

Business Environmental Design, Consumer Visual Literacy and Self-Concept

A thesis submitted to the College of Communication and Information of Kent State
University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts

by

Sarah Rutherford

December, 2012

Thesis written by

Sarah Rutherford

B.A., Truman State University, 2006

B.F.A., Truman State University, 2006

M.F.A., Kent State University, 2012

Approved by

Ken Visocky O'Grady, M.F.A., Advisor

AnnMarie LeBlanc, M.F.A., Director of the School of Visual Communication Design

Stanley T. Wearden, Ph.D., Dean, College of Communication and Information

Table of Contents

	Page
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
CHAPTERS	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Research Questions and Goals	2
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	4
Consumer Behavior	4
Visual and Mental Processing	11
Branding and Environment	16
III. RETAIL CASE STUDIES	23
Jcpenney	23
Paper Source	30
Menchie's	35
IV. METHODOLOGY	40
Research Statement	40
Research Design	40
V. FINDINGS	50
Survey 1: I Shop Therefore I Am	50
Survey 2: Shopping, Inside and Out	64
Interviews	67
VI. DISCUSSION	73
Implications	73
Suggestions for Future Research	75
VII. CONCLUSION	79

Table of Contents (continued)

APPENDICES

A. Survey Landing Page Text81
B. Consumer Interview Questions84

REFERENCES88

List of Figures

Figure	Page
1. 2011 and 2012 jcpenny logos.....	25
2. 2012 jcpenny promotional postcard.....	26
3. February 2012 jcpenny store photo.....	27
4. Sephora and MNG shops within jcpenny stores.....	28
5. Sample from the Paper Source Colorscope.....	30
6. Interior image from Paper Source in Studio City, CA.....	31
7. Exterior image from a Paper Source in Chicago and a product image from the company's website.....	32
8. Image of a poll about new paper designs from the Paper Source Facebook page.....	34
9. A screen shot from the Menchie's website featuring the Menchie's mascots.....	35
10. Screen shots from the Menchie's YouTube video, "Ella – Menchie's Mix Master".....	36
11. Interior image of a Menchie's store.....	38
12. The photo of Rozi's Wine and Spirits used in the surveys.....	43
13. A screen shot from the survey landing page.....	44
14. A graph displaying the number of "I Shop, Therefore I Am" survey participants by age.....	45
15. A graph displaying the number of "Shopping, Inside and Out" survey participants by age....	46
16. A graph displaying the responses to the questions "Where do you live?" and "Where would you like to live?" from the survey "I Shop, Therefore I Am".....	51

List of Figures (contd.)

Figure	Page
17. A graph displaying the responses to the question “Choose five words from the list below that would give someone who didn’t know you the most accurate representation of your personality” from the survey “I Shop, Therefore I Am”	52
18. Images of options for the grocery store, book store, and shoe store categories from “I Shop, Therefore I Am”	53
19. Images of options for the bakery, wine store, and coffee shop categories from “I Shop, Therefore I Am”	54
20. Images of options for the restaurant, men’s clothing store, and women’s clothing store categories from “I Shop, Therefore I Am”	55
21. Images of the top choices from each category from the survey “I Shop, Therefore I Am”	57
22. Images of the least-favorite choices from each category from the survey “I Shop, Therefore I Am”	58
23. Image revealing the matching interior and exterior of Nature’s Bin from the survey “Shopping, Inside and Out”	65
24. Image revealing the matching interior and exterior of Phoenix Coffee from the survey “Shopping, Inside and Out”	66
25. Image revealing the matching interior and exterior of 56 West from the survey “Shopping, Inside and Out”	67

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Kent State University School of Visual Communication Design faculty and staff for their support throughout the the process of my education in addition to the completion of my thesis. I would also like to thank my entire VCD MFA consort for their guidance while developing my thesis topic. Special thanks goes to Aimee Crane as an excellent and thorough survey tester (and general advisor) and to Amy Peck for helping the project feel less daunting.

I would also like to thank Dr. Carrie Berta for her academic counsel and perspective—she was invaluable to this process. I must also thank Katie Volin for the hours she devoted to editing this work with care and humor. And finally, I am so grateful to my family and to Ryan Kerr for their support and encouragement during this process.

Chapter I

Introduction

This thesis began as a meditation on urban retail exteriors. From my own experience living in Washington, D.C., I noticed that the stores that were appealing to me or that I frequented sometimes made out-of-town visitors uncomfortable and that after several years shopping at small boutiques and bodegas I often felt this same discomfort in shopping malls and among suburban streets pocked with large supermarkets. I was either overwhelmed by the environment or simply couldn't find what I was looking for. But what exactly was I "looking for"? I began to realize that a collection of exterior visual cues gave me clues about what experience I might have once inside a store or restaurant and that I made these types of evaluations all the time. The mere act of seeing a sign, exterior, or window put in motion a split-second process of testing these elements against other places I'd experienced and deciding if I liked the store or not.

I began to wonder if this process, so engrained in my mental process, was something that others did, too, and where those preferences came from. This led me to the large volume of consumer research on self-concept, the idea that every individual creates a construct of who they believe they are and that this guides behavior. Much of the self-concept literature focused on how consumers make decisions and even retail environment, but few researchers had approached this from the perspective of design, specifically, how the environmental design of a business affirms self-concept.

Research Questions and Goals

I saw this as an opportunity for research and began my investigation into connecting consumer behavior and retail design. I knew I would need some method of testing my theory that the identity and environmental design of a business, whether created intentionally or not, attracts customers because it affirms some aspect of the customer's self-concept, and began to explore online survey models. I ended up creating two surveys. In order to replicate the process of decision making when faced with a new store or choices between competitors, I constructed a photo-simulated shopping experience, guiding respondents through a series of retail and dining categories with four competitors in each category.

Brand personality emerged from my research as a clear mode of connecting a brand and audience, and I wanted to test consumers' ability to identify brand personality in a retail context and see if and how they could verbalize the elements of a brand. I also wanted to see if consumers form a picture of the interior environment of a business based on the brand elements of the exterior. To test these questions, I created a second survey with another set of simulated shopping experiences, but this time showed respondents the interior of a business and asked them to match the exterior from a series of four choices.

Because I wanted to see how individuals might talk about retail environments outside of the context of prescribed choices, I conducted four consumer interviews with volunteers from the surveys. I also hoped to learn more about how consumers make these decisions. Would the mental processing be consistent with my own experience and research on mental categories or would the participants articulate other motivations for their choices?

All in all, I was very pleased with the responses from both of the surveys and the

engagement of the interview participants. It appears consumers have a lot to say about their shopping and dining choices and exert clear preferences that may seem arbitrary until one connects these responses to larger patterns of behavior. The aim of this research is to explore the possibility of predictive choice related to self-concept. In other words, is it possible to know where an individual would prefer to shop or dine based on views of self? An additional goal is to understand how consumers develop preferences and how designers can tailor environments and exteriors to better communicate what experience the consumer will have once inside.

Chapter II

Review of Related Literature

The process of constructing a model for how consumers evaluate retail environments and how to tailor environments to these consumers is built upon several theories. It is first essential to understand what motivates consumers and how they make decisions. It is also helpful to understand the biological and mental processes at work that drive visual information processing. Decisions and behaviors occur in the context of visual or environmental stimulation, so it is important to know how environments affect people and what parts of the environment retailers can manipulate to reach consumers.

Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior consists of three distinct activities: “shopping, buying, and consuming” (Tauber, 1972, p. 46). The activities that surround this behavior are rooted in the notion that individuals shop for reasons beyond the acquisition of goods. If retailers can identify these motivations, they will possess a greater advantage to connect with their customers and secure long-term patronage (Tauber, 1972).

Researchers have employed a number of strategies in order to track, measure, evaluate and predict consumer behavior. If a retail business can predict how their consumers will respond, they can better modify the products and experience they sell to reflect the consumers’ desires, and in turn, stimulate buying activity.

Efforts have been made to profile consumers’ decision-making styles (Sproles, 1986), to predict purchase motivation (Sirgy, 1985), to connect self image to brand choice (Schenk,

1980), and to predict, influence, or control a myriad of other consumer behaviors. Researchers most often utilize quantitative measures to collect and interpret consumer data. Sproles (1986) identifies three methods of distinguishing consumer styles:

The psychographic/lifestyle approach, the consumer typology approach, and the consumer characteristics approach. The psychographic approach identifies over 100 characteristics relevant to consumer behavior.... The consumer typology approach attempts to define general consumer “types.” The consumer characteristics approach focuses on cognitive and affective orientations specifically related to consumer decision-making. (p. 268)

These methods give researchers and retailers a generalized view of who consumers are and the techniques that might be employed to reach them.

Purchasing behavior does not occur independent of the environment where goods are housed. Retail design affects consumer behavior because there are a host of mediating factors that influence consumer behavior beyond the need to purchase a specific object. Self-concept, and the desire to act in accordance with this concept, influences a range of human behaviors, including shopping decisions. As several of the above researchers have found, the study of consumer behavior is not complete without an analysis of the atmospheres in which this behavior occurs. If retailers want to influence consumer behavior, buying environments should be designed to connect with their customers (Kotler, 1973, p. 54).

One of the most basic elements of consumer behavior is the theory of self-concept. This theory holds that individuals have a holistic perception of themselves that establishes self and directs choices (Sirgy, 1982). The concept of self is generally thought to have multiple

dimensions: actual self, ideal self and social self. As Sirgy (1982) explains, “Actual self refers to how a person perceives herself; ideal self refers to how a person would like to perceive herself; and social self refers to how a person presents herself to others” (p. 287).

Individuals access their multiple selves at different times for different mental tasks or situations. The idea that context influences self-image and in turn, behavior, refers to situational self-image. The theory states that individuals choose which self they wish to present in different contexts and modify behaviors to present the desired self (Shenk, 1980). Schenk and Holman explain this phenomenon in the context of brand choice, arguing that consumers use brands to enhance self-image, but this presentation can easily be extended to store choice and behaviors within that store. For example, a dinner among friends might elicit a different self-image than a shopping trip to purchase a suit for a job interview. An individual among the comfort of friends might access the social self, but when making an aspirational purchase such as a new suit would access the ideal self.

The actual self, or how a person perceives himself, might be accessed in situations where presentation matters little to the individual. Dornoff (1972) suggests that:

The degree to which the motives are internalized determines which personal image is most important in explaining store selection. In a shopping situation where an individual’s behavior is routinized and selections are familiar, behavior is highly internalized, giving emphasis to the role of real self-image. (p. 46)

For activities an individual engages in frequently, such as shopping at a grocery store or drug store, Dornoff theorizes that the consumer will be less likely to be interested in what others think and will choose a location in line with their actual self image. As the novelty of the shopping

excursion increases, one might be more prone to present the ideal or social selves and choose a location that favors this expression (Dornoff, 1972, p. 51).

The ideal and social selves correspond to externalized behaviors—those that a individual might care if others are observing or modify in the presence of others. DeBotton (2006) suggests that satisfying the expression of these selves moves us farther away from the true, or actual, self and implicates environments as a factor in this distance (p. 106). But if the idea of situational self-image holds true, then these selves are all components of the complete self-concept. An individual's need for a sense of belonging, expressed through shopping at a trendy chain store, is still a part of that person's self, but his outlet manifests through the ideal self (Dornoff, 1972, p. 46).

The theory of self-consistency holds that an individual is motivated to act in accordance with his or her self concept (Sirgy, 1982, p. 287). This desire to complete actions that affirm the self concept is what prompts feelings of discomfort when entering an environment that does not affirm some aspect of the self-concept. Self-consistency applies to consumer behavior in that it mediates the purchase of goods and shopping behavior with the self-image belief (Sirgy, 1982, p. 290). Although there is often a function of utility in the acquisition of goods, the act of shopping affords certain satisfactions to the individual outside of the need for a tube of toothpaste, or a can of soup (Tauber, 1972).

