How do clients and users perceive sensory elements in a branded environment?
- What are the primary senses that are most positive and influential with respect to consumers’ behavior in a branded environment?
Objectives

The objective of this study is to develop a brand prototype based on understanding the increasing impact on the brand identity and graphic system, especially in the retail environment, while relying heavily on the consumers’ senses to fulfill their shopping goals. The thesis will provide guidance to the client-owner by creating new strategies and marketing goals for future business extension and possible franchising. The sensory design will highlight not only the newly branded product and store, but also will provide services that are tied into the new branded environment.

Hypothesis

First hypothesis: The visual sense is the most effective sense with respect to both the physical and emotional brand experience.

Second hypothesis: A branded environment with high sensory stimulation will attract more clients, convince them to stay longer, and increase the likelihood they will revisit the store.

Third hypothesis: Non-visual stimulations can be effectively enhanced through the visual sense and visual perception.

Fourth hypothesis: Consistency of graphic identity, visual communication, and visual stimuli all positively support brand experience.
Limitations

The scope of this study focuses on relationships between physical store environments, brand image, and sensory perception. Due to the lack of research in the retail design area in terms of sensory perception, branding applications, and marketing strategies, the author’s interpretation will be applied. Existing design research and literature related to sensory perception limited their focus on the perception of a single sense without including the other human senses. The absence of branding in interior design research was an additional complication to the lack of information for this thesis research. Additionally, the resources and data related to the brand were limited and were gathered through an interview with a franchise owner and frequent site observations.

This thesis should be understood as the first attempt at an exploratory study of branded environment as a conceptual prototype associated with sensory stimulation in the interior design field. The findings and design concept of this thesis is based upon the data collected at a particular site during the Spring semester, under severe weather changes in Iowa. Due to these circumstances, consumers’ activities and product preferences may vary from the current season and geographical site location with respect to other seasons and locations.

Although other senses were included while exploring the case study, the visualization of the brand prototype in this thesis will explore in depth the branded experience only through the visual sense. The visualization of the space will demonstrate how retail graphics are logically perceived by cueing, communicating, and stimulating the branded experience, and by addressing the diverse perspectives and emotional responses of different users—customers.
Methodology

In this thesis, an attempt will be made based on a qualitative approach to understand existing theories and practical research results from a designer’s standpoint. In addition, an understanding of the relationship between environmental stimuli and sensory response within the store settings will be created. This thesis is an endeavor to develop a prototype as a guide for designers and marketers to facilitate the efficient analysis of a retail store and to create an effective environment enhanced by sensory cues, which will lead to pleasant shopping experiences. The purpose of this case study is to utilize the proposed prototype by analyzing, developing, and visualizing three-dimensional space of an existing store environment. The sensory analysis will illustrate problems or issues that may occur at the existing site during the activity of sales and service, shopping, entertaining, and marketing. The case is important for studying the elements and principles of retail graphics in order to further discuss the quality of brand perception over the sensory experience of the clients.

Information cited in this thesis is categorized into two parts. The first part is in the form of words, drawings, and photographic documentation. The analysis starts with a literature review that covers branding, retail design, and the human senses. Photographic documentation is extensively used in the study. The second part involves social and physical studies including both an interview and frequent observations. Interviewing the local franchise owner informs the research about the brand’s history, objectives, goals, product information, current site, consumers’ details, et cetera. Observation of the current site can provide information with respect to such factors as product demand and type of customers. The design proposal will include a three-dimensional visualization and the application of a retail graphic system for the newly created store identity.
Selection of the Site

The study will be conducted on Chocolaterie Stam located in the heart and cultural district of Main Street in Ames, a small town in Iowa. The Main Street Cultural District in Ames was established on January 1, 2004 as the result of a 2-year local initiative to create a unique identity and focus for the downtown area. The presence of key cultural institutions in the Main Street area, along with unique, locally owned businesses, made this a logical move.

The cultural concept has been strongly embraced by many key players in the community as well as by individual residents. In November 2005, the Main Street Cultural District in Ames became an official, State of Iowa Certified Cultural and Entertainment District. The certification provided improved highway signage and access to state programs to enhance the growth and development of the district. The most distinguished parts of the Main Street District is the 1900 train depot and the1916 former City Hall. Retail establishments on Main Street include art galleries, musical instrument stores, bookstores, graphic and interior design studios, coffee houses, restaurants, and organic and whole foods groceries. On the other side of the street, there are a coffee shop and a chocolate store. These stores are considered the main competitors of the store in Main Street. This underscores the

Figure 1-6. Location of the site
need to distinguish Chocolaterie Stam to compete against the local competitors in the neighborhood. Main Street accommodates popular annual events such as an Art Walk, a 4th of July Parade, a Festival of Trees, and walking tours to the main shops, including Chocolaterie Stam. The characteristic layout of this area positions Chocolaterie Stam in an ideal location to introduce the new brand represented by their popular product.

The building has existed since 1900 and consists of two floors and a basement. Part of the second floor is occupied by the building owner as a studio for his photography practice, with a side entrance from the front of the building. The other part is occupied by Chocolaterie Stam as an office space for the manager. The basement is utilized as the store’s storage area. For the purpose of this thesis, the author will concentrate only on the first floor as the main public and commercial space where consumers are involved.

![Figure 1-7. Facade of the existing store](image)

**Data Collection Strategies**

The main activity of this thesis is to use literature findings to develop a brand prototype for Chocolaterie Stam in Ames, a college town located in Iowa. An interview will be conducted with the owner to develop a thorough understanding of the visions, objectives,
and history of the brand and the current location. Frequent on-site observation will be conducted while recording the users’ behavior and required data without interfering with their activities. The observations will focus on consumers’ interaction and involvement in the space as well as their demographics in order to generate a clear definition of the users.

This work, along with the accumulated literature data, will form a basis for the author to design the new brand image. The outcome of the expected design would induce sensory and emotional reactions, affecting customers’ behavior with respect to the space, and facilitating achievement of the brand’s goals and objectives.

**Data Analysis Strategies**

The author aimed to analyze the existing site based on the Sensory Slider tool created by Malnar & Vodvarkas (2004). The sensory analysis is used to develop common concepts, determine sensory experience in a store environment, and to discover a conceptual prototype for holistically understanding of the phenomenon of sensory experience. The modified version of the sensory slider used to analyze each of the five human senses is constructed in a bar form with a positive and negative values on each side (Figure 1-8). The positive side represents the value of positive sensory perception, the negative side represents the value of negative sensory perception, and the middle zero value represents the absence of sensory influence. The circle symbol indicates the existing sensory level between the positive and negative values while the square symbol indicates the expected sensory level for the environment. Analyzing the sensory level of interior environments require an estimation of the environment’s physical condition in relation to sensory perception. The environmental factors include temperature, sensation of shape and size, ratio of color, shade and shadow,
loudness and pitch, inhaled odors, object textures, and organization. An example of a negative visual perception is presented in Figure 1-9. The retail space is overflowing with visual clutter, has distracting light fixtures, is lacking in points of interest, and is missing consistency, organization, and outline of the space. Figure 1-10 represents an example of a positive visual perception. The space is organized, consistent in product presentation, well illuminated, utilizes an appealing ratio of colors, and the space outlines are clearly defined.

The data and figures collected from frequent site observations were interpreted as narratives to provide design guidelines related to the consumers’ direct interaction with the retail environment, store products, and sales staff. Additionally, the interview with the franchise owner resulted in elaborat information related to the brand background and future directions.
Definition of Terms

In redesigning the brand, it is important to clearly define terms or else the concepts underlying a given term might refer to conflicting ideas or concepts leaving readers confused. The most common and potentially confusing terms used in the study are retail design, branded environment, environmental graphic design, and visual merchandising. Therefore, clear definitions of these terms will be presented here.

Retail Design

Retail design is a creative and commercial discipline that combines and utilizes a combination of many different design concepts in the conceptualizing and construction of retail space (Retail Design, n.d). Retail design is primarily a specialized practice of architecture and interior design with an incorporation of elements from interior decoration, graphic design, ergonomics, and advertising. Retail spaces, especially when they form part of a retail chain, must also be designed to draw shoppers into the space. According to Barr & Broudy (1990), industry leaders agree that the design of a store and its merchandise presentation is more important than ever before. Merchants are keenly aware of store image;
they pay more attention now to shaping their store’s image in the media and creating a unique shopping environment as part of an overall differentiation strategy. Advertising, graphics, store front, windows, and the ambience of the store itself are closely coordinated. Merchandisers are betting heavily on clearly communicating their points of view to their target market to capture, retain, and grow their market share. Retailing is the focus of the American market-driven economy.

**Branded Environment**

Branded environments extend the experience of an organization or company's brand from distinguishing characteristics as expressed in names, symbols, and designs to the design of interior or exterior settings. Components of a branded environment can include finish materials, environmental graphics, way-finding devices and signage, and identification systems. Creators of branded environments leverage the effects of physical structure and organization of space to help deliver their clients' identity attributes, personality, and key messages. The practice of designing branded environments is often a research-driven effort led by an interior designer or architect and may also include a multi-disciplinary team of strategic consultants, brand development experts, marketing and communications consultants, and graphic designers. The designed environment can reflect or express the attributes of a community or the competitive advantages of a company’s product or service (Martin and Guerin, 2005).

The benefits of a branded environment include improved brand position and communication, better customer recognition, differentiation from competitors, and higher perceived value from investors. Internal benefits may include higher employee satisfaction
and retention, increased productivity, and better understanding of an organization’s mission, vision, and values (Floor, 2006). A branded environment can be defined as “a visual identity that is formulated, tailored, constructed, and applied to a three-dimensional space for a variety of environments and for a variety of purposes, including education, entertainment, endearment, inspiration, or promotion” (Landa, 2005, p. 16). Adding to the definition of the branded environment, Miller (2007) includes the three-dimensional physical experience of the brand that goes into creating a customer’s experience. When that experience, in all its forms, produces a positive influence, the customer perceives the organization’s products or services as having quality. That, in turn, may lead them to purchase and return to purchase again. According to Floor (2006), consumers are no longer looking only for a certain product, but are looking for an entire store experience. A strong retail brand should have a strong position in the mind of the consumer. A strong store brand has many loyal customers and a high share of their expenditure. The consumer does not (or hardly ever) go to competing retail brands. The relationship between the retail brand and the consumer goes further than just buying a number of products. The consumer feels connected with the story behind the store; there is emotionally-based store loyalty.

**Environmental Graphic Design**

As defined by the Society of Environmental Graphic Design (2009), environmental graphic design is a design profession embracing many disciplines including graphic design, architecture, industrial design, and landscape architecture. Practitioners in this field are concerned with the visual aspects of wayfinding, communicating identity and brands, information design, and shaping a sense of place. The origin of this field as stated by Calori
(2007) goes back to a time before the invention of paper, when humans made marks on various objects to visually communicate information and to create a shared language. As such, environmental graphic design can be defined as the graphic communication of information in the developed environment.

The Society of Environmental Graphic Design (2009) lists some examples of work produced by environmental graphic designers, including the design and planning of sign programs, wayfinding consulting, exhibit and interpretive design, entertainment environment development, retail design, information design (including maps), and memorial and donor recognition programs. Hunt, Gerry, and Eric (1994) credit the creation of this profession as the cause of a hyper-competitive climate for customers and the emergence of an all-time high level of consumer sophistication. Both people and business want places of distinction to help attract and retain customers. Resorts, superstores, retail establishments, entertainment entities, and restaurants are but a few types of industries looking for more expressive environments.

**Visual Merchandising**

Visual merchandising is defined as “the presentation of merchandise at its best; color coordinated, accessorized, and self exploratory” (Israel, 1994, p. 206). Visual merchandise adds sparkle and shine to merchandise and makes the shopper stop, look, and buy what has been carefully assembled. As Israel mentioned (1994), stores distinguish themselves from each other through visual merchandising and displays to be more special, unique, and tuned into what the market wants. Merchandise presentation has become over time more involved, more exciting, more challenging, and more stimulating. This includes activities that combine product, environment, and space into stimulating and engaging displays to encourage the sale
of a product or service, to promote a new collection, and to attract appropriate buyers. Many elements can be used by visual merchandisers in creating such displays, including colour, lighting, space, product information, sensory inputs such as smell, touch, and sound, as well as technologies such as digital displays and interactive installations.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Retail Branding

The structure of every strong brand identity, according to Floor (2006), is built on three pillars: (1) a clear, differentiating position, (2) a distinct personality, and (3) consistent communications. Brand positioning is the mix of functional, tangible attributes that the retail brand has to offer to the consumer. Brand personality describes the characteristics of the retail brand and it is strong emotionally. Brand communication informs the consumer through its own look and feel of the positioning and the personality. A strong brand has to contain these three aspects to form a consistent and integrated whole. A retail company has the ability to use its stores to build the brand that contains these three aspects. Using this retail branding means that the contact with the consumer is more direct and more intense than it is for a manufacturer. The retailer can immediately determine the consumers’ desires and needs in order to gain maximum benefit from the store. This part of the literature review will demonstrate brand positioning, brand communications and the strategies to reach the brand goals.

Brand Positioning

In a marketplace overcrowded with goods and services, a relevant and engaging brand experience can make or break a brand. Landa (2005) describes the process of building the brand positioning which starts from the moment a customer reads the brand’s brochure, walks into their store, looks at their website, or holds their product. At this point, he or she begins to form an opinion about the brand and its value. Healy (2008) calls attention to the
importance for producers to focus on the customer’s thoughts, and respond to that which makes branding a two-way process. A brand resides primarily in the minds of customers, and is often synonymous with reputation. Just having a recognized name and label can raise the perceived quality of an item too. This explains why we are more likely to try a new product from someone we trust, so we look for similar clues and hints in the packaging, the style of illustration, the typography, and the place of origin (Healey, 2008).

According to Lindstrom (2005), the first documented evidence on the positive effect of branding appeared during the late 1980s when consumers appeared prepared to pay more for branded products, even if the non-branded item was the same quality, appearance, and taste. There have not been any dramatic changes in our brand perception during all this time. The ability of branding to ensure the success of the product or service lay in its capabilities to (1) reinforce a good reputation, (2) encourage loyalty, (3) assure quality, and (4) grant the buyer a sense of affirmation.

The way to establish a difference between the brand and its competition, as explained by Landa (2005), is by creating a position in the market to differentiate the brand for consumers who will most likely buy the one they have bought before or heard of first. Floor (2006) points to the creation of consumer loyalty, where a strong brand identity is needed, as a main factor in differentiating a brand from the competition. According to Floor (2006), in order to have clear positioning, a retailer will have to choose the target group it wants to focus on, and the attributes it wants to use in differentiating itself from the competition. Positioning is the basic promise a retailer makes to the target group, therefore, the functional, tangible attributes of the positioning will have to match the consumers’ values and be translated into the consumer benefits. A differentiated functional positioning is the
foundation for the successful retail brand. If this foundation is not correct, the retail brand will not survive the battle with the competition. Floor (2006) states that retailers should consider four attributes when formulating a differentiated brand positioning: range, prices, convenience, and store experience. The retail brand strives to be better, faster, or cheaper in comparing all these attributes with the competition.

In a store, the consumer can walk through the brand, and forms a positive image about the store’s brand proposition before the actual buying takes place. Therefore, the positioning of a retail brand is mainly about the concrete attributes that can be observed with the senses to form the core of every retail brand (Floor, 2006). We can make consumers’ lives easier or more pleasant through the store experience if we offer them not only functional but also emotional benefits. This is why the retailers are always most vulnerable in their stores.

Marketing Goals and Strategies

Landa (2005) describes a brand experience as “an individual audience member’s experience as he or she interacts with a brand- every time he or she interacts with that brand” (Landa, 2006, p.9). Every interaction a person has with a brand contributes to his or her overall perception of the brand. The interaction can be a positive, negative, or neutral experience. This shows the need for strategic planning to gain the most benefit for the brand from that experience. Brand strategy is the core tactical foundation of branding, uniting all planning for every visual and verbal application. Wheeler (2006) explains how effective brand strategy provides a central unifying idea with which all behaviors, actions, and communications are aligned. Brand strategy is built on a vision, is aligned with business
strategy, emerges from a company’s values and culture, and reflects an in-depth understanding of the customer’s needs and perceptions.

The brand strategy defines the brand’s personality and promise, differentiates the brand from the competition by defining the brand’s positioning, and codifies the brand essences. It is a conceptual plan providing guidelines for driving all brand applications from identity and packaging to advertising. Essentially, the brand strategy is how the business conceives, creates, and positions the brand in the marketplace to achieve differentiation, relevance, and significance (Landa, 2005; Wheeler, 2006). A brand construct is a conceptual, strategic platform that has been systematically planned and developed for a brand. A brand construct allows a designer to generate concepts and to focus ideas and directions (Landa, 2005).

Lindstrom (2005) expresses that repetition is one of the most prominent strategies used by advertisers to ensure a message is understood and remembered by the consumer. A classic television and radio campaign is seen or heard, on average, three times a day. However, the reality is that people are spending less time in front of television, less time reading magazines, and less time listening to the radio. This abandonment calls the need to replace repetition with sensory synergy, where sensory messages have a better and direct impact on consumers. Primarily, design concerns the visual and tactile. Since these are our two most powerful senses, design is probably the single most important tool in branding. Smell, sound, and taste can also be designed, although this is done less frequently (Healey, 2008). On the other hand, many brand practitioners say they focus branding on the experience of using a service or product. According to Healey (2008), experience is the best way to appreciate something; the experience is usually the most memorable aspect of each
thing people buy. Wheeler (2006) states that the vast amount of purchasing choices is inspiring companies to enhance the brand experience in order to lure customers and keep them. Every customer contact provides an opportunity to enhance an emotional connection. A good experience generates positive buzz. A bad experience becomes a lost opportunity sabotaging the brand.

Agencies sometimes apply incremental changes in identity or package design as a “rebranding”, although really they are not rebranding at all. It is not the brand’s essence- the underlying insights, values, and ideas- that are changing, only the visual presentation. Such an update results in an appearance better suited to the existing brand (Healey, 2008). When this kind of change occurs repeatedly, a brand can evolve into a different look over time. Which is another strategy focused on change to expose themselves differently every time even though the brand is still the same but with a more “fresh” look.

**Brand Communications**

Landa (2005) claims that what people think of a brand is what counts. A brand is itself plus the user’s perception and beliefs about the brand. An individual perception of a brand is in most cases based on the brand identity and advertising. When an individual finds a brand identity engaging, that person is more likely to patronize the brand. There are other contributing factors to brand perception, such as the communities or celebrities who “adopt” the brand. Everything contributes to the perception of a brand. Therefore, the means of communication for sending the perceived messages about the brand are important.

In a consumer society, where we all come into contact with advertising, visual identity applications, and branded environments, each visual communication application
builds our perception of a brand and is an individual experience that contributes to the overall brand experience. Landa (2005) states that since an individual’s experiences are, on a critical level, visceral and sensory, branded environments can play a key role in determining an audience member’s brand perception. The brand identity describes the brand the way the retailer desires.

The brand perception or brand image points out how the target group experiences the brand. The look and feel of the communications will have to reflect the brand personality. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that the advertising and direct marketing communications, the store design, the visual merchandising, and the employees, all communicate the same consistent message (Floor, 2006).

According to Floor (2006), many buying decisions are not made until the consumer is in the store. Landa (2005) points to surveys, conducted by several marketing experts, whose results show that seventy five percent of purchasing decisions are made standing in front of the packaging in the store. A retailer can no longer survive with good positioning alone. Consumers demand more of a store than just good merchandise and good prices. For example, consumers also expect the store to offer all kinds of sensory experiences. Stores that react well to this and offer in store experiences where the consumer can see, hear, feel, taste, and smell will strengthen their brand and have the right to demand higher prices than their competitors.

The most important communication objectives of a retail brand are to create store traffic, improve the spending of existing customers, and strengthen bonds with customers (Figure 2-1). The brand communications should be an integral part of the brand identity strategy. Retailers face the challenge of focusing on all the senses in their brand
communications. Almost all in-store communication is now visual. The result is sometimes visual pollution, and consequently some retail brands miss the opportunity to strengthen their emotional bond with their customers because of all the visual clutter (Floor, 2006). A retail brand can develop a distinctive look and feel for its in-store communications by counting on distinguished style attributes like colors, shapes, materials, sounds, smells, and other sensory appeals.

Figure 2-1. From consumer to loyal customer (Floor, 2006, p. 239)

According to Floor (2006), a retail brand communicates its positioning and personality through out-of-store tools, such as advertisements to attract customers, and in-store tools such as store design, visual merchandising, and employees. In-store communications can bring the brand to life by conveying its positioning and personality, and can be used as communication tools to clarify the brand promise which will lead to increased spending per customer.
Communications tell customers what to expect from the retail brand. The location of the store has an influence on the need for advertisement and affects their success which could be increased just by being close to other retail stores with high traffic (Floor, 2006). The exterior of the store can attract passing customers by communicating clear messages to them about the anticipated interior look. The interior of the store can influence buying behavior by turning browsers into buyers with the help of store design, visual merchandising, and sales people (Floor, 2006). Attracting new customers costs ten times as much as retaining existing ones. In order to gain the customers’ loyalty and make them feel at home in a store, an emotional bond should develop between the retail brand and the customer. This bond will mainly develop when the brand positioning is proven by the brand performance in the store.

Immediately preceding a purchase decision, visual merchandising can be the most powerful and most effective communication tool for a retailer. Floor (2006) expresses that in reality, many stores do not make the most of available opportunities to seduce consumers, and they are perceived as a very boring and predictable environment. The store is the most important medium for a retailer because the brand is made in the store through their in-store communications. Once customers are in the store, they will have to be inspired via other touch-points to purchase one or more items. Customers come into the store because they already have a certain interest in the retail brand proposition. The physical interaction with the brand has much more influence on buying behavior than any other communication tool.

Employees are considered another part of brand communication. They can have a huge influence on strengthening the bond with the customer. This bond should result not only in customers returning to the store, but also the way that they come to feel emotionally involved with the retail brand. Floor (2006) refers to employees as the link between the
customer and the retail brand. They are almost the brand themselves, and they can make a real difference in retail stores. That is why every employee should be an internal brand and know exactly what the retail brand stands for.

In conclusion, store design and visual merchandising, together with merchandise and employees, form the in-store brand experience. They give the retail brand a face, a voice, and a personality. That is what makes store design, visual merchandising, and employees essential for communicating the brand. Floor (2006) proved they can communicate just as strongly as advertising or direct marketing. The consumer needs to be persuaded to buy something via store design and visual merchandising, and the employees have to close the deal. Store design has to be more than a neutral background for products. It has to be a persuasive marketer and an appealing product presenter. Through this section, the author was able to form an understanding of the way retail brands communicate with the human senses to create positive sensory feelings.

**Branding Examples of Successful Cases**

Regardless of the lack of case studies about sensory experience and branding in retail design, adequate examples and broad selections of design solutions for branding in restaurant identity design are presented in Cliff’s book “The Best in Restaurant Corporate Identity”. Some of most relevant case-studies will be exhibited as a source of ideas and inspiration to guide the author. The corporate identity, according to Cliff, is now well established as an important element in the personality of a company. It tells its customers, both actual and potential, about the quality of its products, its services, and its price. Even the design of an
opening invitation for a restaurant can be the deciding factor in whether the guests come or not, just as much as a theater poster can be in attracting an audience.

**Brasserie Rocque**

The French style restaurant located in London, England exemplifies a beautifully executed series of elements where every ingredient (typography, paper, illustrations, and colors) works in harmony. A very modern solution crafted from traditional elements. The association between its elements is obvious with the color scheme, the implementation of the symbol on the glass partition, the texture of the wall and fabrics, and the graphics inside the walls.

**Eureka**

This restaurant, following the concept of presenting cuisines that goes with beer, is located in Los Angeles, California. Their logo, which combines all the letters of the name, is incorporated within a complicated design that precisely emulates a beer label. The essence of the beer bottle is well presented on the entrance design.
The element of the brand name, which means war-helmet, is represented on Kabuto’s restaurant identity in Tokyo, Japan. Implementation of the brand symbol is presented as a functional design element with the large copper helmet-shaped lids on the table to cover the individual cooking facilities. Their concept is presented in their logo as well and is implemented as a design feature on their interior walls.
**CityScape Restaurant**

This restaurant located in Chicago, Illinois embraces their identity dominated by their brand symbol in their signature. The symbol is implemented on their menus, wine bottle label, bolo ties worn by waiters, and as an eye-catching wall feature.

![Figure 2-8. Interior signage](image1)

![Figure 2-9. Brand product](image2)

**Real Compania Cervecera Casa Fernandez**

The Spanish restaurant in Barcelona, Spain incorporates their graphic signature on all their graphic system components. Their main feature includes an interior mural that emphasizes their brand symbol as a creative background forming an impressive story.

![Figure 2-10. Graphic identity](image3)

![Figure 2-11. Interior mural](image4)
Science Museum Café

This café draws inspiration from the surrounding airplane collection where even the choice of chairs reflects aircraft technology. Their creative brand signature blended with the scientific theme is supported by their interesting illustrations on the glass. The illustrations overlap the view to create a fascinating composition with the café scene.

Sensory Stimulation

The effect of sensory branding is astounding. The effect is magnified many times over when it includes any of the other senses to produce a domino effect created from the sensory synergy. Because of the way impressions are stored in the brain, one sense triggering an impression will lead to another impression and then another impression in a chain reaction. A whole vista of memories and emotions can instantaneously unfold. Creating a synergy across the senses should be the ultimate goal. Based on a study conducted by Lindstrom (2007), 37 percent of a survey sample listed sight as the most important sense when evaluating our environment. This was followed by 23 percent listing smell. Touch ranked lowest on the scale (Figure 2-14).
What is surprising to Lindstrom is that the entire world of branding has ignored the use of multisensory inputs. Furthermore, what emerged in the Brand Sense study revealed that the more sensory touch points leveraged when building brands, the higher the number of sensory memories activated. The higher the number of sensory memories activated, the stronger the bonding between brand and consumer. In the big picture, each sense can be leveraged to build a better, stronger, and more durable brand. Gobe adds to Lindstrom’s finding that “sensory experiences are immediate, powerful, and capable of changing our life profoundly, but they are not used to their fullest extent in branding, particularly at the store level” (2001, p. 13). It is up to the designer to find a balance that will ensure experiences and products are maximized through the additional use of sensory elements, rather than overwhelmed or rendered banal. This cannot be done in isolation. The objective is to ensure a positive synergy across multiple consumer touch points. Sensory signatures that characterize the brand need to be identified. Malnar & Vodvarka (2004) has successfully designed a tool
to measure the sensory intensity in existing buildings. The created tool, called the Sensory Slider, describes the extent each particular sense contributes to the whole with most of the attributes devoted to the haptic sense. The information is integrated into visual schematic diagram by adjusting the slidebar for every attribute. This tool, designed to analyze sensory existens in architectural buildings, can be used in a modified version to analyze sensory stimulation in interior areas.

Figure 2-15. Sensory slider created by Malnar & Vodvarka (2004, pg 248)
By using this tool and the information gathered from literature in the following section, the author will find out the kind of sensory experiences that occurs in retail environments. Massara, & Pelloso (2006) organized the elements of a store environment into three nested scales through which the individual moves, the macro, the meso, and the micro environment (Figure 2-16). The macro-environment concerns all the variables on the exterior of the store, the meso-environment contains the variables that determine the structure of the interior, and the micro-environment that includes elements within close proximity to the consumer such as shelves and tabletops. The macro-environment contains many meso-environments, which in turn contain many micro-environments. Therefore, The sensory experiences will be focused on the brand’s elements encircled within the meso and the micro environment.

Figure 2-16. Nested scales of the store environment (Massara & Pelloso, 2006, p. 521)
Visual Sense

“Space is such a highly visual medium that its role in brand building is arguably that of principal actor, not a bit player” (Miller, 2007, p. 2). Vision is both a primary sense and a complementary sense to our other four senses. When we touch something that we don’t see, we try to determine what we are touching with the sound, smell, and taste of the object. It is quite challenging to do that without the help of the visual sense. Truly sight is the most persuasive sense of all. Lindstrom (2005) mentions that it often overrules the other senses, and has the power to persuade us against all logic. From a study conducted by Lindstrom (2005), 37 percent of a surveyed sample listed sight as the most important sense when evaluating our environment. Vision is the most powerful of our five senses. It is the sense on which brand builders and marketers have traditionally concentrated. An example of a visual brand mentioned by Lindstrom (2007) is the Coca-Cola brand. It has a very clear sense of color. Simply enough, wherever there is Coke, there is red and white. The consistent use of the colors, the dynamic ribbon, the typography, and the logo have established a very clear and unambiguous image which has survived for decades and is memorable to anyone who has been exposed to the brand. It is a brand that will, without a moment of hesitation, earn full marks for its visuals. Many brands utilize color and hues to represent temperature, especially cold drinks brand, where they use colors that suggest the coldness or warmness of their product.