The desire to belong, among others or to oneself, is a powerful motivator of human behavior. Environments afford individuals the opportunity to remove some of the burden of self-projection by relying on the qualities and associations of an environment to affirm self-concept (deBotton, 2006, p. 107). From a consumer standpoint this might translate to intimidation in

certain environments, or feelings of superiority in others (Martineau, 1958, p. 48). Sirgy (2000) presents that:

Shoppers are motivated to protect their personal identities. They may feel uncomfortable if they see themselves patronizing a store that is not reflective of their true selves. For example, a working class shopper is likely to feel uncomfortable in an upscale department store. This is because this behavior is perceived as inconsistent with her perception of who she truly is. (p. 130)

Consumers form images of stores that direct purchase decisions (Mazursky, 1986). These images are based on several factors, some relating to the physical appearance of a store, others related to psychological factors (Lindquist, 1974; Martineau, 1958). These factors relate to “attitudes, opinions, and symbolic meanings they [attach] to some of the intangible attributes of a store—friendliness, fashionableness, prestigiousness, reliability, and courtesy” (Dornoff, 1972, p. 45) as well as the typical shopper of a store. Consumers are most likely to shop at stores that demonstrate a match to their expectations, either those relating to the functional attributes or the less tangible elements of store image.

The physical attributes of a store, as well as its staff and policies, contribute to the image of the store in the consumer’s mind. Physical attributes include: merchandise layout and architecture, colors, windows, displays, music, and lighting. There are other factors at work too: sales personnel, convenience, and promotions (Lindquist, 1974; Martineau, 1958; Sirgy, 2000). These elements signify more than the availability and quality of merchandise, they communicate a symbolic message of acceptance or potential discomfort. Through observation and association a customer will know if he cannot afford to shop at a store or would feel more comfortable

elsewhere (Martineau, 1958).

Store location also gives cues to consumers about what they might find inside or who typically shops there. As Sirgy (2000) explains:

A store located in a poor neighborhood signals to shoppers that the typical store patrons may be poor or working class. Similarly, a store located in an upscale residential community may signify that its store patrons are upscale. A store located in a certain ethnic neighborhood may make a statement too—that it caters to that ethnic population.

(p. 129)

Once inside, there are a number of manifestations of the physical attributes of retail interiors that influence a customer's perception: types of lighting, fluorescent or ambient; flooring, plush carpet or concrete floors; colors, primary reds and blues or soft neutrals. Each of these elements influence the impression of merchandise quality, service quality, and the overall kind of experience a consumer might have (Baker, 1994, p. 329).

The physical elements of a store are not the only factors that contribute to the image of that store in a consumer's mind. Shoppers are also aware of the types of individuals that usually patronize stores, known as the retail patron image (Sirgy, 2000). This image can be based direct observation of a store's patrons or on cues picked up from the environment, exterior, or location of a store. Additionally, retail patron images can be based on actual users or idealized users, those pictured in advertising and elsewhere (D. Aaker, 1996).

There are two types of matching that consumers experience when considering retail environments: functional congruity and self-congruity. Functional congruity relates to a connection between the utilitarian expectations of a given store and self-congruity relates to

a match between the consumer's self-concept and the retail patron image (Sirgy, 1991; Sirgy, 2000). In other words, customers are looking for either a match between their expectations for products, environment, etc., or a relation between how they view themselves and who they expect to shop at a given store. The greater the match, the more likely a consumer will have a favorable perception of the store and thus will be more likely to patronize it.

Much of the consumer research literature focuses on the motivating connection between self image and store (or brand) image and suggests that the connection between self and store is not only an opportunity for a consumer to be satisfied with a purchase, but also an opportunity to express their personality through choice (Arora, 2009; Dornoff, 1972; Martineau, 1958). In his research on the effects of congruity, however, Sirgy (1991) found that functional congruity is "more predictive of consumer behavior than self-congruity" but that self-congruity influences functional congruity (p. 373). If a consumer has a negative image regarding the typical shoppers of a store, she is more likely to believe that that store will not carry the goods she is seeking.

It is possible though, that this desire for functional congruity shifts with the socioeconomic status of the consumer. Individuals in lower income brackets will seek stores with functionality in mind: price, convenience, organization, etc. Those with greater wealth may be less concerned with these attributes, instead seeking a status-experience and an affirmation of their personal style and philosophies (Martineau, 1958). Consider a grocery store. While a lower-middle-class mother with children may value organic produce and gourmet foods, her need to shop within a budget, and find a store she knows will accommodate this, will be her primary concern. Contrast her with a childless couple with two sizable incomes. This couple may have greater financial freedom to shop at a store that will affirm their "foodie" status with a selection

of gourmet items in a trendy shopping district. Both sets of consumers are making shopping decisions based on what is important to them and both might feel uncomfortable patronizing the others' stores because the image would be inconsistent with their own self-concepts.

Visual and Mental Processing

The basic elements of response to an environment begin with sensory responses. An individual cannot express oneself through store choice without first processing the elements that make up the environment: at a fundamental level involving colors and textures and through increasingly complex responses related to judgments about the atmosphere, location, and other shoppers. Smells and sounds contribute to these responses, but the most prevalent factor in an individual's response to environment is visual processing. Visual cues provide key information about an environment and its contents.

Research on visual perception and learning supports that individuals recognize shapes and patterns first and then apply meaning in terms of learned information (Ware, 2008; Wheeler, 2006, p. 9). There are two types of visual processing: the first, called bottom-up, involves the filtration of information from meaningless features to patterns, and then to recognizable objects. The second, called top-down, or attentional processing, adds the "spotlight of attention" to the visual process, accepting only that information that corresponds to an individual's desired elements in a visual search (Ware, 2008, p. 23, 8-10).

At the most elemental level of visual processing, patterns are formed into objects and then connected to concepts. Ware explains that the "momentary binding together of visual information with nonvisual concepts and action priming is central to what it means to perceive

something” (Ware, 2008, p. 11). A collection of textures and lines might form into the concept of “sidewalk,” which will prompt the notions of “hardness” and “walking.” Situational factors such as a sheen that denotes the concept of ice (another pattern-test-response process) in the winter will prompt additional concepts such as “slippery” and the need to walk slowly.

The process of pattern search and recognition is repeated in several stages of visual information processing and can be connected to cognitive and behavioral action. Ware notes that “it is possible to think of intelligence in general as a collaboration of pattern-finding processors” and that “response patterns are the essence of the skills that bind perception to action” (Ware, 2008, p. 12). In the above example, the visual pattern test relates to the perception of the sidewalk and the response pattern relates to walking.

These basic concepts can be applied to increasingly complex situations in the form of nested loops. At the top level lies the need for problem solving, which results in a visual pattern search and concludes in testing patterns against acquired knowledge (Ware, 2008, p. 14). Ware (2008) provides this example:

“Suppose I enter a supermarket produce section looking for oranges. My brain will tune my low-level feature receptors so that orange things send a stronger signal than patches of other colors. From this, a rough map of potential areas where there may be oranges will be constructed. Another part of my brain will construct a series of eye movements to all the potential areas on this spatial map. The eye movement sequence will be executed with a pattern processor checking off those areas where the target happened to be mangoes, or something else, so that they are not visited again. This process goes on until either oranges are found, or we decide they are probably hidden from view.” (p. 14)

When an individual is setting out to accomplish a task, attentional processing limits search criteria and, in turn, what patterns are tested and objects are perceived: in the above example, first the color orange, and then the physical object of oranges. This might be followed by the response pattern of walking to the desired object and picking it up, or abandoning the task all together.

In terms of an even broader goal, such as looking for a specific kind of store, the processing loops will be activated for a series of increasingly specific tasks until the desired match has been found. If the problem-solving task in this instance would be looking for a clothing store, an individual will look for elements that signify the kind of store he or she is looking for (based on mood or goals), activating the visual pattern search. Returning to the previous example of buying a suit for an interview, the interviewee might be looking for visual elements that signify a store will carry business clothes and personalized service. In the pattern testing stage, the individual will then evaluate each store within the visual search field for elements that signify the desired features of business clothes and personalized service. This may translate to building materials, typefaces, store size, etc. The loops continue as the individual makes a choice and sets out for the goal of entering the store, searching for patterns that signify “door,” “handle” and so on.

Individuals learn to distinguish visual stimuli through exposure. As Ware notes, “Any images that we see and process to some extent prime the visual pathways involved in their processing” (Ware, 2008, p. 118). Exposure to edges, shapes, and the textures of wood solidify the concept of “table” separate from “chair.” Exposure to letters leads to the ability to recognize words. Exposure to many different styles of letters leads to the ability to recognize typefaces.

At the cognitive level, much of the pattern testing that involves a goal of evaluation or action relies on mental categories to quickly process information. In terms of categorization, individuals create cognitive structures that integrate existing information into more useful and streamlined units that allow them to easily process new information. They use these structures to direct attention based on interesting patterns of information. Cohen identifies such structures as “schemas” and explains that when action is required, these schemas enable individuals to make evaluations based on mental categories (Cohen, 1982). For example, if an individual is looking for a convenience store, his choice is based on previous experience with other such stores—part of this is visual, part is experiential. He has formed evaluative categories based on these experiences (“fast,” “has good coffee,” “unfriendly staff,” etc.) and will tune his attention to the type of store he is seeking.

There are two types of categories: common categories and ad hoc categories. Common categories might be called universal. They come to mind often (i.e., “car,” “house,” “cat”), include a graded structure of membership (a ranch style home is more typical of “house” than a trailer home), and are easily agreed upon from person to person. Ad hoc categories differ in that they are unique to individuals and connected to a goal (Barsalou, 1983). Categories become more concrete in a person’s mind because “objects that are frequently encountered as instances of the category are perceived to be representative of the category” (Nedungadi, 1985, p. 498).

In a way, all categories are goal-driven. Both common and ad hoc categories are used by the brain to quickly and easily process information. It is as useful to recognize a glass from the category of “drinking vessels” as it is to identify a takeout restaurant as a “place I want to order from.” The first example is a common category, and the second an ad hoc evaluative category. By

knowing which category a given target falls within, an individual can exert less mental energy by predicting as many properties as possible about that object, place, or person (Cohen, 1982).

Ad hoc categories come with the additional distinction of individualized action. Most people will recognize a glass as something to drink from, but will have great variation of thought concerning the acceptability of a given takeout restaurant.

Emotion differentiates common categories from those that are unique to an individual mental process. Most people within a given cultural construct will be able to differentiate objects based on the categories of “restaurant,” “chair,” and “person.” But emotion will dictate the individual categorization of “expensive restaurant,” “comfortable chair,” and “friendly person” (Cohen, 1982). These emotion-driven, ad hoc categories speed information processing for the individual (Barsalou, 1983; Cohen, 1982; Nedungadi, 1985).

Prototypicality, or “measure of how representative an object is of a category” is central to the formation and utilization of categories (Nedungadi, 1985, p. 498). Though writing centuries before the advent of consumer research, essayist John Hume (1711-1776) identified the key components of categorization and the typicality of given elements. He postulated that one object (or person or location) will evoke innumerable sentiments among observers and that none of these sentiments are inherent to the object itself. The preference for specific objects lies in the individual assessment. He writes:

On the contrary, a thousand different sentiments, excited by the same object, are all right: Because no sentiment represents what is really in the object. It only marks a certain conformity or relation between the object and the organs or faculties of the mind; and if that conformity did not really exist, the sentiment could never possibly have

being. Beauty is no quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty.” (Hume, 1965, p. 6)

This preference is not innate, but instead is built from exposure. The patterns and objects learned through visual processing form in an individual’s mind the prototypical representatives of particular categories (Nedungadi, 1985). Someone who has lived in a rural area her entire life may not be comfortable with the sights and sounds of urban existence because the notion of “street” formed from her experience with open roads is very different from a bustling urban street.