Store design and visual merchandising mostly appeal to the eye through light, shapes, colors, graphics, typeface, and movements. Through vision, we can perceive the texture of the surface without touching. This information can be perceived by illumination spreading evenly on a smooth surface and by shadows, representing dents and recesses, appearing on a
surface. Perceived information through vision includes size and shape. Shape is an instantly recognizable visual aspect of any brand (Floor, 2006). A good example is world famous and highly recognizable golden arches of McDonald’s and the shape of Hershey’s Kisses. Distinctive shapes create the most solid foundation for brand building across channels. We recognize and remember shape, and this may be what accounts for the longevity of Hershey’s kisses, Toblerone and many other brands. The shape of these products can influence taste when we connect the brand’s famous shapes into our favorite food product and entice us into craving their product without even having the actual product in the picture. Innovative architectural structures often become iconic trademarks instantly synonymous with the cities where they are located. The Statue of Liberty is a visual linkage to New York City. The same principle applies to the Gateway Arch at Saint Louis, Sydney’s Opera house, and the Sears Tower in Chicago. They are perceived as visual landmarks that represent a place, an experience, or a memory.

Figure 2-17. Hershey’s store in Niagara Falls, Canada

Through the visual sense, all the store elements in front of the customers’ eyes will have a role in their perceived impact. This impact on the customers’ memorable experience
starts from meso-environment elements, such as floors finish and ceiling materials, to micro-environment elements, such as product packaging and brand logo. The glare on the floor, the distraction from light fixtures, and the hidden product in the package may affect the consumers’ experience and create a negative impact. Their judgment will be embedded in their mind with the brand. Equist (n.d) states that by taking into account the senses and experiences in the design, designers will be more adept to answering the real needs of consumers, and thus help improve people’s lifestyles and well-being.

**Non Visual Senses**

Even though vision is our primary sense, we use our other senses more often than we realize. Our other senses contribute a significant amount of extra information and experience to our everyday lives. All of our senses contribute to the impressions we form of the world around us. Healey (2008) express the need for branding professionals to take advantage of this and consider the other senses in designing every aspect of the brand experience: product, packaging, advertising, and retail environment. Customers certainly will be able to sense the brand, and their actions will be based on their sensory impressions. Through a survey conducted by Lindstrom (2007), Almost every consumer interviewed in the focus groups expressed their suprise at the lack of multisensory appeal in today’s brands. Based on that study, we see that a multisensory appeal directly affects the perception of the quality of the product, and therefore the value of the brand.

**Smell**

We can close our eyes, cover our ears, refrain from touch, and reject taste, but smell is part of the air we breathe. It is the one sense we cannot turn off. We smell with every
breath we take, around 20,000 times a day. According to Lindstrom and Enquist, it is the
sense we most take for granted. Smell is the most memorable of senses, which explains its
ability to evoke long forgotten memories and the emotions associated with those memories.
Smell is almost impossible to describe. We are exposed to thousands of different smells yet
we lack the language to describe smells and have an extremely limited vocabulary to address
them. We often use words from the wider vocabulary of food and taste to describe a scent.

Expanding the brand platform to appeal as many senses as possible makes sense.
According to Healey (2008), studies have proven something that bakers and chocolate-
makers have always known: a strong, pleasant scent attracts people and encourages them to
buy. It is hard to resist the aroma of a bakery when people pass which is part of the meso
environment experience. Lindstrom (2007) mentions that in the supermarkets of Northern
Europe, freshly bakes bread is prominently displayed near the entry to the store with spot
vents on the ceiling designed to disperse baking aroma as a sensory strategy to attract
customers walking by the store.

Scents evoke images, sensations, memories, and associations. It affects us more than
we are aware of and plays a vital role in our survival by alerting us to distant danger like fire.
Lindstrom (2007) clarifies how smell can alter our mood. Each odor in the world has the
potential to influence mood and behavior using “sensory memory,” as expressed by Malnar
& Vodvarka (2004), by distinguishing a certain kind of memory that evokes memorable
experiences that happened in the past. Everyone perceives odor differently, so many other
factors come into play including age, race, and gender. Smell and taste are known as the
chemical senses since both are able to sample the environment. This is supported also by
Lindstrom’s (2007) studies which indicate that we often eat with our nose. Taste without smell is virtually impossible.

Several chain stores are starting to introduce branded smells. An example by Lindstrom (2007) is Thomas Pink, a British store that specializes in fine shirts, has introduced sensors in their stores that emits a smell of freshly laundered cotton to passing trade. Other stores use the same sensory strategy such as the Rainforest Café that pumps fresh-flower extracts into its retail section, and Jordan’s furniture stores in Massachusetts that uses scents such as bubble gum in the children’s section and the smell of pine in the country-style section (Gobe, 2001). According to Floor (2006), coffee shops, candle stores, perfumeries, bakeries, and lots of other stores are characterized by the smell of their products as part of their meso and micro experience, but this smell does not always differentiate them from another store in the same sector. Most things in our world smell, it is the result of evaporation. Nowadays, just about any smell can be reproduced, and scentless materials can be artificially made to smell. For the sensory and experience result, this is meaningful for designers because it can help determine which materials to use or what fragrances to use to evoke a certain emotion.
**Sound**

“Without sounds, visual perception is different: less contrasting, less attention-demanding, and less informative” (Malnar & Vodvarka, 2004, p. 138). As smell is connected to memory, so sound is connected to mood. Sound generates mood and creates feelings and emotions. A romantic movie is not as emotional if it was watched with the sound off. Sound can inspire joy and sadness in equal measure. But according to Lindstrom (2007), only 9 percent of the fortune 500 brands utilize the strength of audio in making their brand more distinct, clearer, consistent, and memorable across a majority of their channels. The sound of a brand should target both the hearer, who uses their ear to listen, and the listener, who uses their brains to listen, since both are equally important in influencing purchasing behavior.

Most of us possess sounds we love and sounds we hate, such as the soothing sound of the sea and the scraping screech of a black board, but many of the other sounds go unnoticed, or rather, they are not registered consciously. However, this does not necessarily exclude them from having an effect on us. According to Enquist (n.d), music is probably one of the most powerful forms of sound. The sound of played music in the background can have an affect on us even without noticing. The pace of music playing in the background affects services, spending money, and traffic flow in stores and restaurants. The slower the music, the more people shop. The faster the tempo, the less they spend. Lindstrom (2007) shows how related studies have shown that significantly longer dining times are needed for restaurant tables when slow music was played. This resulted in more money being spent at the bar. Music makes new memories, evokes the past, and instanously can transport someone to another place. All three characteristics can be found in the Disney World theme parks through both meso and micro experiences. Carefully choreographed sound is piped through
the entire park as a meso experience; even the bird sounds are controlled for a closer micro experience. Sound and sight are the two senses that are already integrated in every aspect of marketing and merchandising. Traditionally, sound has focused on appealing to our hearing, at the expense of our listening capabilities. The notion that sound can actually influence a purchasing decision has been pretty much ignored.

According Floor (2006), older shoppers shop longer and purchase more when background music is playing, while younger shoppers respond similarly to foreground music. Music can be used to strengthen the emotional part of the brand and to give the store a nice ambience. Sound can also be used to attract more attention to specific products or to reach specific target groups. An example of applying sound in retail stores is the famous Starbucks. Starbucks choose specific music to enhance the atmosphere, with acoustic architecture supporting the experience so that it is not too loud or too soft. The sound strategy was designed as an acoustic experience that would reinforce the very essence of Starbucks values and branding. Another example of applying sound in retail establishments mentioned by Gobe (2001) is Abercrombie & Fitch stores. They have DJs in the store that carefully select music appealing to shoppers that is consistent with the brand’s personality and attitude, which is also reflected in their website as a distinction to their identity. The advantage of this over a simple CD that is played and replayed is that the DJ can perceive what sort of clients there are and how they react to the music. In a certain sense, the music played interacts with its listeners. The Discovery Channel stores have intelligently incorporated sound and are enhancing their brand identity with acoustical stimulation. Corresponding sound and music changes from one section to another to add non-visual boundaries between them and creates a fun adventure experience at the micro level for its customers.
Taste

Taste is detected by special bodily structures called taste buds. The belief that girls are more sensitive to taste than boys is well founded by Lindstrom’s (2007) justification that girls have more taste buds than boys. As we get older, our sense of taste changes, and become less sensitive, making it more likely that we enjoy food that we consider “too strong” as a child. Given the fact that children influence an astounding 80 percent of parents’ purchases, appealing to the sense of taste becomes increasingly important. Food can be classified into four types: sweet, salty, sour, or bitter (Lindstrom, 2007). Each type is located in different regions of the tongue which makes certain areas better than others at detecting flavors. Different tastes are distinguished by various combinations of the four types and a more sophisticated sense of smell. When the nose fails to smell, taste suffers an eighty percent loss. A full sensory appreciation of food also involves its appearance, its consistency, and its temperature. Smell is estimated to be 10,000 times more sensitive than taste, making taste the weakest of our five senses that can be experienced mainly through the micro level of sensory experiences. This explains why sight plays an important supporting role with taste.
“If Starbucks was just a cup of coffee rather an experience, it would not be so easy to stretch the brand across geographies, locations, and products” (Lindstrom, 2006, pg 158).

**Figure 2-20. Starbucks Cafe**

**Touch**

The skin is the largest organ of the body. We are alerted through the skin instantly to cold, heat, pain, or pressure. As we get older, we lose the sensitivity in our hands. However, our need for touch does not diminish, and exists beyond detecting danger. How a brand feels has a lot to do with the sort of quality we attribute to the product. Lindstrom (2007) states that the feel of a product is essential in forming the perception we have of the brand. Enquist (n.d) adds to it that the sense of touch establishes our existence because as we touch we feel ourselves touching: it confirms the presence of whatever it is we are touching. This is important for the designer, especially in today’s context where people’s stress levels generally seem to be at a maximum, and where there is a deficiency of connection and exchanges. Tactile qualities of a brand are often not quite as obvious. One of the most interesting results that emerged in Lindstrom’s (2007) study occurred in the cell phone industry. The results revealed that 35 percent of the interviewed consumers stated that the micro experience of how the phone felt was more important than the appearance. An astounding 46 percent of U.S consumers said that the weight of the phone was more
important that the look of it in their purchasing decision. Following this strategy, the Apple store demonstrates its new iPhone on a display table so that customers can touch, hold, and feel their new product, making full use of the sense of touch.

“Touch forms an important part of the brand and shopping experience, whether it is the feel of products, the materials that are used for the design, or the temperature in the store. The feel and texture of the materials in the store can give the store a masculine or feminine look, and the temperature is also very important in creating the right shopping environment. Shopping time will be short if it is too cold or too warm in the store” (Floor, 2006, p. 281). Gobe (2001) believes that the feeling of holding an item is a pleasant way of exploring and experiencing the world, which is why people want to touch everything around them. Studies have shown that customers are more likely to touch a product in the process of evaluating it. Mainly because touching substitutes the absence of information at the meso level where shoppers use their senses to gain more information, whether it includes the product itself, the store fixture, the room temperature, or even the door’s handle.
Even the pace at which the customer shops can be influenced by the materials used. The consumer will walk faster on a smooth floor than on a rough surface. The extent to which customers can grasp or feel products also influences the appeal of a store. If customer can grasp or feel products, shopping can become more pleasurable. The ability to touch the product increases the chance that the product will be bought. Britain’s Asda supermarket chain removed the wrappers from several brands of toilet paper so that shoppers could feel and compare textures. This resulted in soaring sales for its private brand.

**Retail Graphics and Identity System**

According to Calori (2007), the word “graphic” has ancient roots in the Greek word graphikos which means “writing.” The transformation of written communication into visual communication was the result of human civilizations developing the need to record, preserve, and accumulate knowledge. Retail graphic systems are part of this great cultural legacy of visual communication that builds the structure, form, and style of information delivered to people.

The brand identity is the visual and verbal articulation of a brand which includes all integrated graphic design applications; it is also called a visual identity or a corporate identity (Landa, 2005). Any brand identity consists of standardized components and consistent graphic elements. The use of graphic elements in a retail environment can create a powerful visual lead for the brand in a cluttered shopping area as well as making it more memorable.
Brand Name and Logo

“The right name is timeless, is tireless, is easy to say and remember, stands for something, and facilitates brand extensions. Its sound has rhythm. It looks great in the text of an email and in the logo” (Wheeler, 2006, p. 48). One crucial element of a brand is a brand’s name. It’s the verbal signature of a company’s product or services. It is an intangible asset, optimally adding value to a brand. The name is the thing by which a brand is remembered and discussed. Healey (2008) expresses that a brand’s “good name” is synonymous with a good reputation. The wrong name for a company, product, or service can hinder marketing efforts through miscommunication or because people cannot pronounce it or remember it. Usually, the name is the element that remains unchanged or, at least, in place for a long period unless there is a company merger, acquisition, takeover, or the name becomes outdated. Brands that pick a good name successfully found half the marketing and branding work done for them. Landa (2005) and Healey (2008) categorize the common name types into founder’s name, explanatory, expressive, symbolic, and acronym. The existing name of Chocolaterie Stam belongs to the founder’s name category similar to other brands like Harrods and Levi’s.

Figure 2-22. Harrods verbal signature
Beyond a brand’s name, a brand identity requires a visual system starting with a logo. A logo is not a brand; it is shorthand for one. Landa (2005) defined a logo as a unique identifying symbol or wordmark. A logo represents everything a brand signifies and provides an immediate and direct recognition to the viewer. A logo can take any form. While some logos are simply a word, others are a wordless symbol or a combination of the two. Landa (2005), categorized logos into four types: wordmark, lettermark, a symbol mark, and a combination mark. The important feature of logos is that customers recognize them and receive the desired impressions. A logo is just a mark that acquires meaning through a lifetime of stories and experience.

Figure 2-23. Apple storefront

**Typographic Information**

Typography is a key element in visual communication, or as stated by Calori (2007), “Typography is the backbone of sign graphic system” (p. 103). Healy (2008) describes typography as “the art of selecting and using an appropriate style of type, or font, in a way that reinforces the message or the word, without distracting from them”. Every written language has a set of characters that comprise the language; whatever that language, the
character sets are expressed in typefaces, which vary in the way they depict the unique visual characters (Calori, 2007). Typography selection should consider how easily text may be read, text recognition and understanding, ordering of information, and ability to work in almost all contexts and in a variety of sizes. Unity throughout a brand identity and across the brand experience greatly relies on typography, and the viewer’s ability to recognize a brand greatly relies upon thoughtful typography (Landa, 2005). Consistency is necessary for long-lasting items to be timeless without being generic, and consistent with established brand standards. Such a unity and consistency can be observed with all Apple products, signages, website, and advertisement.

**Color in Graphics**

Calori (2007) justifies the importance of color in a graphic system by describing several roles. These roles are (1) to contrast or harmonize with the sign environment, (2) to augment the meaning of messages, (3) to distinguish messages from one another, (4) to be decorated. Many leading brands are so linked to specific hues that they are primarily recognized by their color or colors. Examples of this linkage include McDonald’s yellow and red and Starbucks’s green (Eiseman, 2006). When a color and design “signature” is established, it becomes the brand identifier that reinforces the image across many levels of communication in the marketplace. This should include print and collateral materials, websites, packaging, point of purchase displays, signage, as well as the product itself, creating what is termed a “total brand experience”.
Eiseman (2006) refers to the color choice as the key element contributing to a brand’s emotional information meaning. The information is current, credible and reliable because this will form the basis of consumers’ rationale for selecting products. An example of color association with a brand is the blue and yellow of the Swedish origin brand IKEA. By choosing the right colors, and consequently using them in all in-store and out-of-store communications, a retail brand can build up an entirely unique visual identity by using color as a unique element of the store.

![IKEA store interior](image)

**Figure 2-24. IKEA brand colors**
(Source: Wang, 2006, p. 75)

Very important aspects of visual tempters are called the “sensorial cues” (Eiseman 2006). These cues link colors to all of the senses and conjure up thoughts and perceptions of how the product will taste, smell, feel, and in some cases, sound. At point of purchase and display, color is vitally important and is an instant attention-grabber. Color briefly gets the message across at point of purchase, entices the would-be customer, and makes the sale (Figure 2-24).

Gender was also a subject of attention and differentiation in terms of color for Eiseman (2006). In general, women shop more emotionally and deliberately than men and
respond to enticing merchandise where colors play a large part in the enticement. On the other hand, men are generally impulsive shoppers, leaning more to “spur of the moment” decisions, but even they have become more color aware.

Color perception according to the viewer is an important part of branding that needs to be taken into consideration. Landa (2005), states that the color is perhaps the most elusive design element. The perception of color varies greatly from one person to another, depending upon culture, physiology, and exposure to marketing color symbolism. Each culture attributes certain symbolic meanings to colors, and the meanings vary greatly from country to country and even vary between regions within countries. The main goal for the color, or color palette, of any brand design is to distinguish the brand in a category and convey a relevant image to the audience (Landa, 2005).

Viewers today expect to be “wowed” by color. More than ever, they are exposed to colorful and creative websites, TV ads, films, computer software and games. Imaginative animation and often-sophisticated graphics have achieved a new level of artistry. This exposure leads to greater expectations as consumers assume that they will be educated and entertained at the same time.

Figure 2-25. The Motorola store highlighted display
Package Design

“Packaging contains more than a product- it contains the brand essence” (Landa, 2005, p. 161). Packaging design is a graphic design application that operates as the casing as well as promoting the brand and attracting consumers. Packaging encloses a product and also allows access to the product when the consumer interacts with the package by trying to open it, pour it, reclose it, and so on. It is a sensation-based brand experience filled with excitement and anticipation. According to Landa (2005), any well executed, excellently designed packaging sends a message of overall excellence about a brand to a client. Packaging is a very important part of the brand experience since the consumer has close contact with the product, within the micro level. Most often, packaging is one part of a large, integrated marketing strategy and media plan including promotions, advertising, et cetera.

Healey (2008) lists several functions packaging can accomplish. It can communicate brand identity, attract attention in a busy retail space, and position a product within a certain category or price range. Healy reveals that unnecessarily over-packaged products are sometimes caused by the desire to make the strongest brand statement. As customers become more aware of and concerned with the impact of human activity on the environment, some

Figure 2-26. Packaging of a chocolate product
brands are touting their use of postconsumer recycled packaging or offering foods with minimal packaging. The design concept behind the packaging design must be relevant to the audience, be set in the same voice as the larger brand identity, and be eye-catching. It must reflect the qualities associated with the brand.
CHAPTER 3. CASE STUDY

In this section, the proposed prototype will be created and applied in designing a specialty food retail space. The Chocolaterie Stam, located in Ames, Iowa, is the retail space to be studied. The purpose here is to use the proposed prototype as a guideline to The Chocolaterie Stam’s retail space. This case study will eventually contribute to further studies in the interior design field and will help to connect academia with the practical world. Furthermore, the effect of the enhanced, sensory response design on customers will be based on observations, interviews, and sensory analysis. This will further demonstrate how an application of the proposed prototype in an actual design process helps to connect academia with the practical world. Therefore, this chapter will explore the brand and the existing site while applying the research tools to gather the necessary data for the proposed prototype.

Background

In this section, the author will discuss information about the brand and the current site to provide a brief background about the case study.

Brand Information

The Stam family started their business at 1800 with a bakery in Amsterdam and started producing chocolate in 1913. One of the founder’s grandsons, who moved to America, used his grandfather’s recipes to bake chocolates out of his own kitchen and started selling them in a Kiosk at the Valley West Mall located in Des Moines. His success originated from his customer’s willingness to purchase fresh, natural, high-end chocolates
with no preservatives. In 1997, the owner opened more stores in Des Moines, which are now the two corporate branches and the main production sources for Stam’s fresh chocolates. The brand owner opened three branches in North Carolina and Wisconsin. These branches are under the management of family members. The only branch not managed by family members is their latest branch, in Ames, IA, which is under the management of a local investor.

The name “Chocolaterie Stam” is a reference to Jacobs Stam, the brand’s founder. The brand is a young one among its competitors, but it is growing quickly, especially in the Midwest where it is closer to the corporate location in Des Moines. The brand offers a variety of services such as gift-wrapping, domestic shipping, catering for special occasions, and custom chocolates. Based on an independent research conducted by the original brand owner, the brand’s main consumers are women whose ages range from 30 to 40 years old. This consumer target was the search focus for the franchise owner while searching for an appropriate site location.

The local branch located at Main Street in Ames, Iowa was built in 2006. Main Street is a collection of historical and commercial buildings that forms the business and cultural district. This district provides goods and services to downtown shoppers and adjacent towns. After site surveys of Campus Town, downtown, and the local mall, the franchise owner ended up selecting the Main Street location. The selected location was the perfect match with Chocolaterie Stam’s target customers because of the neighboring female oriented retail stores, such as boutique shops, jewelry shops, et cetera. The existing building was originally constructed around 1900. Since then it has been a multiuse building that served several different retail professions starting from a hardware store to a women’s boutique. The building offers both historic and sentimental value to the Ames community.
Store Condition

The existing site consists of a two-story building and a basement with a total area of 1992 square foot for each floor. At present, the basement and the first floor are occupied by the retail store. One third of the second floor is used as the manager’s office; the other two thirds of the second floor are used by the building owner as a studio for his photography practice, which has a separate side entrance from the front of the building. The basement is used as the store’s storage area taking advantage of the back door as a private access. The main entrance of the building faces Main Street and three metered parking spaces that provide easy access for drivers while additional free parking is located at the back of the building. The existing store layout is exhibited in Figure 3-1.

Figure 3-1. Initial sketch of site

Store Front: The frontage of the building uses brick finishing on the second level with four windows. The storefront consists of full height glass windows, exterior fabric canopies formed in geometric shapes in burgundy color on a green metal back surface, and a double door in a recessed area. The brand signature is printed on the semi-cylinder shaped fabric canopy. The showcase windows display a variety of different items such as furniture
pieces and mannequins. The display windows do not express the nature of the store even though they are constantly changed and redecorated by the staff according to the season. Pedestrians had a hard time noticing the brand name printed on the exterior canopy above their sight line; it is clearly visible only from the other side of the street. Consequently, it fails to inform the pedestrians about the store’s identity, offered products, and activities. Therefore it will not accomplish the goal of attracting new customers.

**Furniture and accessories:** The interior seating arrangement can hold up to twenty people at once; yet it is rarely full. The place contains a variety of furniture types: round tables, rocking chairs, a dining table, a sofa and armchairs, a grand piano, display tables, and display cabinets. The materials of the furniture pieces include wood, fabric, and metal. The overwhelming array of materials affects the senses with all the different surfaces, textures, colors, and forms. The store exhibits a variety of items, either for sale or for display only, such as coffee beans, local ads, personal pictures, imported European products, tea packs, packed waffles, gift baskets, books, board games, greeting cards, vases, glasses, China, and photographed portraits taken by a professional photographer who happens to be the owner of the building. Using unrelated items in the store will interfere with the customers’ perception
and send negative massages to the customer that do not relate to the brand and the products.

The sales counter is made from wood with decorative wooden elements on the front surface. A high glass barrier suspended by golden posts isolates the chocolate placed on the counter. The chocolates are stacked in large piles. Such merchandise presentation reduces the value of the product by showing it in a mixed and unorganized mass.

**Figure 3-4. Store furniture**
**Figure 3-5. Display units**
**Figure 3-6. Sales counter**

**Interior floors, walls, and ceiling:** The flooring of the store still uses the original parquet flooring with antiqued, torn rugs in different sizes at the seating areas. The worn rugs do not represent the luxurious look the brand is aiming for. The right side of the store contains the original brick in different hues of red with a wide architectural beam at the top. In addition, a large and wide burgundy column is located at the front. A recess in the wall, where it used to be an access door, is covered with a tall mirror. The mirror is not related to a design or a functional attribute with this kind of store. The wall at the end of the store contains two segments, one is hiding the stairs that leads to the manager’s office at the second floor, and the other has an opening that leads to the restroom, cold room, gelato preparation area, and the back access. The back wall has a paint finish with faux effect and a handmade decorative illustration. The decorative illustration does not relate to the brand or
its products. The back area is visually exposed to nearby areas, especially the view of the long, narrow corridor from the entrance area. The old stair produces creaking sounds when it is being used and some noises come from the preparation area. The wall on the left side is painted in purple color that represents the current brand color. The wall has a thin beam at the top and a thin column located at the front of the wall painted in the same color. At the sales area is a golden built-in display constructed with decorative trims, shelves, and backlighting that is used for storing boxes and displaying non-related items. The complexity of this decorative built-in display draws attention from the displayed chocolates on the sales counter. The ceiling is made from two materials set at two different levels. The highest level is made of two-by-two feet ceiling tiles painted in a burgundy and silver finish with a decorative illustration. The lower part is made of off-white gypsum board. This part covers the sales counter area with an angled edge that follows the position of the gelato fridge below it.

![Figure 3-7. Back wall](image1)
![Figure 3-8. Brick Wall](image2)
![Figure 3-9. Parquet flooring](image3)

**Other Design Elements:** The main sound source in the store is two speakers placed at the front and the back of the store that produce unbalanced sounds focused only at the two ends. The store has a grand piano located at the back corner of the store that is played on
weekends. The illumination of the space has many sources. The only daylight source is the windows on the north side of the building, which allows a considerable amount of light into the front part of the building. The front windows are blocked by displays of large furniture pieces and hanging items. The main source of lights are the ceiling spotlights and ten chandeliers exhibited in the following figures. The spotlights, scattered between the gypsum and tile ceilings, are arranged without any consideration to the areas below. One chandelier is placed at the storefront, another is placed at the back above the piano, and the other eight chandeliers are placed at the low-level ceiling above the sales counter. This kind of lighting with exposed and distracting bulbs is not appropriate for highlighting displayed products. Thus, the lighting of this space needs to be re-planned. Pendant, track and indirect lights need to be introduced into the space, and the windows need to be unblocked to let in more daylight. Secondary sources of artificial illumination vary from floor lamps, table lamps, and track lights. The main source of air circulation and temperature control is HVAC outlets scattered on the two ceiling levels. A thermostat located at the back wall controls the temperature. The temperature and music need to be re-planned as well.

Figure 3-10. Spotlight
Figure 3-11. Floor lamp
Figure 3-12. Sales area chandeliers
**Existing Graphic Elements:** The brand logo consists of the brand symbol covered with an oval frame, and the brand name is split into two different parts, each with a different form and size. The main logo colors are burgundy and gold. Other variations, such as white and purple, are used in different situations. The current logo is outdated, the brand symbol is mysterious and unclear, and it contains odd shapes and typography. The proportions of the brand signature do not fit with their printed materials such as flyers and business cards. The brand packages are a large collection of different types of containers and wrapping. The current collection contains paper boxes, translucent plastic bags with stickers, translucent plastic bags with wrapped banners, translucent plastic boxes with a printed brand mark, and plastic bottles with a printed brand name. The multitude of package designs confuses the customers because of the absence of harmony. The lack of a unique look with the current graphic elements is a critical matter that needs to be resolved.

Figure 3-13. Current logo  
Figure 3-14. Package design in display
Design Analysis

In this part, different analysis methods will be discussed and conducted to construct a body of information to help the author with the design proposal. The analysis method consists of an interview, site observations, and sensory analysis.

Interview

An interview was conducted with the local franchise owner by the author. The brand history, position, services, and basic thoughts of sensory association with the brand were discussed in the interview. The sensory experience in the store was not one of the main discussion points in order to avoid the personal bias of the owner’s preference on the study while depending heavily on the author’s sensory analysis using the sensory slider tool. The following information is gathered from the owner.