It can be broadly suggested that preference, or liking, is built upon exposure to specific elements. There are a host of experiential factors at work when an individual identifies a “good” takeout restaurant or “expensive” shoe. The pattern testing that an individual uses to identify desirable things is built upon what that individual has experienced, the identification of common categories, the categories he has then formed based on emotion and the desire to engage with or avoid a given target.

Branding and Environment

Brand personality refers to “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (J. Aaker, 1997, p. 347). This includes not only personality traits like humor and sentimentality but also lifestyle and demographic traits like gender, age and socioeconomic class (D. Aaker, 1996, p. 141-42). Some brand personality traits are subjective and are colored by the experience of the individual consumer, but others can be easily agreed on; for example, most consumers would perceive Nike as “athletic.” And in fact, the symbolic use of a brand like Nike—customers

use the brand because they, too, want to feel athletic—is possible because of the personality traits associated with the brand (J. Aaker, 1997, p. 347). Not only do consumers perceive the personality characteristics of brands, but the use of, or association with, a brand “[provides] a vehicle for customers to express their own personality” (D. Aaker, 1996, p. 173).

Brand personality is only one aspect of the associations in a consumer’s mind that build the whole impression of the brand. There are two fundamental aspects of brand perception, the identity the brand presents to the consumer and how the consumer perceives this identity (D. Aaker, 1996, p. 25). Brand identity represents a range of brand associations that the brand strives to create or maintain. As D. Aaker (1996) notes, “These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organization members” (p. 68).

Just as an individual’s personality is one aspect of their identity, brand personality is one of the associations that make up brand identity. An individual’s identity is built of not only their personality, but also how they see themselves, how they behave around others, their job, age, where they live, etc. Just as a personality is the basis for interpersonal connection, brand personality allows consumers to connect with a given brand. In the same way it would be difficult to connect with a person over one aspect of his identity, say age, consumers do not form meaningful relationships with brands over one aspect of the brand identity. A consumer does not use Kodak simply because the company has been around since the 1800s, they may use the brand because of its wide availability, reputation for quality, or product innovations (D. Aaker, 1996, p. 2-7).

Brand personality gives consumers an opportunity to express their own personality, but Sirgy argues that, “For a product to have personality associations, it has to be purchased

and/or consumed conspicuously or visibly” (1982, p. 288). D. Aaker (1996) adds that in order for a brand personality to be effective it should be “desirable and important enough to matter to the person using the brand” (p. 157). The brand identity cannot exist without the addition of customer perception. A company can create and advertise a product, but the brand has no strength without the associations placed on the brand by the consumer.

There are many factors that contribute to the perception of a brand’s personality. Any situational associations—where it is seen, how often it is seen, who is using it—are factors in creating a brand’s personality (D. Aaker, 1996, p. 145; J. Aaker, 1997, p. 348). Other key contributors include any colors, shapes, and graphic styles applied to the brand. Use also contributes to the perception of brand personality, according to D. Aaker (1996): “Users will perceive a brand to have a strong personality, whereas nonusers may not” (p. 142).

Many of these associations can be created and directed by those controlling the brand identity. The resulting personality can also be measured. Applying similar methods to the development of the Big Five human personality factors, J. Aaker found that consumers perceive brands to have “five distinct personality dimensions: Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness” (J. Aaker, 1997, p. 353). Each brand dimension is built from a number of factors that enrich its associations:

Sincerity: down-to-earth, honest, wholesome, cheerful

Excitement: daring, spirited, imaginative, up-to-date

Competence: reliable, intelligent, successful

Sophistication: upper class, charming

Ruggedness: outdoorsy, tough

(J. Aaker, 1997, p. 352)

In the same way that human personalities can be summed up from among the five factors, brand personalities can be reduced to a similarly concise list. J. Aaker (1997) developed these personality dimensions because she believed that brands could not accurately be described using the existing human personality. She also notes that the brand personality dimensions were distilled from a list of largely positive qualities because consumers tend to view brands in a positive light. (J. Aaker, 1997, p. 350).

Because brand use can be an outlet for self-expression, consumers will be drawn to brands whose personalities are similar or complement their own. J. Aaker (1997) found, though, that brand personality dimensions do not apply universally to consumers:

[Brand] personality dimensions might operate in different ways or influence consumer preference for different reasons. For example, whereas Sincerity, Excitement, and Competence tap an innate part of human personality, Sophistication and Ruggedness tap a dimension that individuals desire but do not necessarily have. (p. 353)

Supporting the theory of self-consistency that states individuals want to behave in ways consistent with their self-concept (Sirgy, 1982, p. 287), consumers will feel uncomfortable interacting with brands that exist outside their notion of self and fulfilled by associating with those brands that “fit” within the one of the aspects of self-concept (actual, ideal or social selves) (D. Aaker, 1996, p. 154). If consumers are using brands to express some aspect of their personality, they will be drawn only to those brands consistent with their view of self.

In the context of buying and consumer behavior, the retail environment is a key feature of the consumer experience and the associations they make with a given store or brand. A market

saturated with a myriad of retail options has forced retailers to focus on aspects of differentiation, rather than just supply of product (Kotler, 1973). One of the ways retailers can differentiate themselves from competitors is by crafting a unique retail environment and store experience. Creating such places requires that retailers emphasize design “both in terms of the quality of the finished store but also the holistic problem solving approach to arrive at a designed solution” (Kent, 2007, p. 735). In many cases it is not the product that draws customers, but the store experience (Kent, 2007, p 734; Kotler, 1973, p. 48).

Any elements within a retail environment can be said to encompass the store experience, whether intentionally designed or not, but retail design is a distinct field that consists of store layout and branded elements applied to a space. These branded elements, or graphics, perform a range of functions from identifying signage, to product information and customer inspiration, to designed elements that help reinforce the brand (Calver, 2003, p. 10). These elements can be executed across building exteriors, interior atmosphere, and store windows (Kotler, 1973, p. 63).

Inherent in the application of brand identity elements to a space is the influence of brand personality on the store experience. A consumer’s notion of a brand personality will influence her perception of the retail experience. Retail personality is distinct from brand personality in that it encompasses more than symbolic brand associations and also includes environment, location, and typical users (the retail patron image) (Sirgy, 2000). In the same way that brands without a distinct personality will not form a distinct picture in the consumer’s mind, retail environments that lack a definable personality do not become dominant stores. They are like “a dull person” (Martineau, 1958, p. 50).

Aside from providing a distinct experience for consumers, retail design can influence

purchase decisions. As Sherman notes (1997), “The shopper who goes to the store because she or he likes the environment may unexpectedly spend more money as a result of a positive-mood-inducing atmosphere in a store” (p. 374).

The mood of a consumer once inside a retail environment is influenced by a range of factors including her perception of the brand. The environment itself though also has power to create an emotional response. And in fact, Darden and Babin (1994) note that “retail store image, or personality, is more fully explained by including perceptions of affective as well as functional quality” (p. 106), meaning that in order to get an accurate picture of a retail environment in a consumer’s mind, an analysis of retail personality should include an assessment of the emotion-inducing qualities of the space in addition to the utilitarian aspects. This emotion can be categorized as the first response consumers have to the environment, influenced not only by brand personality, but also lighting, architecture, smell and temperature (Darden and Babin, 1994, p. 101).

Kotler (1973) also notes the importance of emotion in the store environment, stating that “Atmosphere may serve as an affect-creating medium. The colors, sounds, and textures of the establishment may directly arouse visceral reactions that contribute favorably to purchase probability” (p. 54). Interior space not only has the ability to evoke emotion, but to enhance the emotional experience through manipulation of the space (deBotton, 2006, p. 121).

An emotional response is not useful to a retailer without the ability to prompt thought or behavior in the consumer, whether that involves solidifying the brand personality or increasing the likelihood of purchase. Donovan and Rossiter (1982) found that retail interiors create emotional responses in consumers that lead to either approach or avoidance behaviors. These

approach and avoidance behaviors can be translated to a range of actions including “liking of the store, enjoyment of shopping in the store, willingness to spend time in the store, willingness to explore the environment, feelings of friendliness to others, willingness to return, and likelihood of spending more money than intended” (p. 285). In other words, that the emotion or feeling generated by an environment has an effect on shopping behavior (Darden and Babin, 1984, p. 107).

Chapter III

Retail Case Studies

In order to identify the elements of brand personality and retail experience in practice, three case studies on the retailers, jcpenny, Paper Source, and Menchie's are presented. Because so much of brand identity is audience directed, it is possible to paint an accurate picture of the personality and experiences surrounding a brand as well as the retailer's intentions through observation. Jcpenny has undergone an identity overhaul since Ron Johnson, formerly of Apple, took over as CEO. While the brand has aspirations to augment their target audience, they currently serve as a middle-market department retailer with 1,100 locations across the country found in shopping malls and, in small-town markets, as freestanding stores (jcpenny, n.d.). A retail chain focused on specialty paper and craft supplies, Paper Source serves as an example of a high-end specialty retailer because of its specialized product offerings, price point, and locations in high-end markets. Menchie's is a rapidly-expanding frozen yogurt franchise focused on family values and a consistent, engineered experience. The chain, founded in 2007 has 230 locations and another 250 in development across the world (Menchie's, n.d.-a). Each of these examples provides a unique look into how retail brands are engineered and marketed.

jcpenny

Jcpenny has experienced a radical overhaul since Ron Johnson took over as CEO in November of 2011. The store's perception as a value department store provided an inflexible identity that left the company struggling to compete with or distinguish itself from chains like Macy's and Kohl's. In past years, with an outdated identity, forgettable store environment,

endless barrage of sales, and selection of mostly proprietary brands, the store felt less like a destination and more like a shopper's last resort. Once associated with the refreshing newness of Helvetica with a logo designed by Unimark in the mid-1960s, the limping chain was grasping for a new identity (Mangan, 1976, p. 43). The company stumbled last year after sourcing a new logo from a competition of employees, design firms, and two design schools (jcpenny, 2011; jcpenny, 2012b).

The winning logo design, created by a student at the University of Cincinnati, was implemented among patchy brand language that showed little innovation or commitment to overarching change. It seemed that jcpenny was applying a Band-Aid to its identity problem; as though the brand wanted to initiate change simply by saying they were changing. A sample from a 2011 press release announcing the logo demonstrates this: "The fresh, bold design is the most meaningful update to the Company's logo in 40 years. It signifies the Company's great progress in creating a more exciting and relevant shopping experience" (jcpenny, 2011). Aside from the logo, there were few alterations to the store experience. The brand was stuck in what D. Aaker calls the Brand Position Trap (1996, p. 71). Rather than starting with a dynamic position for the brand, the company was searching for this stance as they applied a new identity.

Because the store experience was mired in blandness, the company would have to create a new experience to control the perception of its identity. Compare the language above with a quote from a February 2012 press release announcing the newest jcpenny identity: "Over the next few years, jcpenny stores will transform its sales floor into a dynamic collection of 100 Shops... jcpenny is on an exciting journey to build the first specialty department store of its kind by creating an unforgettable retail experience that will forever change the way America shops"

(jcpenny, 2012b). In addition to this radical change, the company initiated a subtle alteration of the brand's position from "America's favorite shopping destination" to "America's favorite store" (jcpenny, 2011; 2012b). See Figure 1 for a comparison of the 2011 and 2012 logos.