Brand Position and Strategies

The brand is quickly growing, especially in the Midwest area close to the corporate headquarters in Des Moines. Since their chocolate is produced only by the brand owner’s production line in Des Moines, the brand owner aims to build his own plant in another location to accommodate the demand from all branches. The owner states that the main goal of the brand is to produce chocolate locally in order to sustain the freshness of the chocolate without preservatives and maintain a moderate shelf life that is controlled by the temperature of the room. The brand’s marketing strategy is mainly focused on radio and television advertisements to market their chocolate as the best and freshest chocolate anyone can get. The aim of the brand is to succeed in becoming the best chocolate produced with a pleasant,
home-like environment. According to the owner, the brand’s plan is not aiming for a high level of advertisement, but is counting on word of mouth to avoid a massive demand that they cannot supply. The franchise owner aims to host more people in less time, especially large groups of people. The owner say that “hosting more people every hour means more profit to us than having the same clients for longer time than usual”.

When the local franchise announced the opening of the brand in Ames, local residents were anxious to start shopping since they were very familiar with the main branch located in Des Moines. This is a great example of the brand’s positive reputation among the local populace. The local franchise already had new clients ready to shop while the current site was still under construction. The brand’s owner believes in saving the environment and supporting sustainability and advises his franchise owners to be environmentally friendly as much as possible. This explains the reason for utilizing used furniture in their store. This helps support a longer life cycle for manufactured furniture pieces. According to the owner, the brand looks satisfying and high end to the franchise owner. Local corporate and business owners request their custom wrapped chocolates with the brand’s logo clearly marked on the package as a way to validate the product’s value, freshness, and quality.

**Brand Services**

“Fine European chocolate since 1931” is the brand’s tagline that reflects its history and quality pledge to the consumer. The word “Stam” in Dutch means tree trunk, this linkage is expressed visually in the brand’s logo as a representation of their strong, European history. The owner of the local franchise offers a variety of services such as gift wrapping, domestic shipping, catering at special occasions, and custom design chocolates for corporate and
business owners with their own logo or name on the wrap. The owner does not offer a wireless network to encourage people into having friendly discussions instead of working separately on their laptops. Occasionally, business owners hold small business meetings or community meetings in the store; these groups of people prefer the quiet and pleasant atmosphere of the dining table for their minor meetings. The staff is organized by the owner according to seasonal demands and the owner’s prediction of customers’ density on certain times or days. Outdoor seating is an authorized attraction for the store within certain time periods; a permanent arrangement of seating is unacceptable by city laws and codes.

The franchise owner is planning for a future expansion in the back to have a regular outdoor seating area with a proper entrance access to the free parking space in the back area. The brand is licensed only to serve chocolate, gelato and similar goods; preparing and serving food on site are unauthorized under their current license. The basement is used as storage and may be used to store extra amount of gelato to save more preparation time. The owner invites musicians to play live music in the store. Hosting musical rehearsals in the store is common because music instructors see the compact setting as a good place to test the performance of young students. A proper arrangement of furniture in a theater style is needed to accommodate the special events and the large number of visitors. According to the owner, the store’s longitudinal space contributes to their special hosting adjustment. Additionally, the piano addition to the stores is considered a valuable element rarely existing in similar retail stores.
**Brand Association**

The owner says: “the olfactory sense is probably the dominate sense associated with the brand, in addition to the visual sense with the introduction of gelato products and stacked chocolates on the counter”. The owner presents fresh chocolate products in large overlapping piles to draw attention to them and to save time on restocking. According to the owner, the brand’s logo is the most recognizable visual element to their clients. It is striking, simple, and signifies the high end chocolate that people associate with their brand. The acoustical sense is supported by live and recorded background music instead of unpleasant silence. Jazz and classical music, according to the owner, are the musical types associated with the brand. The refrigerator and the cash registers are the only noise sources in the store. Chocolate samples, strongly connected to the taste sense, are rarely served to their visitors since it will cost the store and may affect its profits.

**Observations**

Frequent on-site observations were held at the site for two weeks starting from the middle of January 2009. The observation times included weekdays, weekends, and the preparation period prior to Valentines Day. During the site observations, users’ behavior and demographics were recorded without interfering with client activities. The collected information listed below describes the observational notes on the site setting and atmosphere, displayed products, the clients’ behavior, and the services offered by the staff. In addition, the clients’ demographic results were calculated to make a comprehensive ratio of the clients’ gender, age group, meeting formation, points of interests, product demand, and preferred meeting places.
Setting

Seated clients do not stay more than 30 minutes, which is the average period needed to consume the purchased product while having conversation with their companions. Even though the store offers a selection of activities, such as books and board games, no one used them through the observation. Only one person through the observation used a laptop on the dining table. The place is not considered to be PC friendly; there were no available outlets for recharging purposes, no wireless network, and it is hard to use the laptops on the existing furniture. This is an intentional purpose of the brand owner to distinguish them from working environments like Starbucks and become an intimate place of discussion and dialog. In every visit, the played ambient music changed to different types from classical to western, soundtracks, and French instrumental pieces. On the weekends, a hired musician plays the piano to create a soothing atmosphere. Even though the sound of the piano adds a pleasant sensation to the store, the high-pitched notes were perceived as noisy and annoying; they bothered the customers while ordering and talking to the staff. The original, antique, and light color parquet flooring requires constant cleaning due to wet marks left by visitors’ boots after entering the store under Iowa’s wet weather.

Product

The store offered more than ten options for the valentine boxed packages; all with the same heart shape in different sizes and finishes. Strangely, none of them represented the brand in any way, neither by expressing the brand name, logo, or color. The new valentine’s boxes replaced the standard displayed boxes on the wall during the valentine season. The sales display was not visible and clear to the customers and had the least amount of their
attention. In some cases, the weather conditions were an exterior stimulation on the clients desires to demand a particular product. In cold weather, clients visited the store just to purchase hot drinks even though a coffee shop exists on the other side of the street.

**Customers**

The store has an average of ten visitors per hour. Most of the customers are regulars; they are used to the place and know what to order and where to find it. The visitors’ scenario and circulation process starts at the entrance then progressing through the packaged products area, gelato display, fresh chocolate display, hot drinks and checkout, Seating area, and exiting the store (Figure 3-15). Some customers ask questions about the products and the history of the brand. Fresh chocolate customers require more time discussing the product with the staff in order to make a better decision from their non-sampled chocolate selection. The majority of senior citizens prefer the dining table as their seating preference; couples preferred the round tables; while groups of three and more preferred the sofa setting.

![Visitor’s circulation process in the Store](image)

**Service**

The staff welcomes the visitors from behind the sales counter when they enter the store. They connect and communicate with them to help them with their purchase from the gelato display area, through the fresh chocolate to the checkout area. Gelato customers pay at
the front and the staff has to use the register at the back to get the customer’s change and receipt. Sampling the gelato is a highly desirable habit for everyone, which is encouraged by the staff. The staff mostly engages in a friendly discussion with the customers while they make their decision on their purchased selection. The customers’ hesitation causes congestion on the shared walkway especially when the area is filled with a group of clients at once, and when the staff needs to deal with more than one customer at a time. In-house hot drink orders are served to the table by the staff. Every once in a while, the owner drops in to help the staff and greet the customers with friendly conversation.

**Observation Data**

The author exhibits the collected data from the frequent observations in the form of annotations and a summary table. The data summary are as follows:

**Gender:** The number of female visitors was significantly larger than the males. The percentage of female visitors during the observation session was 68% while male visitors were 32%.

**Age group:** Most of the visitors were working adults between the age of 20-50 years old with a percentage of 60.65%, followed by senior citizens older than 50 years old with a percentage of 30.32%, children with a percentage of 7.40%, and teenagers with a small percentage of 1.63%.

**Meeting formation:** The majority of customers visited the store individually with a percentage of 42.62%, followed by couples with a percentage of 36%, and finally groups of three or more with a percentage of 21.32%.
Points of Interest: The majority of the visitors had their attention on the product on sale (fresh chocolates, gelato, and hot drinks) with a percentage of 90.98%. Almost a third of the visitors were interested in the products on display (pre-packed chocolate, coffee beans, etc.) with a percentage of 32.78%. Surprisingly, the décor of the store had the least amount of the visitors’ attention where only 13.93% of the customers, mostly new visitors, were interested of the environment design.

Product Demand: The fresh chocolate was the product most in demand where it had the interest of 49.18% of the visitors, followed by hot drinks and gelato with a close percentage of 29% each, and the packed chocolate was the product least in demand with a percentage of 9%.

Meeting Place: Even though the store provides seating arrangements for the visitors, 62.96% of the visitors preferred their orders to-go. This might be caused by the nature of the offered products; the gelato and hot drinks are the only items in the menu that could be consumed while seating in the store. The rest of the visitors had an equal percentage of seating preferences between the sofa, dining table, and round tables.
Table 3-1. Users’ demographics collected during observations

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<th>Observation Summary</th>
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<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
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<td>Products on Sale</td>
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<td>Dining Table</td>
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**Sensory Analysis**

In this part, a sensory analysis tool is used to determine the sensory experience in Chocolaterie Stam’s environment and to develop a holistic understanding of the sensory experience within the space. A simplified version of the sensory slider, based on Malnar & Vodvarka’s (2004) original sensory slider, is used to analyze the perception level for each of the five human senses. The sensory tool expresses the evaluated sensory perception level in
the existing environment. The existing perception level, represented by the circle symbol, for each one of the five senses is shown in the slider while addressing the reasons that leads to that result. The expected value of sensory perception of the environment, represented by the square symbol, is shown as well while explaining what was supposed to be expected from that particular environment. The factors affecting the environment analysis includes store temperature, sensation of shape and size, ratio of color, shade and shadow, loudness and pitch, inhaled odors, objects textures, and organization.

**Visual Sense**

The sensory level is positively high for this main sensory perception. This result is derived from the following reasons:

- Visual clutter all over the space
- Over stimulation from quantity and type of furnishings, fabrics, and finishes
- Distraction of unintended illumination
- Reflection from the high glass barrier
- Over crowded with non-related products such as personal photos and cashmere

Figure 3-16. Indirect illumination

Figure 3-17. Visual clutter
The expected level of visual perception is lower than the current level. The unmatched expectation for this sensory perception is missing the following:

- Organized layout
- Clear pathways
- Pure fabrics and finishes
- Focused and non-distracting lighting
- Cohesive presentation of products

The sensory level is expressed in the sensory slider tool (Figure 3-18). The circle symbol represents the existing level of visual perception while the square symbol represents the expected level.

![Sensory Slider](image)

Figure 3-18. Visual sense level on the sensory slider

**Acoustical Sense**

The sensory level is at a moderate level on the positive side. This result is derived from the following reasons:

- Sound system positioned at two ends of the store
- Diverse type of background music
- Musical performance on the weekend
- Customer’s dialog, especially at the sales counter area
- Change in flooring material
• White noise, sounds from service area and mechanical sounds

The expected level of the acoustical perception is lower than the current level. The unmatched expectation for this sensory perception is missing the following:

• Calm, controlled, and unified music
• Quieter environment for human interaction at the sales area

The sensory level is expressed in the sensory slider tool (Figure 3-21). The circle symbol represents the existing level of acoustical perception while the square symbol represents the expected level.

![Figure 3-19. Grand piano](image1.png) ![Figure 3-20. Speaker](image2.png)

Tactile Sense

The sensory level is high on the positive side for sensory perception. This result is derived from the following reasons:
• Tactile interaction is a secondary sense in the space
• Tactile stimulus comes from interaction with packaged products
• Coldness from the high glass barrier between customers and product at the sales counter
• Interference of multi-textured surfaces

The expected level is lower than the current level. The unmatched expectation for this sensory perception is missing the following:

• Main objective of a space to observe, sit, eat and have social interaction without tactile interference
• The main source of tactile stimulus should be the product

The sensory level is expressed in the sensory slider tool (Figure 3-22). The circle symbol represents the existing level of tactile perception while the square symbol represents the expected level.

![Figure 3-22. Tactile sense level on the sensory slider](image)

**Olfactory Sense**

The sensory stimulation is absent and the sensory level is at zero. This result is derived from the following reasons:

• No odor at all
• Temperature and atmosphere results in diminished smell
• Chocolate products are not made in-house

The expected level is significantly higher than the current level. The unmatched expectation for this sensory perception is missing the following:

• Given characteristics of the product and purpose of the space, the olfactory sense would be perceived to be high
• Low air circulation in certain areas
• Production of in-house chocolate products to have the freshly made chocolate smell

The sensory level is expressed in the sensory slider tool (Figure 3-23). The circle symbol represents the existing level of olfactory perception while the square symbol represents the expected level.

![Figure 3-23. Olfactory sense level on the sensory slider](image)

**Taste Sense**

The sensory level is very low on the positive side. This result is derived from the following reasons:

• The sense exists only at the seating area after sampling the gelato and purchasing the product
• Distraction from other sensory stimulation
• Lack of odors that induce the sense of taste
The expected level is significantly higher than the current level. The unmatched expectation for this sensory perception is missing the following:

- Based on perception of space and product, a slight taste is expected around the whole area
- Less distraction from other senses
- Perceiving chocolate aroma within the entire space

The sensory level is expressed in the sensory slider tool (Figure 3-24). The circle symbol represents the existing level of taste perception while the square represents the expected level.

![Figure 3-24. Taste sense level on the sensory slider](image-url)

**Proposed Design Solution**

The proposed retail design will offer city dwellers a relaxing setting to interact with the street itself. A warm and intimate atmosphere with a touch of contemporary simplicity will establish an inviting retail store in the city. The primary functions are dictated by the activities of the store: preparing and serving a variety of sweets and drinks, musical performance, reading, and conversation. In the following parts, the design program and concept for the author’s vision of the design solution will be exhibited.
Design Program

As per the interview and site analysis, the functions to be accommodated on the first floor are: sales counter, seating area, merchandise display, circulation spaces, and service areas including the restroom. Each area with its needs and requirements will be addressed in this part. The proposed program is exhibited in (Figure 3-25). The programming process sketches are exhibited in the appendix.

Sales counter

The sales and cash counter function as one unit. The counter should be facing the main entry as the main focal point to provide a locus for paying, ordering, and product packaging. It includes a display of selected chocolates and gelato, cash register, coffee preparation, package display, storage, and working space.

Seating Area

The indoor seating area is separated into two sections. The front section will contain a built-in bench and round tables for intimate seating. The middle section will contain a variety of seating types to accommodate the various needs of individuals and groups. The seating
areas should have a sense of enclosure and privacy yet visually relate to each other. The possibility of re-arrangements in the case of group parties or special musical performances is part of the program plan.