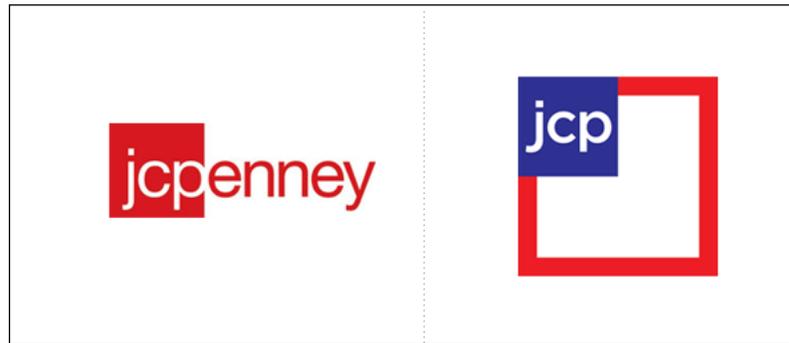


Figure 1. 2011 and 2012 jcpenny logos. Adapted from "Jcpenny nails the American Look" [blog post], 2012.

While the 2011 identity sought to influence change with a "fresh, bold design," the 2012 rollout has been ushered in among sweeping changes to the company's advertising, store concept, sales cycle, and brand offerings. The chain even hired a spokesperson, Ellen DeGeneres. The company shared in a 2012 press release that "we couldn't think of a better partner to help us put the fun back into the retail experience" (jcpenny, 2012a). D. Aaker notes that spokespeople help create a user imagery for a brand, "because the user is already a person and thus the difficulty of conceptualizing the brand personality is reduced." (1996, p. 147). By aligning itself with a spokesperson with "great warmth and a down-to-earth attitude," jcpenny helped its customers understand what the shopping experience will be like (jcpenny, 2012a).

With the new design, the company is actively changed the jcpenny brand experience.

Instead of asking its customers to create brand associations based on a new logo alone, jcpenny has engineered its experience and the associations customers have with the brand. Initially introduced with a series of ads featuring DeGeneres, the company followed up with print ads educating customers about the new pricing cycle and their “fair and square” mantra (jcpenny, 2012b) (see Figure 2). In the store, customers were greeted by large, colorful photos with close zooms on products, new store signage, and displays featuring the squares motif (see Figure 3).



Figure 2. 2012 jcpenny promotional postcard. Adapted from “Jcpenny nails the American Look” [blog post], 2012.



Figure 3. February 2012 jcpenny store photo. Adapted from “Jcpenney nails the American Look” [blog post], 2012.

The company had experimented with a “store within a store” concept beginning with Sephora Inside J.C. Penney starting in 2006 and the MNG line that launched in 2010 (Sephora, 2006, jcpenny, 2010) (see Figure 4 for examples of the Sephora and MNG shops). However, with the identity launch, the company promised this concept as the beginning of a new “Main Street” store experience that organized brands into segregated retail areas called “The Shops,” the first of which launched in August 2012. If this new approach to a controlled brand experience marked by partnerships with name appeal seems familiar, it is because it is likely a result of a range of new hires in the company’s strategic departments. To prepare for the restructuring, jcpenny assembled a team of brand and design experts from many leading companies, most notably retail design leaders Target and Apple. Brian Robinson, the VP of marketing and design partnerships, formerly held the role at Target, and Mike Fisher, the SVP of visual presentation joined jcpenny from Apple (jcpenny, 2012c).



Figure 4. Sephora and MNG shops within jcpenny stores. Adapted from “J.C. Penney Opening ‘Hip’ In-Store Shops” [blog post], 2012 and “JCPenney Plans New Stores and Renovations at Existing Stores” [blog post], 2010.

The jcpenny brand personality is certainly still evolving, but the following attributes can be applied from J. Aaker’s brand personality construct to the store experience, brand language, products, and imagery. The components that make up the new brand are: down-to-earth, honest, wholesome, cheerful, spirited, up-to-date, and reliable.

D. Aaker (1996) states that part of the reason consumers connect with brands is the value

those brands bring to their lives. He identifies three benefits that make up this value proposition: functional benefits, emotional benefits and self-expressive benefits (p. 95). The functional benefits of the jcpenny brand are fashionable clothes at a good price, easy to navigate, conveniently located. The emotional benefits include an enjoyable store experience and being ahead of the curve by shopping at a store that formerly had “value” associations. The brand also allows customers to express their personal style and become a brand ambassador for the new store experience.

D. Aaker (1996) notes that the brand position “is the part of the brand identity and value proposition that is to be actively communicated to the target audience.” (p. 71). The positioning statement allows stakeholders to engage with and promote a brand in a consistent manner. It also identifies the heart of a brand and a position that all brand decisions should emanate from. Positioning statements give brands a unified mission and litmus to test any communication that will engage the audience. If an action is consistent with the positioning statement, it supports the brand identity.

While positioning statements are typically internal documents, a consumer can glean a rich picture of a company’s intentions through their communication, imagery, shoppers, etc. A proposed positioning statement for the jcpenny brand follows:

jcpenny is changing its entire outlook to become “America’s favorite store.” The Shops feature classic American designs and exciting collaborations at fair and square prices. Customers can depend on jcpenny to provide an easy, stylish shopping experience.

Paper Source

Disclosure: I was employed by Paper Source from 2006-2007 as a Custom Consultant and from 2006-2008 as a workshop instructor, both in the Washington, D.C. store.

Paper Source is a national retail chain and online store that sells specialty paper, crafts, and gifts. Paper Source invites their customers to live their credo, “Do something creative every day” which can be found on their website, shopping bags, store walls, shipping boxes, and all printed materials. In addition to its supply of quirky gifts and fine papers, the chain is known for its proprietary color palette that saturates product displays and extends to wall colors and furnishings (see Figures 5 and 6). These colors are a primary component of the Paper Source experience. While many of the types of products Paper Source supplies can be found elsewhere, their colors and aesthetic, as well as the store experience, are a central selling point of the Paper Source brand.



Figure 5. Sample from the Paper Source Colorscope. Available in stores and online, the Colorscope displays the Paper Source color palette and a corresponding horoscope for each color. Retrieved from http://www.paper-source.com/pdfs/colorsscope_0109.pdf



Figure 6. Interior image from Paper Source in Studio City, CA. Adapted from “Paper Lover’s Heaven: Paper Source” [blog post], 2010.

Founded in Chicago in 1983 by Sue Lindstrom, the store focuses on larger urban markets in wealthy areas (Paper Source, n.d.-a). In addition to carrying paper and craft supplies, Paper Source has a proprietary line of customizable invitations and stationery and offers a series of workshops and special events, such as the Paper Wedding, which takes place in the spring (See Figure 7).

Paper Source distributes a seasonal catalog that showcases new products and collections, workshops and, on occasion, new solid paper colors. Customers can sign up to receive the catalog in store or online and store employees are instructed to ask each customer if they’re on the mailing list. The catalog is not designed to serve as an ordering tool, but instead as an outlet for Paper Source to highlight their products and services. It is a reminder of the Paper Source brand that connects customers to the store experience.



Figure 7. Exterior image from a Paper Source in Chicago and a product image from the company's website. Retrieved from http://www.paper-source.com/cgi-bin/paper/locations/il_southport.html and <http://www.paper-source.com/cgi-bin/paper/about/index.html>

The chain does not have store-wide sales, but does discount seasonal or outdated merchandise and offers online promotions like free shipping (Kristen, 2012). Largely though, the Paper Source brand and products are unique and exclusive enough to allow the retailer to avoid sale cycles.

The “Do something creative every day” credo empowers and promises that customers can live in their own Paper Source environment by fostering daily creativity. As many customers are lured by the proprietary colors and unique company aesthetic, it also suggests that the chain is the best-suited retailer to help customers accomplish this task.

Lively customer engagement is a core extension of the brand's personality. Associates go through frequent trainings on new product and are encouraged to attend store workshops. The well-trained staff is instructed to engage customers and demonstrate product features rather than directly selling products. The sales philosophy behind this is that by connecting with the

store's friendly, knowledgeable staff, customers will be eager to recreate the experience at home. The chain also holds weekly nationwide demo days featuring instruction on short projects and workshops in which customers sit with other creative-minded people and receive in-depth instruction from a Paper Source instructor. Customers are greeted when they enter the store and thanked upon leaving, regardless of whether they have made a purchase. A reflection of the bright interior and original designs, Paper Source staff play a key role in connecting customers to the brand.

This engagement extends online through a variety of outlets. In addition to offering their full product range on the company's website, Paper Source features a section on "how to & workshops" in the main navigation. On this page customers can find the workshop schedule, various demos and links to the company's blog and YouTube channel. Paper Source also engages its customers on Pinterest, Twitter and Facebook. As of October 2012, the company has 10,282 followers on Pinterest, 15,938 followers on Twitter and 35,751 likes on Facebook (Paper Source, n.d.-b; Paper Source, n.d.-d; Paper Source, n.d.-c). In addition to posting project photos and inspiration on Facebook, Paper Source has allowed customers to vote on new paper designs and even new paper colors (See figure 8).

The company's inviting atmosphere, approachable language and cheeky gifts bring to mind the following facets of J. Aaker's brand personality framework: down-to-earth, cheerful imaginative, and charming. The dimensions that represent these facets would be sincerity (down-to-earth, cheerful), excitement (imaginative) and sophistication (charming). It is these personality elements that resonate with customers, energizing them to "do something creative every day." If the Paper Source brand personality connects with its customers the call to "do something creative

every day” translates as encouraging rather than demanding. Customers want to participate in order to maintain contact with the cheerful and charming brand.



Figure 8. Image of a poll for new paper colors from the Paper Source Facebook page. Adapted from “Hoots to All You Night Owls!” [Facebook post], 2012.

The Paper Source brand offers several benefits to its customers that make up its value proposition. At the most basic level, the functional benefit of shopping at Paper Source is acquiring high-quality paper and craft supplies that enhance creativity. Compounding on that, the emotional benefits give customers an improved life and happy and playful feelings. The self-expressive benefits extend to creating something beautiful, personal creative expression and sharing gifts and projects with others.

Working from the company’s promotional materials, website and store experience, the following brand positioning statement can be applied:

Paper Source is a fun, imaginative retail chain and online store specializing in paper, crafts and unique gifts. The brand is unique due to their collection of Paper Source colors and

original product designs and paper patterns. Their products give anyone the tools and knowledge to “do something creative every day.”

Menchie’s

Menchie’s is an international frozen desert franchise founded in Valley Village, California, in 2007 by husband & wife team Danna & Adam Caldwell over “their common love of frozen yogurt “(Menchie’s, n.d.-a). Menchie’s build-it-yourself philosophy allows customers to create their own custom frozen yogurt “mix” by choosing unlimited flavors from their yogurt wall topped with a range of cereal, candy, fresh fruit and sauces. All yogurt cups are paid for by weight. The quickly expanding chain caters to families with its bright interiors, range of cartoon mascots (See figure 9), and an environment that the company deems, “the smiliest frozen yogurt experience” (Menchie’s, 2012).



Figure 9. A screen shot from the Menchie’s website featuring the Menchie’s mascots. Retrieved from <http://www.menchie.com/frozen-yogurt-about>

Families are a large portion of the Menchie’s target market. The company’s mission is

outlined in a video featuring Ella, a school-aged girl visiting Menchie's with her family (see Figure 10). Ella lets the viewer know that “with your first step into Menchie's, you'll be awoken with energy and happiness” and continues to share highlights of the store experience while she serves herself yogurt and toppings. It's notable that most of the product is at a height that is accessible to children. As the video concludes Ella smiles and says “so go ahead, enjoy your mix, and have a smiley day.” The company also reveals the aim behind this family focus on their website, noting that: “Although all types of people will be attracted to Menchie's, it will appeal primarily to families with children and people who seek a happy, friendly frozen dessert experience with the ability to have the freedom of crafting their desires” (Menchie's, n.d.-b).



Figure 10. Screen shots from the Menchie's YouTube video, “Ella – Menchie's Mix Master.”

Adapted from “Ella – Menchie's Mix Master” [YouTube video], 2012.

Much of the Menchie's language focuses on quality and experience. The company wants customers to “enjoy exactly the same experience every time: quality service, a quality product, a happy environment, a warm and friendly design, and cleanliness” (Menchie's, n.d.-b).

And indeed, Menchie's is incredibly consistent with their brand language and execution.

The company's mission statement is "We make you smile." Words like "smiliest" "friendly" and "quality" appear within nearly all of their company information and are reflected in the taglines and slogans they advertise to their customers. While quality is a large concern, customer experience is the company's top priority as Menchie's seeks to create an "experience that extends the brand beyond the product" (Menchie's, n.d.-b).

The company displays a surprising amount of strategic brand language on their website (perhaps because they promote franchising opportunities) that reveals the goals behind their core identity and mission. On the "Vision" section of their website, Menchie's notes that "our guests will frequent our stores to seek added value multi-dimensional experiences that exist beyond and outside the core product realm" (Menchie's, n.d.-b).

A brief analysis of some of the company's competitors (including Yogurtland and Let's Yo!) reveals why "experience" is such a notable concept. "Experience" is a word that appears within the language of many brands. Yogurtland is "pioneering the experience of customer-created frozen yogurt" (Yogurtland, 2012) and Let's Yo! positions themselves as a "yogurt experience." With the frozen yogurt market growing and locations flooding suburban developments (Menchie's opened 230 locations since they opened in 2007) brands are striving to create a unique store experience to help distinguish themselves from competitors. While many customers would likely struggle to describe a "multi-dimensional experience," they may return to Menchie's because of the feelings the environment evoked.

Many factors combine to create "the smiliest frozen yogurt experience" (Menchie's, 2012). The most notable is the store environment. Menchie's extends their brand color palette

of fuchsia and chartreuse to the design of their stores with bright green walls, colorful glass mosaics in the familiar Menchie's swirl, branded signage, and even fuchsia plastic spoons topped with the Menchie mascot. The yogurt flavors are even creatively named to fit within this playful experience. The store layout is fashioned in a semi-circle, with the yogurts positioned along the rounded back wall. Toppings are placed to the right, and the circular checkout counter is located in the center of the store, in front of the yogurt wall and directly facing the door (see Figure 11). This enables employees to greet customers immediately and forces customers to work through the entire environment and past a merchandise display in order to check out.



Figure 11. Interior image of a Menchie's store. Adapted from "Menchie's Frozen Yogurt coming to the Admiral District will let you mix it up yourself" [blog post], 2011.

Menchie's has a customer incentive program called a "Smileage" card that gives customers \$5 free for every 50 points they acquire (one dollar is equal to one point). The company also offers promotions such as double points during specific times and five dollars free yogurt on birthdays. If the Menchie's experience doesn't lure customers back, the promise of free

product gives the company an additional outlet to connect with their audience.

The Menchie's brand personality can be surmised by the following facets from Aaker's brand personality framework. The brand portrays itself as cheerful, down-to-earth, wholesome, imaginative and reliable. The brand's family-focused language and prevalence of "smiles" relate to the sincerity and excitement dimensions, while the quickly expanding locations and unified experience project the idea of reliability, a facet of the competence dimension.

Much of the value of the Menchie's experience is connected to the pleasures of food. On a functional level, the company offers high quality self-serve yogurt with a variety of flavors and toppings. Emotional benefits include happiness, whether through store environment or eating, the choice of crafting a custom dessert, and the joys of comfort food. Menchie's allows customers to express themselves by choosing a healthier desert option creating a "mix" of their own.

Menchie's provides a vision statement on their website that shares their goal is "To make the Menchie's experience available to every guest all over the world as a legacy for generations to come." While this vision encompasses the company direction that hints at a identical experience and aggressive growth, key elements of the brand can be further defined with a positioning statement:

Menchie's is a frozen yogurt store focused on the values of happiness and quality. Menchie's makes their customers smile, allowing them to craft their desires by creating a custom yogurt mix in a fun and friendly atmosphere.

Chapter IV

Methodology

Research Statement

Based on an analysis of consumer behavior literature and research into brand personality and retail environments I formulated the following research hypothesis:

The identity and environmental design of a business, whether created intentionally or not, attracts customers because it affirms some aspect of the customer's self-concept.

I attempted to test this hypothesis with a set of two surveys: one exploring self-concept and retail choice and the other on brand personality, and a series of interviews. If consumers are motivated to act in accordance with their self-concept, it could be reasonably assumed that patterns would emerge between measures of self-concept and store choice. My other research assumption proposed that consumers can evaluate brand personality based on their prior exposure to similar stores and evaluations of the interior and exterior environments. This was based on the idea that individuals form ad hoc categories for specific tasks and use prototypical representations to evaluate category membership.

The following sections cover the purpose, creation, and analysis of primary research data on self-concept, store choice, store environment, and brand personality.

Research Design

In order to test the research hypothesis that the identity and environmental design of a business, whether created intentionally or not, attracts customers because it affirms some aspect of the customer's self-concept, I constructed two surveys for the purposes of measuring these

concepts. The first, titled “I Shop, Therefore I Am: The Connection Between Self-concept and Retail Choice” focused on self concept and store choice. And the second, “Shopping, Inside and Out: Matching Retail Exteriors and Interiors” looked at how retail environments affect consumer perceptions of brand personality. Both surveys consisted of demographic, personality, and opinion questions and a section containing a simulated photo shopping experience that made up the bulk of the survey.

I chose to distribute two surveys because if the data I sought was compressed into one survey, it would take a significant amount of time to complete (estimated at over an hour) and would likely deter participation. I also had two simulated experiences that I wanted to measure responses from: choosing a store out of a pre-determined sample of choices and measuring if consumers can accurately predict a store interior (and the experience they will have once inside) based on the exterior. These methods were influenced by a number of consumer research studies, most noticeably a study by Donovan and Rossiter that tested approach-avoidance behavior in retail settings (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982), Kotler’s study that measured personality factors in retail environments (Kotler, 1973), Sherman’s study that matched emotional response and purchase behavior (Sherman, et al., 1997), and J. Aaker’s exploration of the five dimensions of brand personality (J. Aaker, 1997).

I sourced many of the evaluative measures from these studies and, in some cases, reused particular questions. For example, in “Shopping, Inside and Out” I applied questions from the Donovan and Rossiter study that measured approach/avoidance behavior to evaluate whether participants would feel comfortable in a given environment (“Is this a place where you might try to avoid other people, and avoid having to talk to them?” and “Is this a place in which you

would feel friendly and talkative to a stranger who happens to be near you?") (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982). Within the same survey, I also asked participants to assign facets from J. Aaker's five dimensions of brand personality to retail environments to see if any consistencies emerged among respondents.

The businesses portrayed in both of these surveys are located in the Cleveland metro area and were chosen to represent a variety of options that would be prototypical to individuals within suburban and urban environments. I chose locations that would be appealing or familiar to middle-class individuals, as I believed that businesses catering to low-income or high-income populations would distort the survey data. The retail categories presented in the surveys represent typical shopping destinations and were influenced by the categories from the Donovan and Rossiter study (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982). The researchers included department stores and drug stores in their study, categories I originally wanted to include but omitted. I theorized that the almost exclusive presence of chain stores in these categories would not yield data relevant to the study since most consumers would likely base their judgments on previous experiences with the available stores.

I made efforts to keep the photos consistent as possible, shooting between the hours of 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. My goal was to show as much of the exterior signage and entryway as possible, though this resulted in shooting at inconsistent angles. In some instances awnings, other architecture elements, or street signs obscured a clear view of the store sign. In other cases, the signage was not visible from a direct angle. For example, I was unable to photograph Rozi's Wine and Spirits directly in front of the entrance because the sign protruded from the building at a perpendicular angle and was not visible from the front (see Figure 12). Businesses that were

located in commerce districts on busy streets proved much more difficult to capture as they often had to be shot at an angle to avoid interference from street signs and parking meters. Whenever possible, I attempted to exclude people and cars from the compositions, believing that this might influence participant responses. Of the 36 business photos, there are two images in which people are visible directly outside of the store (Barnes and Noble and Journey's) and four photos in which cars are visible in the parking lot (Giant Eagle, Marc's Heinan's, and Famous Footwear).



Figure 12. The photo of Rozi's Wine and Spirits used in the surveys. There is an individual visible in this image, but at a distance that he would be perceived to be entering the business.

Respondents for each survey were recruited through Facebook and personal email contacts. Because no identifying demographic data was to be recorded any connection to the researcher was not apparent in the results and did not influence data analysis. Both surveys were administered through the Qualtrics survey software. Participants were first directed to a customized landing page explaining the research and the content of each survey (see Figure 13).

I created the landing page to personalize the experience and ensure that participants understood how their responses would be used. Full text of this site appears in the appendix. After the survey concluded respondents were directed to a page thanking them for participating in the study and requesting contact information should they like to participate in further research. The landing site received 84 unique visitors during the time period that the surveys were active and the average time spent on the site was 4:26 minutes. The surveys were active from August 29, 2012 through September 11, 2012.



Figure 13. A screen shot from the survey landing page.

The surveys response rate was consistent with the landing page visitation. Fifty-five people began “I Shop, Therefore I Am,” and 40 completed the survey. Of the 55 respondents, 4% were 18-24 years old, 64% were 25-34, 7% were 35-44, 13% were 55-64, and 9% were 65 and older (see Figure 14). Gender divisions for the survey were 22% male and 78% female. Participants were also asked if they had a child under 18 living at home; 13% said yes and 87%

said no. The survey also included questions about where participants lived (See Findings section for a breakdown of this data).

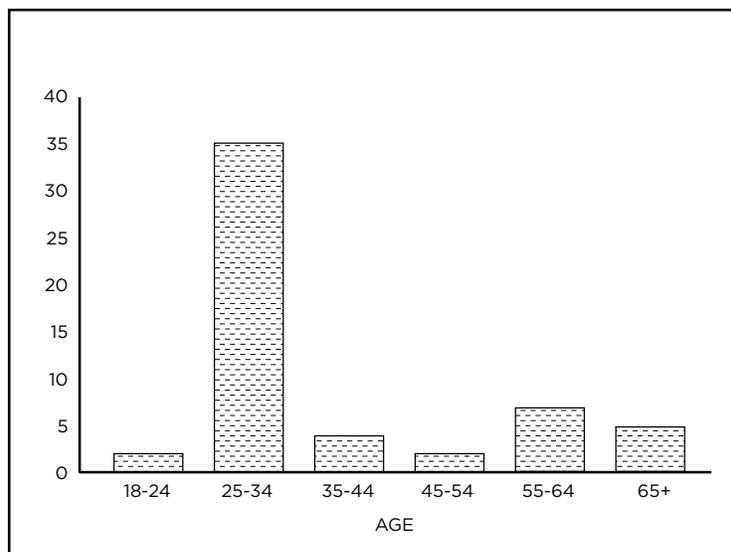


Figure 14. A graph displaying the number of “I Shop, Therefore I Am” survey participants by age.

Thirty individuals began “Shopping, Inside and Out,” and 18 completed the survey. Of the 30, 7% were 18-24 years old, 63% were 25-34, 10% were 35-44, 7% were 45-54, 13% were 55-64. No one over 65 took the survey (see Figure 15). The gender divisions were 13% male and 87% female. Seventeen percent of respondents had at least one child under 18 living at home, while 83% did not. I did not include a question about where participants live; an oversight, as this information would be useful in analyzing trends among the data. I asked participants in “I Shop, Therefore I Am” where they lived in order to contrast this information with responses to the question “Where would you like to live,” believing it to be a revealing element of the

respondents' self-concept. Because "Shopping, Inside and Out" did not explore self-concept I did not think it to be necessary, but now see the value of the data.