**Circulation spaces**

The circulation space should include nodes to give it more interest and to direct the flow. Nodes are given points of the path that act as interior enhancers. They provide points of relief and break spaces, accentuate transitions, and create memorable spaces along the way. The nodes should contain points of purchase and the grand piano. Sub-spaces of circulation are connected with the main circulation flow.

**Merchandise display area**

The merchandise display area should be located by the entry and along the circulation area as part of the nodes. This area allows customers to view pre-packed chocolate and coffee products while they are navigating through the store. Attracting customers to the displays using attractive visual merchandising as sensory cues is part of the program plan.

**Service areas**

Service areas include a restroom, cold room, gelato preparation area, and access to the office and backdoor. The restroom located behind the sales counter should be concealed and separated from the shared corridor with a new access accessible to people with disabilities. The rest of the service areas will be grouped together by adding a door to isolate them from the restroom. This space is dedicated to staff members and patrons coming from the back door. Adding a door will provide privacy and noise control for the sounds coming from this area.
Design Concept

The design for the retail store starts with considerations of how people approach the building, perceive the site, and the relationships between the sensory experience and branded environment. The design concept should create a simple and sleek space. Division of spaces give a sense of zoning the space while repetition of product displays give a sense of uniformity to the space. The form of the site is a rectangle. Therefore, the spatial differentiation can be proportionally divided into rectangular segments. Smooth circulation flow between the furniture arrangements will eliminate the dullness of linear flow. Rengler (2003) addressed the events of the building and the zones people go through in an interior environment. By adopting these events as the sequence and order of movement, the author will address the design solutions through every event.

Approach

“The journey of a place begins the moment we decide to go there” (Rengel, 2003, p. 23). The building surroundings and general circumstantial conditions will have an effect on how we react to the act of entering. The first sight of the building leaves an important first impression on the visitor. The store façade would give the first impression of the store to passers-by. Clear glass windows will symbolize an introduction to the store’s nature and activity. The glass windows frame the interior human movements and activities as a motion picture for the patrons outside the store. This will attract patrons to join the motion and be part of the activities.
**Arrival**

The act of entering the building is a significant event. This is the point where the users’ get the first impression of the building’s interior. If the user is familiar with the building then he/she will proceed automatically towards the goal. Otherwise, it may take few minutes to get oriented and Figure out the destination. Arrival gives the user a partial sense of accomplishment by completing a partial objective of the overall goal of the visit and the shopping experience. Making the arrival a memorable experience is a great opportunity that needs to be seized. The arrival space here is the entrance area located on the north side.

**Moving to the destination**

“The experience of moving to the principal destination is often different for first timers, frequent visitors, and the insiders of a given facility” (Rengel, 2003, p. 26). Users will be limited to the tight corridor until they proceed toward the destination. Impressions are formed based on the view from the corridor to get a better sense of the surrounding environment. The destination space on the first floor would be the sales counter on the south side of the building, and it should be in the range of visibility from all interior areas. The rest of the floor will be a display space and seating spaces. These destinations need to be defined by means of a legible circulation system and introducing nodes as emerged display units through the circulation area. Nodes are junctions, like a convergence of paths, or concentrations, like an enclosed square. They become in-between places to stop and step off the path or an expanded and emphasized location along the path. At both the arrival space as well as the destination space, the nodes are needed. This can be further emphasized by the use of interior features like changes of flooring and introducing some unique design features.
This is the principal movement system to get to all of the spaces and terminates at the sales counter, which forms a strong focal point at the end.

_Arrival at the activity destination_

The arrival point is the sales counter where the sense of arrival at the heart of the activity is established. The following events are part of the activity in this area. After the destination attracts the visitor successfully, other events take place at the destination.

_Waiting_

Users have to wait their turn in situations caused by the confused consumers who cannot make their selection choices. It is one of those rare activities when they are neither engaged in the target activity nor traveling to it. They are at the general destination but they must wait before engaging in the main activity. Waiting experiences are full of anticipation and expectation. This is an excellent opportunity to make an impression and provide meaningful, engaging detail. The waiting area is the area in front of the sales counter where people wait for their turn while discovering the surroundings and exploring some interesting touch points such as a menu board or a point of purchase.

_Engaging in the target activity_

Locomotion and exploration are the common activities at this phase. People will explore the products displayed in the sales area and think about their order. The staff is part of this activity. They will engage the visitors to help make better decisions and convert the visitor into a buyer and a customer.
**Departing the destination**

This is an important transition. Once the activity is complete or if it is time to leave, the customer starts gathering the purchased items to move to a seating area or leave the store. The departure from the target destination starts the overall departure process. If the customer decides to sit in the store, a wide range of activities will be obtainable such as consumption of the product, social dialog, reading, and listening to musical pieces.

**Moving towards the exit**

This is a good time for meaningful engagement with the environment with high potential. It has the opportunity to be as engaging as the experience they had at the beginning of the visit, in either the same route or a different one. It is still an opportunity for people to discover the space before leaving.

**Final departure**

The last space, or the last view, before going through the door, may or may not attempt to make a final impression on the visitor. This is the point where the journey is finished and starts to become a memorable experience. The total amount of impressions is collected and recorded into the mind, which will probably be a good memory caused from positive experiences in the store.

**Design Components**

“A store design has many touch-points that together give the retail brand a look and feel. The most important elements of store design and their functions are the exterior, the interior, the lighting, the layout, and the fixtures” (Floor, 2006, p 291). Together, all these
touch-points form a consistent whole to form a store and to give it a unique look and feel that makes the brand recognizable to the customer. In this part, the author will discuss the design elements that will be required by the new proposal.

**Exterior:** The most important function of the store exterior is to attract customers. The appearance of the building strongly influences the brand perception. Based on opinions formed about the store’s appearance, some customers will decide to pass the store while others will be enticed to enter. Through its exterior, a store has to attract attention, differentiate itself from the competition, and draw customers into itself. In many cities, brands themselves are well-recognized city landmarks. Selfridges and Harrods in London, Lafayette in Paris, and Bloomingdales in New York use their striking architecture as a permanent advertising billboard. The selected colors and materials can play an important role as well. Smooth materials and black finish can give a store exterior a distant look. The brand name and sign give a first impression of the store’s brand identity. The store windows can draw customers and form a transition between the exterior and interior of the store.

**Interior:** The image evoked on the outside has to be enhanced on the inside. Once the consumer is inside, the interior has to take over the communication function and communicate the same message about the brand as the exterior. The look and feel of the interior design should communicate the desired brand personality, and it has to sell as well. A store never gets a second chance to make a first impression.

**Lighting:** Lighting is incredibly important to any retail environment. Lighting can bring drama into the store. It should not only light the store and its products, but lighting should also provide the desired atmosphere. Lighting can be a real communication tool.
Bright light is used mainly at brands that are positioned by price. In contrast, luxurious stores use much cozier lighting schemes similar to theaters. In particular, displays and products that deserve extra attention are lit with spotlights. The variation of light and dark creates excitement in the store. This excitement directs the customer through the store.

**Layout:** The most important function of the layout is navigation through the store. In order to accomplish that, a few factors, such as first impressions and traffic flow, need to be taken into account when deciding on the layout. The store has an enormous influence on the total impression made when customers first enter the store. The first sensory appeal will mostly determine the overall brand perception. Placing a strong display at the entrance makes the transition from outside to inside easier. A good retail design is easy to navigate and leads customers to the important product categories without giving the impression that they are being pushed in certain directions. In determining the layout, it is important to locate the focal points. There should be strong focus points everywhere in the store.

**Fixtures and Furnishing:** Fixtures and furniture in the store have the primary goal of presenting the merchandise in a positive manner while contributing to communicating the desired brand identity. Visual merchandising takes place at the point of purchase. Immediately preceding a purchase decision, visual merchandising can be the most powerful, most effective communication tool. At this point, consumers have more access to product information and inspiration than anywhere else in the store. Furniture is one of the store’s design elements. Each piece’s look, feel, size, color, and even texture can influence the visitors about the brand’s identity. Attributes such as brand position, personality, store activities, and expected customer demographics can be predicted from the type of furnishings.
in a store. Furniture symbolizes the quality, comfort, and preparation a brand is willing to offer its potential customers.

**Other Design Components:** Shopping behaviors and outcomes, including time of stay, pace of movement, store sales, and consumption of beverages in a restaurant, are related to volume and tempo of store music (Lam, 2001). Some spaces require low sound levels while others require higher sound levels. Therefore, the store needs controlled music with a strong source. The distribution of the music should be planned according to each space.

The absence of odor in the store is another element that needs to be introduced in the environment. The association of the product and the aroma is a vital matter. Perceiving positive olfactory sensations will make shoppers spend more time on processing product information and makes them evaluate the store and its merchandise more positively than when no scent is present.

In a typical interior, color will be seen in every element present. Objects cast shadows, forming areas of color that appear darker than the same colors receiving strong light. Since colors can influence the mood and the behavior of customers, as Floor (2006) states, colors in stores should emphasize the brand’s own identity instead of using a neutral color scheme. A warm color scheme based on the brand’s colors as well as clean and pure materials will be used on the furnishing and finishing in the space.

The color harmony should be Analogous Harmony where colors are adjacent to each other on the color wheel. An Analogous scheme may use a dominant tone plus the next two adjacent hues on one side. Since the hues of an analogous scheme are closely related, harmony becomes virtually automatic. Warm colors are desired to create an atmosphere of cheer and warmth. Red and violet, the colors at both ends of the visible spectrum, seem to be
more stimulating than colors at the middle of the spectrum (Lam, 2001). The color scheme developed for the project is a combined scheme between natural color and functional color schemes. In the Functional color scheme, every decision is based on the purpose of the particular element. Functional color makes every color choice on the basis of the function/purpose of the element under consideration. The natural scheme utilizes the natural material’s colors in the existing site with the existing reddish brick and the light brown parquet flooring.

**Design Summary**

The purpose of this case study was to apply the proposed prototype to the design application. The design analysis and design development were conducted based on the branding vision. Sensory perception was considered a key determinant of users’ perception in the retail environment. The concept of branding is associated with a consistent identity. The case study reveals that the prototype can become a guideline that helps designers to find creative solutions in advance. The study also shows that the prototype encourages a designer to consider all the possible environmental characteristics to enhance the sensory shopping experience of customers in a store environment.

The redesigned space was presented in the form of a gallery of eight well-designed boards, which comprised of research introduction, case study background, floor plans, reflected ceiling plans, and the flooring pattern. It also had the interior elevations, graphic system components, a computer generated 3D view, interior finishes, furniture, and fixtures that the author proposed for the space. The boards were displayed for seven days at the dean’s office gallery area located in the College of Design at Iowa State University.
The retail store would serve two groups of customers. The primary consumers would be residents of the area who would normally come during the day. The second group would be working people coming for meetings or for the musical performances. The retail brand promotes extending downtown life into an acoustically pleasant experience by creating a musical environment that sets a different mood for the visitors. The retail store activity and arrangements are designed to accommodate a variety of customer group sizes and needs. While indoor activities occur in all seasons, seasonal weather conditions dictate outdoor activities in Ames. The design calls for some outdoor seating to be offered while the temperature remains comfortable and during the time frame allowed by the city’s regulations. The retail store provides a luxurious and cozy atmosphere. It also creates an intimate ambiance for those who seek privacy and romance.

**Space Layout**

Focusing on space layout, the upcoming section explains the final floor plan of first level of the Chocolaterie Stam store. The floor finish and reflected ceiling plans are also developed and exhibited. The interior elevations and sections are exhibited in the appendix along with the initial plans developed at the beginning of the design phase.

**Entrance**

Upon entry, the customer, at first glance, is exposed to the store where all the areas are clearly visible yet maintain their own privacy. The customer will be able to decide his/her next destination by following the circulation areas. The majority of the area uses the original
parquet flooring while the high traffic area uses a hard-surface granite for easy maintenance and for definition as a node area.

**Product display area**

The product display consists of three types, a wall display, shelves, and display tables. The wall display is situated next to the entry door, the two display tables along the main walkway, and the shelves are on the wall between two seating areas. The wall display area allows customers to view pre-packed chocolate and coffee products with a simple, clear, and organized visual merchandising presentation. It is made of wood with a combination of finishes: white, burgundy, and black. The black back panel is made of iconic panel with a unique pattern engraved in the black wood. The unique background of the wall display units makes it a visual cue and a distinguished landmark in this area. It also adds originality, complexity, and a classical touch to the entire scheme. The shelves and the display tables are made of painted wood with different finishes. The products on the displayed tables are organized as a group of different product to create a distinction with visual merchandising. A lamp track system is used to accentuate the display units and the merchandise. The proposed lighting illuminates the main design features and draws visual focus toward them.

**Seating Area**

The seating area is divided into two major sections. After customers make their order at the counter, they can choose seats from either section. The Chocolaterie Stam proposed tables are round and rectangular. The light weight of the materials enhances the move ability of the tables and chairs. Movable chairs and tables give flexibility to the space whenever it needs to be transformed for an alternative function. A few waiters or waitresses are assigned
Figure 3-26. Proposed floor plan

1. Entry
2. Merchandise display & seating area
3. Seating area
4. Sales & cash counter
5. Restroom
6. Gelato preparation area
7. Cold room
to clean up the seating areas and help customers by delivering their orders to their tables. The first section, located at the front of the store, contains two seating styles. It consists of round tables, rectangular tables, and a built-in bench. The round tables are made from white iconic panels with the same unique pattern. The round tables establish a sense of intimacy. The rectangular tables are made from black wood, and they can be easily rearranged for convenient arrangements. The contrast between the two colors provides rich color to the space. The bench seat and back are made of beige fabric with a wooden back trim finished with burgundy paint. This section is designed to influence intimacy for incoming visitors and coupled customers. A lower ceiling defines the seating area. A black chandelier is installed at the center of the lower ceiling opening to provide elegant illumination and a luxurious look.