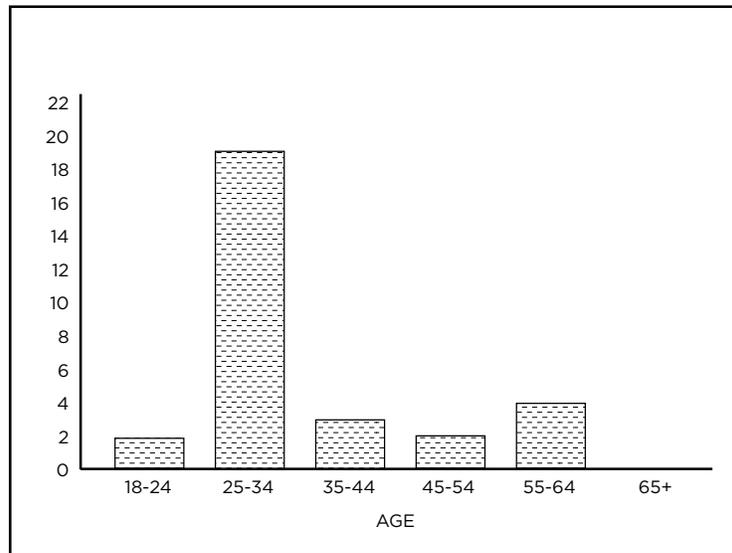


Figure 15. A graph displaying the number of "Shopping, Inside and Out" survey participants by age.

Each survey was constructed for a specific measurement objective. Using a methodology designed to ensure questions align with the purpose of the survey, I first outlined the purpose of each survey and any inherent assumptions (Fowler, 1995, p. 14).

"I Shop, Therefore I Am" presented subjects with a series of questions on their demographic data, personality perception, and shopping behaviors, and then guided them through a simulated store choice experience for eight categories: grocery, books, shoes, bakery, wine, coffee, sit-down restaurant, and clothing. The purpose of this survey was to evaluate the connection between self-concept and retail choice built on an assumption that consumers are likely to choose stores with a retail personality that matches their own. There are several

functions inherent to this assumption. The first is that choosing retail locations on the basis of self-concept is a function of the need to define self and to affirm a sense of self. This is not meant to imply that shopping is the only way to express this, but rather that it is an activity consumers use to define themselves. Additionally, an essential function of shopping is to acquire goods and services. From this survey I was attempting to evaluate and measure self-concept, shopping behaviors, retail choice based on prescribed options, and the retail patron image.

In the simulated shopping experience for this survey, respondents were presented with a given scenario (ex: "You are looking for a bookstore."), shown exterior photos representing four options, asked to provide their first and last choices for patronage, and then asked two questions about their selections. The questions, "Why would you shop at/avoid this store?" and "Describe who would shop at this store" were designed to ascertain any positive or negative feelings about the environment and to create a picture of the retail patron image for each location. The questions were composed as open-ended responses in an effort to minimize any researcher bias caused by providing pre-determined evaluative responses and to capture the visceral reactions of the participants (Zimmer, 1988).

The second survey, "Shopping, Inside and Out: Matching Retail Exteriors and Interiors" was designed to assess how consumers interpret and respond to retail brand personality and to evaluate whether subjects can reliably predict a match between a store's exterior and interior. This was built on an assumption that consumers use their learned preferences to categorize a store's exterior and predict if they would like or dislike the interior atmosphere. Categorization serves as a function of the need to process information and make efficient decisions. I hypothesized that consumers use their impressions of brand personality to form an impression

of the retail environment. Respondents began with a few questions regarding demographic data and shopping behaviors and then were presented with shopping scenarios in seven categories: coffee, grocery, take-out pizza, books, sit-down restaurant, wine and clothing. The measurement objectives for this survey would be based on shopping behaviors, retail interior/exterior matching, retail evaluation, and brand personality identifiers.

While most of the retail and restaurant locations presented in this study are local business or regional chains, I did include some large national chain stores including Barnes and Noble, Panera, Starbucks, and Famous Footwear among others. My motivation was twofold. In some cases, like bookstores, it was difficult to find a representative sample that showed sufficient differentiation between store types—most local bookstores cater to a similar clientele and present themselves accordingly. The second reason was to test my theory that individuals would have difficulty separating prior experience with a given chain from their responses to store exteriors. Individual survey responses supported this theory, as every chain store featured elicited comments about familiarity and recognition. Some examples:

From a question regarding grocery store choice:

“The last one, I didn’t recognize so I avoided it.”

From questions about book stores:

“The prices are unbeatable and it can be a good place to get gifts.”

“I just don’t go here.”

“its a brand I recognize and I get a discount through their program, they also have a large selection”

From questions about shoe stores:

“I know they will have a large selection and decent prices.”

“This actually is where I shop, and I know they have what I want.”

From questions about bakeries:

“Name recognition.”

“familiar and I already know its delicious”

From questions about coffee shops:

“familiar and i know what i’m getting”

“Their great reputation”

Chapter V

Findings

Survey 1: “I Shop, Therefore I Am”

For “I Shop, Therefore I Am: The Connection Between Self-Concept and Retail Choice” the survey sample was primarily 25-34 years old (63.64% of 55 respondents) and female (78.18% of 55 respondents) (for a full breakdown of participant ages see figure 14). Most of the participants did not have children under 18 living at home (87.27%).

Respondents were also asked to describe where they live. No participants lived in a rural area, 14.89% were in a small town, 31.91% in a suburb, 31.91% in a small city and 21.28% lived in a large city. The next question asked respondents where they would like to live. These results exhibited a more even distribution, as 10.87% said they would like to live in a rural area, 15.22% in a small town, 17.39% in a suburb, 23.91% in a small city and 32.61% in a large city. Figure 16 displays a comparison of this data.

When asked what they would do with a day to do whatever they want, most respondents preferred “Relaxing at home” (42.55%). Additionally, 12.77% would do something physically active, 19.15% would prefer to work on a to-do list, 17.02% said they would be shopping and, 8.51% would like to go out to restaurants and bars.

In order to assess respondents according to the Big Five personality traits, they were then asked to “Choose five words from the list below that would give someone who didn’t know you the most accurate representation of your personality. Try to use at least one word that isn’t perceived as positive” (see figure 17 for the complete list). “Friendly” and “compassionate” were

chosen most often (24 and 21 times, respectively) while “cold” and “unkind” were not selected at all. Removing these four terms from the data set, the six most popular traits were “organized” (17 responses), “curious” (16), “consistent” (15), “sensitive” (15), “easy-going” (14) and “reserved” (14).

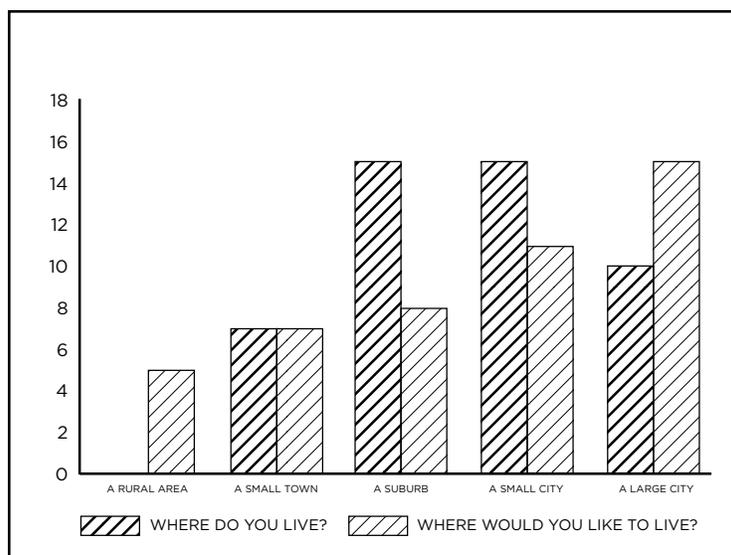


Figure 16. A graph displaying the responses to the questions “Where do you live?” and “Where would you like to live?” from the survey “I Shop, Therefore I Am.”

Respondents were also asked if they were active (53.19%) or relaxed (46.81%), if they preferred being comfortable (51.06%) or challenged (48.94%), and if they preferred doing the same things (44.68%) or trying new things (55.32%) in most aspects of life. In this section one respondent noted that “Those are very much not the kind of words I would use to describe myself,” and another that “On different days, I may answer these questions differently.”

In the section on shopping habits, most respondents noted that they shop for themselves when looking for things other than daily necessities (68.09%). Most respondents preferred to go

to multiple locations for necessary household or personal items (mean rank 1.51) and groceries (1.65), but preferred to go to several stores for gifts (2.58), clothing (1.66), and shoes (2.37).

Additionally, most respondents said that they “shop around to find the best value” (42.55%) and that they valued quality (65.96%) over cost (34.04%).

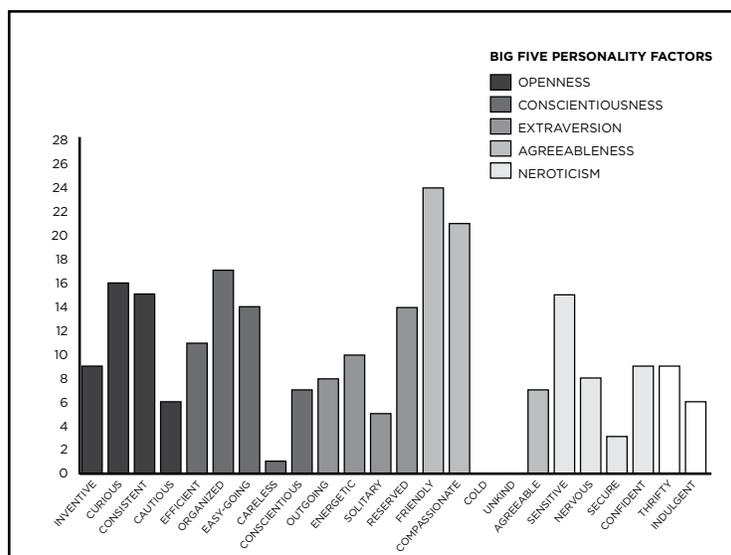


Figure 17. A graph displaying the responses to the question “Choose five words from the list below that would give someone who didn’t know you the most accurate representation of your personality” from the survey “I Shop, Therefore I Am.”

The bulk of the survey consisted of a section where participants were presented with a series of eight shopping scenarios: grocery stores, book stores, shoe stores, bakeries, wine stores, coffee shops, sit-down restaurants, and clothing stores. Respondents were shown either a men’s or women’s store corresponding to their gender selection. The photo options for each category in the survey appear in the following figures, 18, 19, and 20.



Figure 18. Images of options for the grocery store, book store, and shoe store categories from “I Shop, Therefore I Am.”

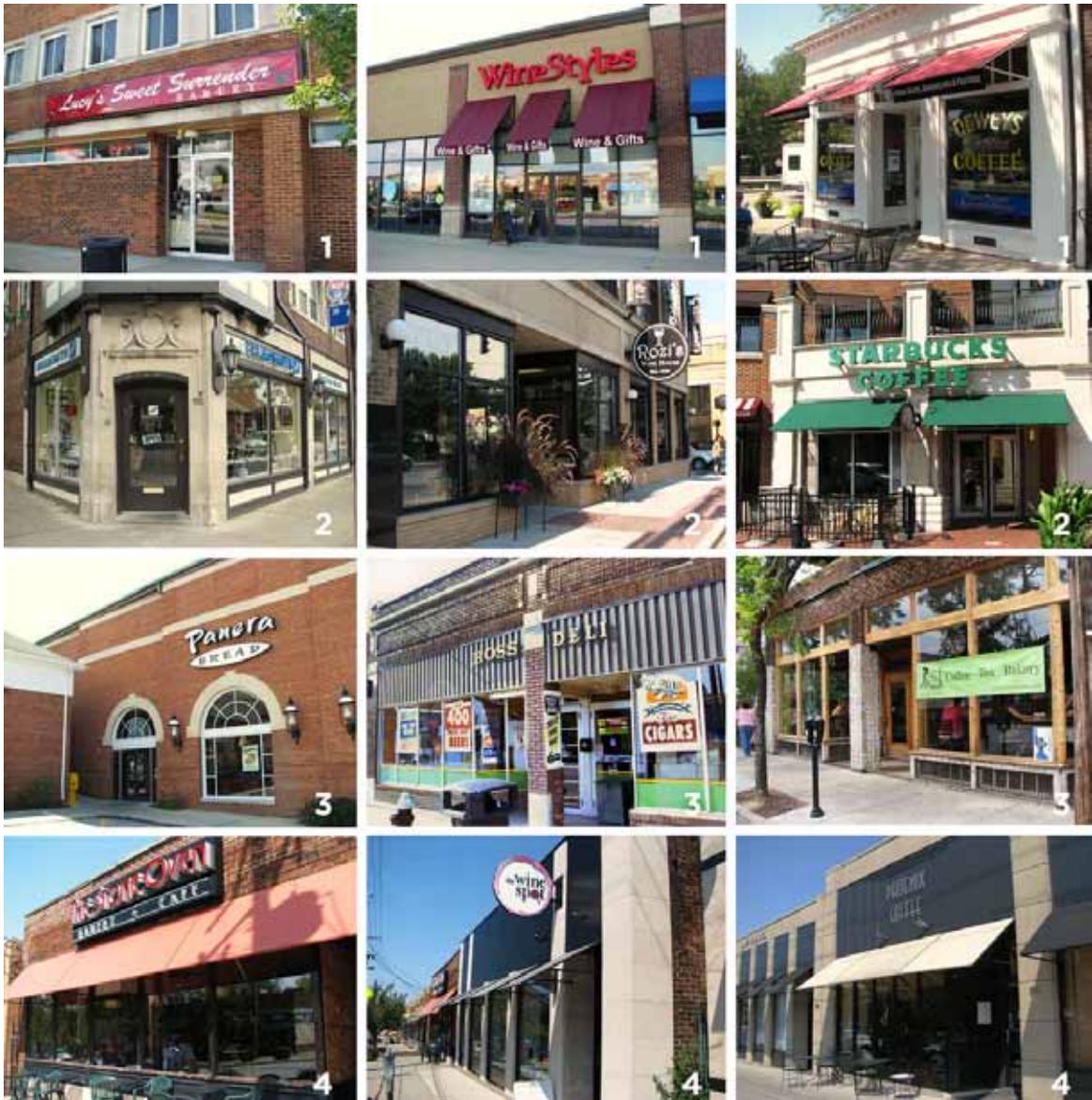


Figure 19. Images of options for the bakery, wine store, and coffee shop categories from “I Shop, Therefore I Am.”

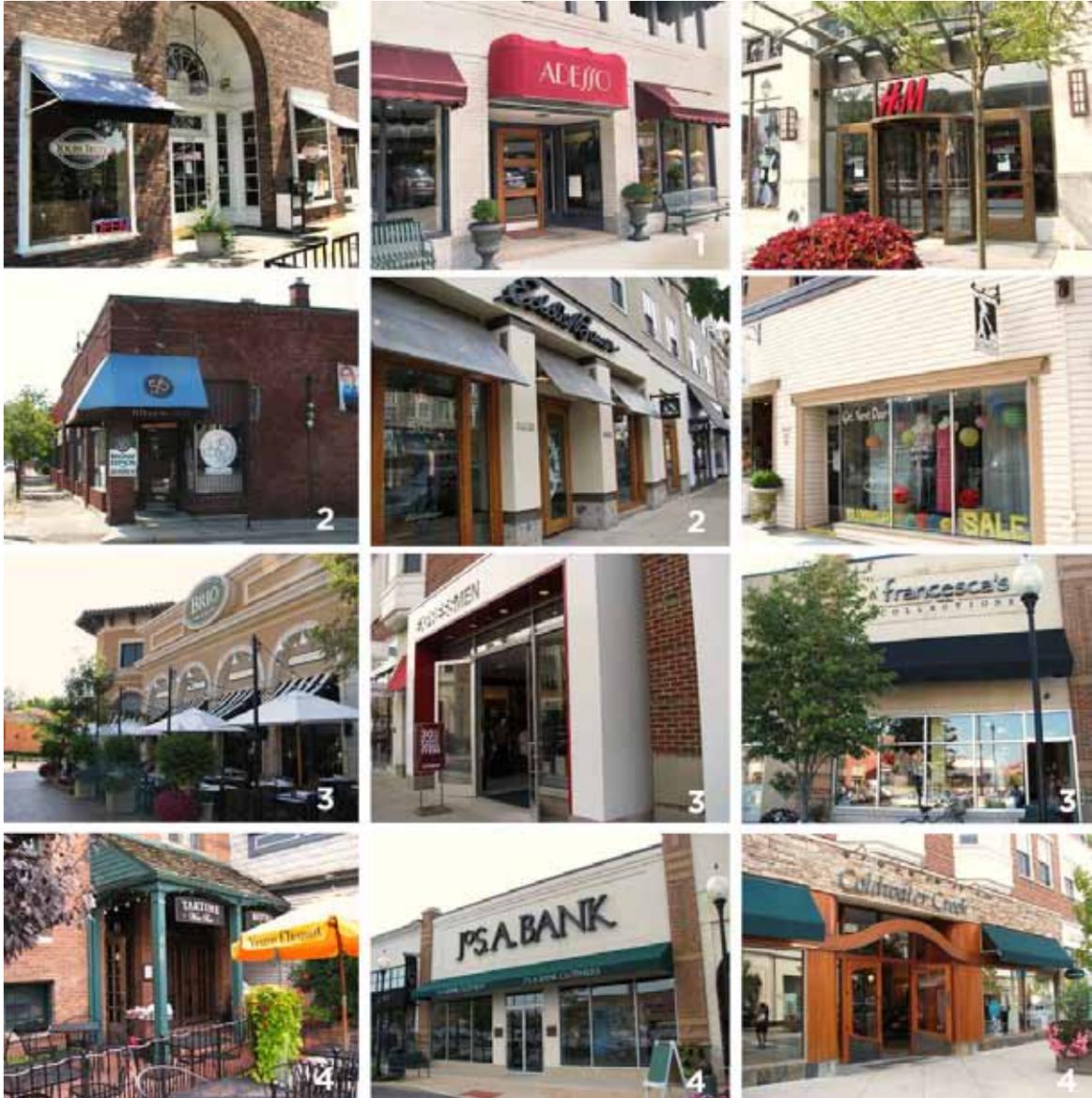


Figure 20. Images of options for the restaurant, men's clothing store, and women's clothing store categories from "I Shop, Therefore I Am."

To analyze the data I began with an assessment of the first and last choices for each store category from all participants. Each of the rankings appears in Table 1 (see Figures 21 and 22 for photos). For the purposes of analysis I am not assessing clothing categories, believing that the options were not representative of the survey population and resulted in inconsistent data.

CATEGORY	FIRST CHOICE	LAST CHOICE
Grocery Store	Nature's Bin	Marc's
Book Store	Visible Voice and Barnes & Noble	Books-A-Million
Shoe Store	Famous Footwear	Cerny Shoes
Bakery	Breadsmith	Lucy's Sweet Surrender
Wine Store	Rozi's Wine and Spirits	Ross Deli
Coffee Shop	Dewey's Coffee	Phoenix Coffee
Sit-Down Restaurant	Tartine	Brio Tuscan Grille
Men's Clothing	Eddie Bauer	Adesso
Women's Clothing	H&M	Girl Next Door and Coldwater Creek

Table 1. Results for the most and least favorite stores from the survey “I Shop, Therefore I Am.”

In general, clear perceptions of each location in the sample emerged. Respondents who preferred a given location gave similar reasons for why they would choose this location and who would shop there. The same held true for the locations that respondents disliked. For example, most respondents who chose Nature's Bin from the list of grocery stores expected it to have fresh, healthy organic food and those who did not like it characterized the store as expensive. Those who liked the book store Visible Voice perceived it as local, quaint, and likely to have personalized service. Respondents who did not like it thought it was cluttered and expensive.

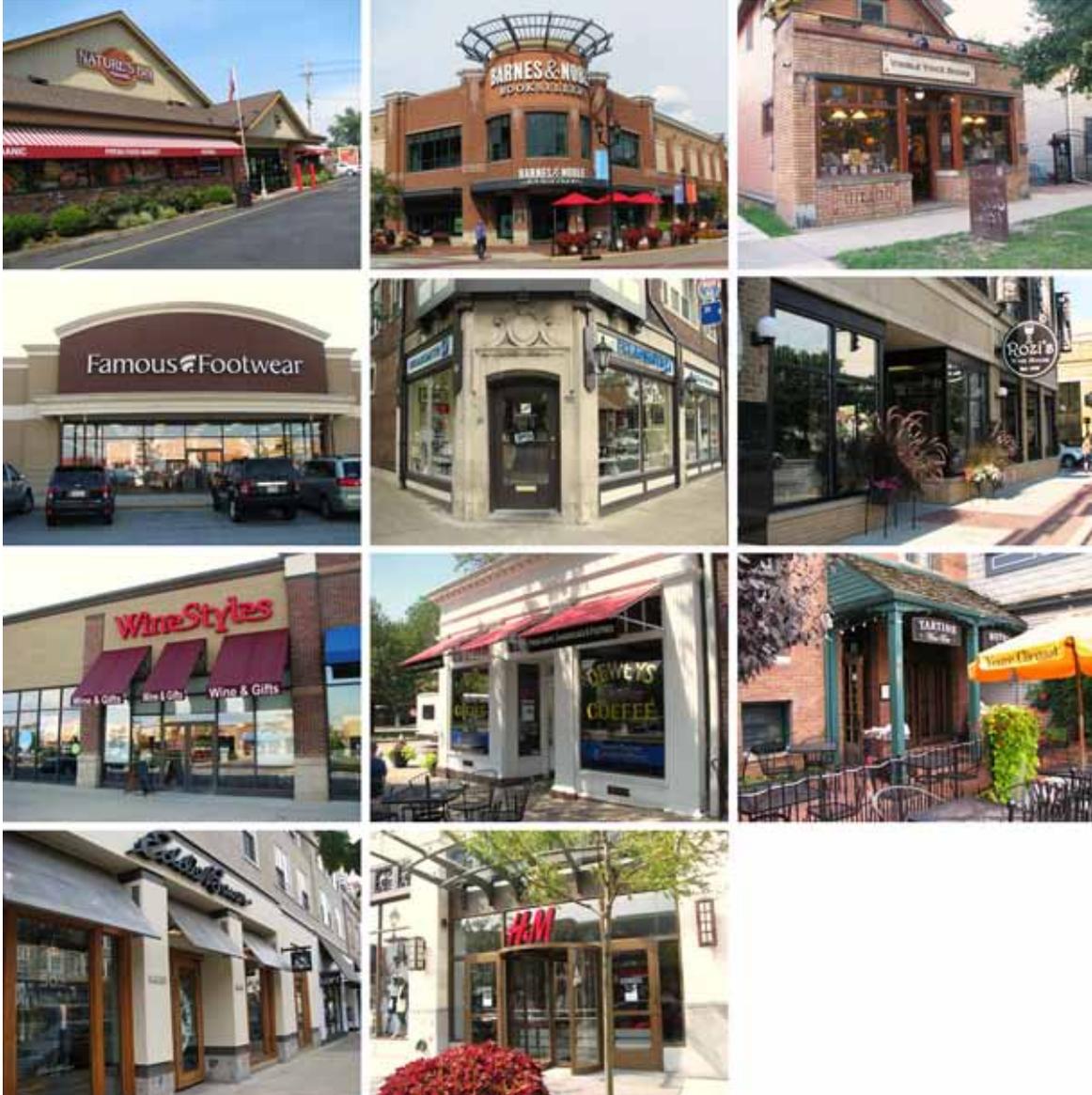


Figure 21. Images of the top choices from each category from the survey “I Shop, Therefore I Am.” Images correspond according to Table 1, clockwise from top left.