The second seating section is situated at the center of the store. This section is more group-oriented. Armchairs, a sofa, and coffee tables are assembled to create a lounge-like seating area. The area is set on the sides of the store with the piano in the middle. The seats are good for reading or listening to the live musical performance. The tables and chairs are arranged in groups from two to six. The rectangular tables are made from black wood, and they can be easily rearranged as needed. A storage system provides reading materials and board games for adults and children while displaying special items and chocolate scented candles on the front side. The floor finish, which is used for heavy traffic, is the existing parquet flooring in the sales counter area and the food preparation area. This area is lightened with a combination of pendant lights and track lights. Movable tables and chairs are the most easily used elements in the store that change spatial functions to meet the store’s special needs in the cases of musical rehearsals or different sizes of customer groups.
Sales counter and cashier

Entering into the last part of the store, customers encounter the sales counter displaying gelato and fresh chocolate. The retail store promotes the idea of self-service to attract the customer to the counter at the end of the store while traveling through the whole store. A menu board is placed on the left side with the gelato refrigerator case placed next to the counter. The counter displays selected varieties of fresh chocolates for sale. The counter is able to accommodate three of the staff receiving and preparing orders at the same time. Customers decide and place their order on the left side of the counter and pay on the right side of the counter.

The countertop displaying the chocolate in two levels is made from Corian to contain the cold temperature required for the fresh chocolate. The glass barrier securing the chocolates consists of a low straight portion and a slanted upper portion to minimize the reflection and the cold sensation. The right end of the glass barrier utilizes white Corian with the same glass form. This provides a concealed location for the cash register. The working area of the back counter is used for wrapping boxes and preparing coffee as well as cleaning and storage. A display unit with a concealed storage is located above the working counter.

Restroom

The men’s and women’s restroom is located behind the sales counter wall. The existing wall covering the stairs is extended to cover the opening and act as a back wall for the new sales counter. The restroom door is relocated to isolate the shared corridor for staff service Only. Accordingly, the bathroom fixtures are relocated to the opposite side of the relocated door. The restroom is handicapped accessible.
Figure 3-27. Reflected ceiling plan

- Recessed downlight
- Emergency light
- Pendant light 1
- Pendant light 2
- Chandelier
- Adjustable spotlight
- 2’x2’ diffuser supply
- Cove light
- 2’x2’ Audio spotlight
Three-Dimensional Visualization of Space

Focusing on three-dimensional visualization of space, the upcoming section showcase the final design of first level of the Chocolaterie Stam store. The interior and exterior spaces were studied through digital modeling to visualize the appearance of the space and to observe how lighting affects its colors and atmosphere. The final presentation displayed in this part will focuses on a three-dimensional model generated and retouched by the computer programs, 3D Studio Max, AutoCAD, and Photoshop. The author will exhibit the final three-dimensional rendering while describing the unique features of every view.

Façade Design

The highlighted entrance with the burgundy leads customers toward the main entry. The glass canopies function as an elegant and contemporary weather protection for exterior seating and patrons. The clear window provides visitors a view of activities that are taking place in the store. A warm-color background seems to be more capable of eliciting attention and attracting people to the store. A unique pattern is applied on the glass front with a frosted glass film. The brand logo is highlighted as the dominant visual cue. The illumination and warm color of the store at night will attract pedestrians.
Entrance & Major Area

The interior spaces of the store are organized in terms of visibility and smooth traffic flow. The borderline of the interior is defined by flooring pattern, ceiling design, and furniture placement. A strong visual axis is defined by the nodes and points of purchase along the circulation path. This central path divides the space in two parts. The nodes contain points of purchase and the grand piano. Ambient music will be distributed only to the seating areas using an audio spotlight fixture above each area. This fixture will focus the spread of music on these areas without interfering with the circulation spaces and sales counter area. Controlling the music distribution will provide a quieter atmosphere for the store visitors while exploring the displayed merchandise and discussing their order with the staff at the sales counter. Seated customers will be acoustically isolated from the surroundings. The grand piano is positioned at the center to provide balanced audio distribution among the
seating areas at the middle of the store. Having the piano on the vision horizon creates an association between the ambient music from the audio spotlight and linking it with the view of the piano when the piano is not being used.

Appetite is very strongly affected by light and color, and the experience of eating can be made more or less pleasant through the choice of color in surroundings. The reddish colors used for the proposed design, derived from the brick, parquet flooring, and burgundy from the new brand, are believed to be stimulating to the appetite. Other warm tones tend to generate a comfortable atmosphere, but must be used with restraint along with stronger accent colors. The burgundy color, which is a mixture of red and violet, will have the benefits of both red and violet colors. Violet is a stress reducer and can create feelings of inner calm while red provides the qualities of high energy and passion that excite the viewer.
Sales Counter

The black surface of the counter front will allow higher visibility of the displayed chocolate and the white area at the back. A lower ceiling above the counter in white gypsum defines the sales area. The color black creates a sense of drama and shadow, while white creates a feeling of luminosity and clarity, creates a feeling of separate space, and enhances the eye’s ability to focus. Pendant lights suspended from the lower ceiling accent the displayed chocolates without any distractions. Next to the sales counter, on the left, is the menu board, which is a good location for a visual cue for new customers to start their ordering process. The verbal information from the staff as well as the engaging menu board and displayed products offers opportunities to provide and share information about the product.
Seating Area

While designing the main circulation path, most of the elements were taken into consideration to make the path interesting as well as enriching the movement. The placement of furniture pieces creates a wavy, smooth movement to form an interesting flow instead of a dull, straight movement. Low pendant lights illuminate the seating area at night. The soft forms of the furniture made with pure fabrics create a cozy ambience. The placement of the seating area benefits from the outdoor setting, extending views from one space to another. The activities occurring in the store and the street create dynamic theatrical moments. Watching others in movement becomes an alluring activity for customers. The high clear windows, open to the interior of the store, draw in the natural light. Daylight coming from windows provides full-spectrum light in its purest form. To encourage customers to spend more time in the store, a new menu will be created with new dishes that are suitable for
indoor consumption such as chocolate cakes, gelato with fudge, and chocolate fondue. This addition will increase the sense of taste in the seating area.

![Figure 3-32. Seating area](image)

**Focused Areas**

The display units are constructed from painted wooden shelves with a black iconic panel at the back. The iconic panel will form a black background for the display boxes with a highlighted grooved pattern. The iconic panel will act as a visual cue for the display area. The concept of environmental graphic design is applied to the wall on the left side of the store. The wall is painted in the form of strips of black, burgundy, and beige with white separation spaces between them. Also, the wall incorporates a large image of the brand’s symbol to provide a strong visual association with the brand. The color schemes and symbols on the walls are related to the brand’s colors and visual identity.
The wall on the right side of the store uses the existing brick material while dividing it with the flat painted surface of the storage system. This gives a nice textual quality to the walls with the transition of different surfaces from smooth to rough textures. The burgundy color of the storage system’s front surface draws the attention of customers. The walls of the store with different elements help provide a visual and sensory experience and provide a sense of sequence.

The implementation of chocolate aroma candles placed in the storage system makes the smell in the air congruent with the product. This will make shoppers spend more time on processing product information, make them evaluate the store and its merchandise more positively, and make them more inclined to visit the store.

Since color is energy, the use of original works of art is always preferable. Original works of art have a life force that reflects the artist’s spirit and can lift the viewer’s spirit. The art has a physical effect on the human body and, therefore, using artwork with a
“chocolate” theme is applied at the store while having the original brick as the background for the artwork.

![Figure 3-35. Storage system & artwork](image1)

![Figure 3-36. Built-in furniture](image2)

**Presentation of Graphic Identity System**

Graphic identity is an important part of the brand. Consistent and proper application of the components within the graphic system will create a strong and unified presentation of the new brand identity. This unified image generates a high degree of recognition and promotes a positive image to the public.

The proposed prototype needs to be immediately recognizable and expresses the brand’s message and identity. The logo should create a visual impression that is memorable to the customers. The tree symbol and brand colors are used as a theme throughout the space. The tree symbol and brand colors are also associated with the graphic design for the retail store. An identity standards manual, a guide containing approved standard graphic elements of the logo, typographic and color palettes, and brand signature, was created through this research. It also provides a range of possibilities and guidelines for the use of fonts in various combinations and in various applications, both print and digital.
Logo and signage design

A logo represents everything a brand signifies and provides immediate and direct recognition to the viewer. The logo provides visual recognition to the brand. The design of the logo for the store reflects the natural theme and simplicity of the space. According to Landa (2005), the current brand logo is considered a combination mark logo since it has a combination of words and symbols. By evaluating the current logo based on Thomas’s (2000) checklist of criteria for a good logo, the logo will not be able to succeed among these criteria. An effective logo has to follow the items in the checklist:

- Visibility: Standing out in its surroundings to provide quick and memorable identification
- Application: Applicable in a variety of applications
- Distinctness: Distinguishing itself from its competition
- Simplicity/University: Ease of logo identification
- Retention: challenging in discovering logo identification
- Color: Applicable in black & white as well
- Descriptiveness: Clear connection between the logo and the nature of the brand
- Timelessness: Tendency to last a longer time span
- Modularity: Adaptability to numerous applications
- Equity: Representing the value of the brand

By redesigning the existing brand signature, the typeface is simplified for readability and the symbol is clearly expressed to have a strong visual impact and recognition. The two
words “Chocolaterie Stam” makeup the logotype. The typography of “Chocolaterie Stam” uses the font “Britannica Bold.” The logo has a black solid line at the bottom to recompense the scale of the word “Chocolaterie.” The logo is applied to signage, menus, packaging, and vehicles.

The tree symbol represents Chocolaterie Stam and for what the company stands: fresh and natural products. It is a quick identifying symbol that the public can relate to Chocolaterie Stam. The symbol may be used alone, as a design element, or as part of the product signature. The proportions and spacing with the Chocolaterie Stam symbol cannot be altered. The standard colors used in the logo are dark purple uncoated pantone numbered 188 PC, black, white, and metallic gold. The design of the symbol allows it to retain its characteristics in a variety of applications and sizes. Faded and blurred shadows may be added to the logo as required.

![Stam Chocolaterie](image_url)

Figure 3-37. Proposed brand signature

Signage should reflect the brand’s personality and use key visual elements of the brand’s identity. The positioning of signage within any environment, according to Landa (2005), should be thoughtfully related to the viewer for ease of readability, maximum visual effect, and access. The signage of the store showing the brand’s signature is displayed in the upper part of the entrance frame with the burgundy color as the background. The signage is created from Plexiglass with a backlight that glows at night with alluring white light.
Colors

Color is an integral part of the overall identification system. Recognition and awareness of the identity system will be increased and maintained with the proper and consistent use of color. Complex and sophisticated mixed colors were selected from a rich color family that appeals to up-scale customers. The approved pantone colors for use in applications are dark purple uncoated pantone 188 pc, black, metallic gold, and white.

![Brand colors](image)

Figure 3-38. Brand colors

Package design

Packaging is part of the brand experience. They are brands that we trust to take them into our homes. A disciplined and coherent approach for the package design leads to a unified and powerful brand presence. The new package consists of two sizes, a compact and a large size. The compact package is made of a translucent plastic box, inner chocolate container, and a cover wrap. The large package is made of a cardboard cover, inner chocolate container, a translucent sheet, and a cover wrap. The box can be closed by inserting the package wrap after closing through a slit on the back of the wrap into which is slipped a small hook-like insert extending from the edge.
The colors of the package correspond to the brand colors clearly perceived in the branded environment. But according to Eisman (2006), color is not the only means of attracting attention. There are other considerations as well, such as the shape of the package, the “fit” in the hand, the texture, the finish, the perceived weight of the object, and the graphics. The visual association concerned with the colors and symbols, is enhanced with other sensory perceptions such as the texture of the box and the smell of the chocolate. The complex, package-opening process is intentionally used to create a package-opening ceremony. It will be a rich sensory activity where opening the package involves touching different surfaces and hearing their distinct sound while removing them to get to the chocolate. The package will be an external representative of the brand that transfers the sensory experience to the customer’s homes.
**Typography**

The typography selection should be concerned with how easily text may be read, ordering of information, and ability to work in almost all contexts and in a variety of sizes. Unity throughout a brand identity and consistency is necessary for long-lasting items to be timeless without being generic, and consistent with established brand standard impressions (Landa, 2005). To create a consistent and recognizable look for the variety of products by Chocolaterie Stam, three type families have been chosen: Britannica Bold, Franklin Gothic Book, and Romantic. For body text, the Franklin Gothic Book typeface should be used. The Britannica Bold typeface should only be applied to headings. Romantic is used for special applications only.

**Britannica Bold**

**Franklin Gothic Book**

**Romantic**

Figure 3-41. Typography selection

**Brochure**

A brochure is an information tool and an extension of a brand’s identity. It makes it easy for customers to understand information and to buy the brand’s products and services. Designing a unified system ensures that the identity of the brand is consistently presented and communicates familiarity to the existing customer. A unified brochure system increases brand recognition and differentiates the brand from the competition.
Brochures are given to customers to review before making an order or for catering orders. The brochure offers a variety of drinks, chocolates, sweets, and gelato. Some choices are not listed on the menu but would be displayed at the sales counter. The brochure contains both text and photographs in a glossy finish. The layout is separated into two pages but presented as a whole in a book type, measuring 5 inches by 5 inches. Pricing is provided next to each item to make the customers’ choices easier. The brand fonts and colors are used for the titles and subtitles. The logo and tagline are on the front cover, the address and telephone number are printed on the back. The golden line continues from the front cover to the back. The infill of the brochure includes some highlighted products to categorize the menu into four parts along with the title, product name and price. The brochure should be printed on a matte finish with the images and patterns of the cover page printed in a glossy finish.

Figure 3-42. Brochure design
Menu board

Communication in the environment provides another opportunity to support a brand. A menu board is another information tool. It makes it easy for customers to make a decision and to buy the brand’s products. A unified look is necessary to ensure the consistency of the brand’s communication and presentation. The menu board contains the brand’s signature and tagline, some highlighted products to categorize the menu parts, product names, and price.

![Menu board design](image)

Figure 3-43. Menu board design

Website

A website is the next best thing to reality and sometimes more efficient, more user-friendly, and faster. The customer is in charge and is engaged by the content, sound, movement, and color of the interactive brand experience, bringing the brand personality to life. The website respects the customers’ needs and preferences. It quickly answers the
questions of who is the brand, what do they offer, where they are located, and how can someone contact them. The web site layout reflects the brand’s look and personality through sensory cues such as music, brand communication through the logo and tagline, the tempting product images, and a patterned background. The website design is exhibited in Figure 3-44.

Other applications

The same graphic standards and principles apply to other minor applications to reflect the brand’s consistent identity for all its elements. The brand’s standard colors, typography, and signature are clearly shown as an example of using the graphic standards to additional minor applications. An exhibited example is the coffee sleeve, a functional, transportable element used to protect the customers from the hot liquids in plastic cups. It also covers the plain plastic cup with the brand’s signature enhanced by the texture of the sleeve’s material. A proposed package design for the gelato is exhibited in the appendix as well.
CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSION

The goal of this thesis was to propose a brand prototype explaining the relationship between the sensory experience and the branding principles in a specialty food store environment. In this final chapter, the objectives and results of the thesis are summarized and evaluated. First, an overview of the research procedure is summarized. Second, a summary of the proposed prototype will be presented. Third, the result of the case study is discussed, and finally, the conclusion and implications for the research will be discussed followed by recommendations for future research.

Research Procedure

The research methodology adopted here is the qualitative research method. The research method is supported by the notion that the study is exploratory, and little has been written about the topic before this time. Sensory experience is one of the key goals of store planning and design. An understanding of the prototype explaining the relationship between the design factors and sensory experience as a whole is necessary.

The basis of this thesis is that branding in retail design is important and can be primarily induced by sensory experience. This research was conducted as an integrated study based on grounded theories. The research questions, hypotheses, and objectives were meaningful at the beginning of the study to help in guiding the author to the right path through the research. Three main bodies of literature were reviewed. The first part was retail branding, the second was sensory stimulation, and the third was retail graphics and identity systems. After reviewing the available literature and collecting essential data, the author
conducted different methods of analysis. First, an interview with the local franchise owner was conducted to collect thorough details about the brand. Second, frequent observations were held on site to observe the human interaction with the space. Third, the site was analyzed using the sensory slider tool to have an understanding on the sensory perception of the space and address current issues. Lastly, relevant case-studies in branding were reviewed and discussed. The collected data would form the basis for the author to design the specialty food store space for Chocolaterie Stam. The outcome of the expected design would be a sensory experience that would affect customers’ positive experience through their brand perception within the space.

The proposed prototype was then applied in an actual design process as a case study. The Chocolaterie Stam, located in Ames, Iowa was used as the case. The design process was performed using the collected data and information as its basis. It was also helpful to consider the prototype characteristics to enhance the sensory experience of customers in a retail setting. The proposed design was then presented at an exhibition to show the prototype and share the successfulness of applying it into a retail space.

**Summary of Design Case-Study**

The evaluation in this part concentrated on layout and spatial qualities of the space and eventually the sensory response to it. The store needed more circulation space and to have the sales counter as the focal point. The windows seating was made intimate by introducing the lower ceiling and accent colors which would appeal to people. The floor pattern, display tables and the view of the sales counter at the end made the entire transit through the main path visually interesting and make people want to explore the place more.
The sales counter and cash register served as a point of interest to customers and acted as a landmark. The space quality enhancers like a storage system, wall display units, and dropped ceiling with chandelier and pendant lights stimulated customers to stay and explore the space more. The neutral tone colors of interior finishes blended well with the building. They provided a good background to some accent colored features and artwork. The space design can stimulate and excite customers to spend their time in the store, and they would like to return to the space.

Conclusions and Implications

In this thesis, the author attempts to understand the holistic picture of sensory experience and branding relationship. The theories from business literature, human senses and interior design were integrated to develop a guideline for understanding this relationship. This was further applied to the case study.

Chocolate stores have served as places for fast shopping everywhere. The proposed store introduces the exact opposite of that. It not only provides a gathering and relaxation place, but also encourages social interaction and sharing musical interests. The study provides an opportunity for the author to explore how chocolate and sweets influences the life of Americans and how social activities relate to store consumers. From the design process, the author learned to view subjects from different perspectives. The author also gained tremendous knowledge in different areas of design, such as graphics, packaging, and computer applications. The study helps the author to acquire an understanding of branding and human senses, and its role in human interaction. The author developed sensitivity toward sensory perception and interior space interaction. The documentation of the design process
and knowledge gained through that process enhance the author’s aesthetics and design abilities in the matters of interior design and graphic design. The project also helps the author to express creative thinking through research, analysis, and conceptual development. As an international student, the study gives the author significant experience in overcoming cultural differences by understanding the factors influencing the behavior of American people and design standards. The study attempts to create for the community an environment from which people experience the pleasure of a good city life and to appreciate the value of sensory elements.

The finding of a proper case study for the design approach was based on the author’s personal experience with the store. Being a former customer, the author had experienced the brand by going through the existing environment and purchasing process. The feeling of a missing identity and an overwhelming amount of conflicting sensory inputs was sensed from the first visit. This made the store a candidate for the case study. During the design process, the program and functions of the store were carefully planned. Numerous sketches of forms based on site analysis were drawn to explore possible ways to meet the requirements of the functions. The interior and exterior spaces were studied through digital modeling to learn the appearance of the space and how lighting affects its colors and atmosphere. The final presentation focuses on a three-dimensional model generated and retouched by the computer programs, 3D Studio Max, AutoCAD, and Photoshop.

**Relationship to Practice**

The motivation for this thesis resides in the author’s long-term interest in retail design, and in retail stores being the trendiest places to frequent in the author’s home
country, Kuwait. While practicing in some interior design firms, the author became interested in project holders and their favor in retail stores. The author, via observations of shopping districts, learned that stores have a positive impact on the development of the community and its economy. Most literature reviews address branding and interior design separately. This thesis, as a result, combined an existing store with branding principles to enhance the brand ability to succeed over the competition. The project, consequently, offers a sensory environment in Ames to fill the needs of all human senses. Furthermore, it attracts people to Main Street. Thus helping to rejuvenate the city. The prototype might be used as a design guideline for store designers and marketers when creating a new brand identity through the application of environmental graphic, brand logo, typography, brand color, package design, and other graphic system components.

The final design shows the potential use of the prototype in other design applications that are essential to the positioning of brand and its perception through sensory experience. It helped identify the strengths and weakness of the existing design of the retail space for Chocolaterie Stam. It was relevant to controlling the design composition in advance and was an important tool in the design process. To conclude, the prototype helps in understanding the influence of design factors on sensory response. It provides a great position for further research in interior design and marketing fields. The prototype can be used in design education concerned with the development of creativity. Using feedback from the prototype, the case study can be developed further.
Future Recommendation

The effort to implement the design from the study has been enormously time-consuming. More design considerations, details, and space planning as well as detailed design of additional items with brand identity, such as tableware, letterhead, and business cards can be added for future study if more time is permitted. The empty space behind the store can be included in the design as a permanent exterior seating area, which creates an additional attraction and provides extra services for the customers.

The effect of two dependant variables, branding and sensory experience, can be further investigated and refined. Applying the findings in a quantitative type of research will verify the results of the research and be able to explore more details and their effect on consumers. The sensory slider tool can be the focus of further research to expand the potential of the tool and to create a new and dependable evaluation tool in the field. Therefore, it might be necessary and advantageous to conduct subsequent studies or quantitative studies on the past subjects for validation or further development.
APPENDIX A. DESIGN PROCESS

Figure A-1. Logo design process

Figure A-2. Package design progress
Figure A-3. Initial bubble diagram of the site

Figure A-4. Space program study
Figure A-5. Space layout study
Figure A-6. Space planning process
Figure B-1. Finished floor plan
Figure B-2. Storefront elevation

Figure B-3. Section 1

Figure B-4. Section 2
APPENDIX C. THESIS EXHIBITION

Retail Branding Through Sensory Experience: Local Case-Study at Chocolaterie Stam

By: Ahmed Alawadhi
Advisor: Prof. Jihyun Song

Introduction

When people plan to travel, they often add well-known shopping places to their to-do list, places like the Rain Forest Café at Mall of America, the ESPN Zone at Downtown Disney, and NASCAR Café at Universal Studios Citywalk. Do they prefer to visit such places because they need to purchase a particular product? Why do people prefer to shop at one place over the other? Why do people visit these places when they can order their products online at the convenience of their home? These are some of the common questions asked among storeowners, marketers, and store designers.

“...In a store, customers can see, hear, touch, smell, and taste products. These opportunities are more limited on a website.”

(Floor, 2006)

In a retail store customers can look and find products through sensory communications. They can hear background music and other sounds, at the same time they can smell the product aromas. They can touch all kinds of products, and taste or try them. All these sensory points influence the brand image, which is why stimulating all senses in a coordinated way is of utmost importance to every retail brand. An effective store design and visual merchandising approach can trigger all the consumer’s senses. Sensory association can additionally result in a strong emotional engagement and therefore provides a retail brand with an edge over the competition. After all, all the impulses of the five senses make up the brand experience.

The design and unique look of a retail store reflect the owner’s merchandising philosophy. Therefore, the retail store experience should draw customers’ attention and enhance their interactions through their sensory perception to create positive and memorable shopping experiences.

“Sensory experiences are immediate, powerful, and capable of changing our lives profoundly, but they are not used to their full extent in branding initiatives at the store level.”

(Gobe, 2001)

The purpose of this study is:

1. To examine the sensory experience of users, visitors, and employees within a store environment to find out any particular sense or combination of senses is most effective in producing a positive store identity and branded environment.

2. To integrate existing theories of branding related to the retail design practice.

3. To provide design guidelines with integrated graphic system that can be applied to other retail stores.

4. To propose a unified and stimulating prototype based on sensory analysis model as guidance for practitioners and educators to create efficiently a memorable, successful, and attractive store environments.

Figure C-1. Research introduction
Case-Study

The study was conducted on Chocolaterie Stam located in the heart and cultural district of Main Street at Ames, a small town in Iowa. The Main Street Cultural District in Ames was established on January 1, 2004 as the result of a 2-year local initiative to create a unique identity and focus for the downtown area. The presence of key cultural institutions in the Main Street area, along with unique, locally-owned businesses, made this a logical move.

In November, 2005, the Main Street Cultural District in Ames became an official, State of Iowa Certified Cultural and Entertainment District. Main Street accommodates popular annual events such as an Art Walk, a 4th of July Parade, a Festival of Trees, and walking tours to the main shops, including Chocolaterie Stam. The characteristic layout of this area makes it an ideal location for site selection for this hotspot to introduce the new brand represented by their popular product.

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### Sensory Analysis of Existing Site

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>Acoustical</th>
<th>Tactile</th>
<th>Olfactory</th>
<th>Taste</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Visual clutter</td>
<td>Sound system positioned at the two ends of the</td>
<td>Tactile interaction is a secondary</td>
<td>No odor at all</td>
<td>The sense exists</td>
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<td>sense in this space</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and type of furnishings,</td>
<td>Diverse types of music played from western and</td>
<td>Touch from high glass barrier</td>
<td>atmosphere results</td>
<td>area after sampling</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fabrics and finishes</td>
<td>symphonies</td>
<td>between customer and product</td>
<td>in diminished smell</td>
<td>the gelato and</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distraction of unintended</td>
<td>Musical performance in the weekends</td>
<td>Interference of multi-textured</td>
<td>Product is not</td>
<td>purchasing the</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>illumination</td>
<td>Customer's dialog</td>
<td>surfaces</td>
<td>made in-house</td>
<td>product</td>
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<td>Reflection from high glass</td>
<td>Change in flooring material</td>
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Figure C-2. Case-study introduction
Graphic Identity

Graphic identity is an important part of the brand. Consistent and proper application of the components elements within the graphic system will create a strong and unified presentation of the new brand identity. This unified image generates a high degree of recognition and promotes a positive image to the general public.

The graphic guidelines were developed to assist those who are responsible for implementation of Chocolaterie Stam Identity System. The guidelines were set to assure consistent quality in application of the Chocolaterie Stam System. Proper usage will promote the image of Chocolaterie Stam as a major, well-integrated brand.

Brand Signature: The tree symbol represents who is Chocolaterie Stam and what they do. It is a quick identifying symbol for the public that they can relate to Chocolaterie Stam Products. The two words “Chocolaterie Stam” make up the logotype. The logo type appears in the typeface Britannica Bold.

Packaging: The package is part of the brand experience. They are brands that we trust to take them into our homes. A discipline and coherent approach for the package design leads to a unified and powerful brand presence.

“Packaging contains more than a product- it contains the brand essence”
(Landa, 2005)

Typography: To create a consistent and recognizable look for the variety of products by Chocolaterie Stam, three type families have been chosen: Britannica Bold, Franklin Gothic Book, and Romantic. For body text, Franklin Gothic Book typeface should be used. Britannica Bold typeface should only be applied to headings. Romantic is used for special applications only.

Britannica Bold
Franklin Gothic Book
Romantic

Figure C-3. Graphic identity 1
Brochure: A brochure is an information tool and an extension of a brand’s identity. It makes it easy for customers to understand information and to buy the brand’s products and services. Designing a unified system ensures that the identity of the brand is consistently presented and communicates familiarity to the existing customer. A unified brochure system increased brand recognition and differentiate the brand from the competitions.

Menu Board: Communication in the environment provides another opportunity to support a brand. A menu board is another information tool. It makes it easy for customers to make a decision and buy the brand’s products. A unified look is necessary to ensure the consistency the brand’s communication and presentation.

Website: A web site is the next best thing to reality and sometimes more efficient, more user-friendly, and faster. The customer is in charge and engaged by the content, sound, movement, and color of the interactive brand experience, bringing the brand personality to life.

Other Applications: The same graphic standards and principles applies to other minor applications to reflects the brand’s consistent identity on all its elements.
Figure C-5. Space program and plans
Figure C-6. Elevations and sections
Design Proposal

Store Front

Before

After

Entrance

Before

After

Figure C-7. Proposed design – Storefront and entrance
Figure C-8. Proposed design – Major areas
Focused Areas

Environmental Graphic Feature
Branding Logo and Color
Storage System
Wall Display
Display Shelves
Package Design
Chocolate Scented Candles
Sensory Product/Musical Instrument
Seating Area

Figure C-9. Proposed design - Focused areas
Figure C-10. Materials and furniture selection
Figure C-11. Thesis exhibition

Figure C-12. Invitation card
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Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my patient and supportive wife, Maryam, who always stood by me with endless love. I would like to thank her for her support and encouragement throughout the entire process in addition to her unconditional love and encouragement that helped me overcome all the difficulties during my study.