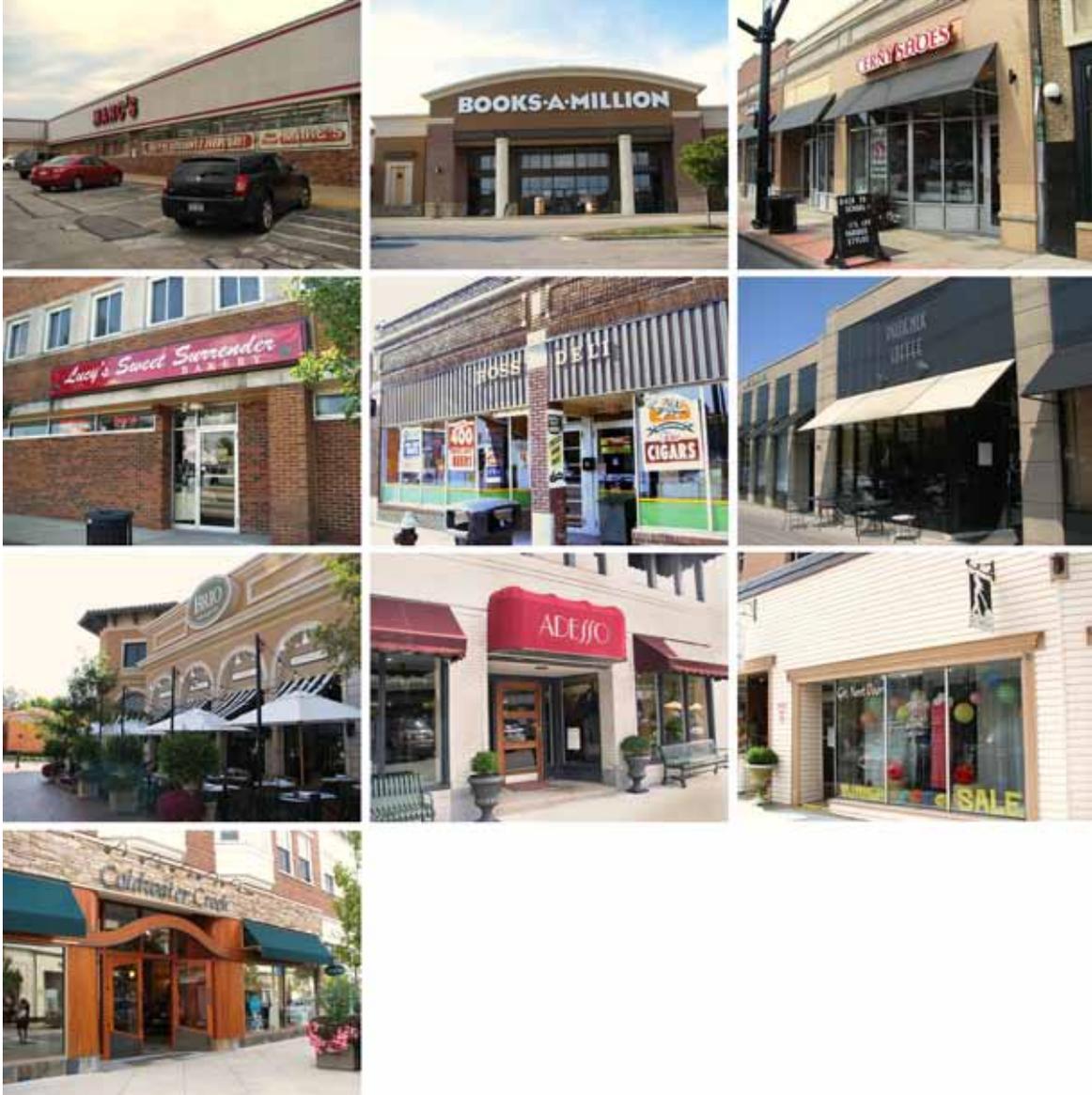


Figure 22. Images of the least-favorite choices from each category from the survey “I Shop, Therefore I Am.” Images correspond according to Table 1, clockwise from top left.

The first filter I applied to the response sample was by location. According to this data, people in small towns preferred Cerny Shoes over Famous Footwear, which became the least favorite shoe store. Small town residents also preferred Lucy’s Sweet Surrender over Breadsmith, which became the least favorite bakery. The respondents from small towns preferred Wine Styles

over Rozi's Wine and Spirits and named The Wine Spot as their least favorite wine store option. They also named 56 West in addition to Brio Tuscan Grille as their least favorite restaurant.

Those in the suburbs preferred Giant Eagle over Nature's Bin, named Breadsmith as their most and least favorite bakery option, and preferred Starbucks over Dewey's Coffee. They added Amy's Shoes to Cerny Shoes as the least preferred options. Respondents in small cities added Amy's Shoes as a preferred location, chose Panera and The Stone Oven over Breadsmith as favorites, identified Starbucks as their least favorite coffee option instead of Phoenix Coffee and added 56 West as the least favorite restaurant option with Brio Tuscan Grille. Respondents in large cities saw the least amount of derivation from the survey averages, preferring Ross Deli over Rozi's Wine and Spirits and identifying The Wine Spot as their least preferred location instead of Ross Deli.

For this sample, respondents in large cities seem the most likely to predict general preferences. Overall, respondents in small cities differed from the average in four instances, those in the suburbs in five instances and those in small towns differed in six instances. A larger respondent pool would need to be assessed to predict this reliably, but it appears that overlap with average preferences decreases as the area of residence becomes less urban.

In order to find connections between self-concept and retail image, I then divided each response sample according to the Big Five personality factors. Each of the five factors—openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism—are divided into four descriptive traits. I added “thrifty” and “indulgent” to the trait list as it represented an additional dimension and was relevant to the research. Respondents chose five of the traits to describe themselves. I filtered the response sample by the two poles of the five dimensions. For example,

levels of openness can be measured as inventive and curious or consistent and cautious. In the end I had 12 filters, two for each of the five personality factors and the addition of thrifty and indulgent.

While there were a few notable results using this method, on the whole it failed to produce any predictive trends or visible connections between self-concept and store choice. Most of the preferred stores were consistent with the results of the entire response sample, or displayed inconsistent differences. For example, most personality factors preferred Nature's Bin as the grocery store choice. In one case, agreeableness (friendly or compassionate) showed a more even distribution across grocery store preference (36% Nature's Bin, 24% Giant Eagle, 16% Marcs, 24% Heinan's). Marc's, however, was still clearly the least liked store, consistent with the sample average. In another case, those who identified themselves as inventive or curious (traits of openness), chose local business in all categories and were the only personality traits where this trend occurred.

Some notable results were found among demographic data. Respondents who identified themselves as easygoing or careless (traits of conscientiousness) were 40% male, a significant shift from the total respondent pool which was 21.82% male. Secure or Confident (traits of Neuroticism) were the only traits that had a noticeable balance between children under 18 living at home (40%) and no children under 18 (60%). In all other cases, the percentage of respondents with children under 18 was more consistent with the average of 12.73%.

Dissatisfied with the lack of identifiable trends across personality types, I then filtered the survey responses according to store selections to see if there would be any consistencies in store choice. While generalized impressions (perceiving certain stores as "clean" or "familiar") were

consistent for each location across the sample average, without clear personality measures for the stores it was difficult to connect preference to self-concept. My thought was that respondents might be drawn to similar types of stores (i.e. chain versus local) and patterns would emerge.

In nearly every personality factor breakdown, in addition to the average, Marc's was the least favorite grocery store. Looking at the data for just those who would shop at Marc's, the sample was 100% female, 80% did not have a child under 18 living at home, and 60% lived in a small city. The most popular personality traits were friendly, sensitive, nervous, energetic and organized. In a reversal of the average sample preferences, the respondents who chose Marc's would be the least likely to shop at Nature's Bin because they perceived it to be expensive. The respondents noted that Marc's "has most of the same things other stores have at a cheaper price," and "great prices/weird closeouts," and that "The 'deep discounts everyday' really speaks to the miser in me." One respondent even compared it to another discount grocer, explaining that Marc's "looks like Aldi (sic) which has lower cost products." These respondents characterized individuals that would shop at Marc's as "people with less spending money; typically people with larger families," "anyone looking for good prices and good products, "moms, grandmas, deal seekers" and "someone on a budget."

Those who would shop at Marc's favored Half Price Books and noted cost as the reason they preferred Famous Footwear and Wine Styles. The Marc's sample also deviated from the average sample and personality breakdowns in that they preferred Yours Truly (40%) in addition to Tartine (60%) in the sit-down restaurant category.

I then reviewed another grocery store with lower preference values, Giant Eagle. Of those who preferred this store, 83.33% were women, 25% had children under 18 living at home

and 58.33% lived in the suburbs. The personality traits they identified with were compassionate, friendly, organized, consistent, and sensitive. They described Giant Eagle as large, familiar, and clean, and noted that it looked like a “normal” or “typical” grocery store. The respondents noted that “average,” “middle class,” “normal, everyday people,” and “suburbanites” would be likely to patronize the store.

While this sample would be least likely to patronize Marc’s they showed some inclination to chain stores, selecting Barnes and Noble, Famous Footwear, Wine Styles, and Starbucks as their preferred choices. Like the Marc’s respondents, the Giant Eagle sample also selected Yours Truly (in addition to Tartine) as their preferred sit-down restaurant.

Another store with a low preference values (and named as the least favorite by the average) was Cerny Shoes. I continued evaluating stores that were generally disliked to see if respondents who chose these stores would lie outside of the averages in other categories as well and would therefore be more likely to display some sort of predictable response pattern. The Cerny respondents were 20% male and 80% female; none had children under 18 living at home and 40% lived in a large city. They described themselves as friendly, reserved, consistent, inventive and agreeable. These respondents noted that Cerny was a “local store [and] may have good value shoes,” and that it “looks old-school and dependable.” They also said that “I like basic shoes, so wouldn’t need to visit anything more high end,” “This looks like a small shoe store where I would get fitted for the right size by friendly people,” and “I have a feeling it would have a variety of quality shoes.”

The Cerny respondents preferred local businesses in all categories (usually by 80%) and disliked chains in five of the seven categories. In fact, 100% of those who preferred Cerny

disliked Marc's ("low-quality merchandise") and Books-A-Million ("cheap books"). They noted that Visible Voice was "Quaint and non corporate. It looks lovely and I would want to support them," and that it "Looks locally owned, and therefore will likely be a more pleasant experience," and that it was a "Local shop [that] might provide better help in looking for the book that I want." They also noted that Breadsmith looked "warm" and "like a neighborhood shop" and expressed wanting to support "little bakeries" or "family run" businesses.

Because the respondents for Cerny proved to have a strong preference for local businesses I also wanted to filter the data for a number of chain stores in the survey. In the entire sample, Panera was the bakery respondents would be least likely to shop at. The participants who chose Panera were 100% female and had no children under 18 at home; most lived in a small city (57.14%). They characterized themselves as organized, friendly, compassionate, curious, and consistent. While they preferred Nature's Bin (not a chain, but part of a larger grocery corporation), they chose chains in every other category, preferring Barnes and Noble, Famous Footwear (and Amy's shoes equally), Starbucks and Brio Tuscan Grille.

I was then interested to see if there would be consistencies toward chain preference using the respondents for Brio Tuscan Grille (12.50% of the total sample) and Starbucks (17.50% of the total sample). There were trends toward chain preference for both. Respondents who favored Brio also chose Barnes and Noble, Famous Footwear, Panera and Starbucks. Respondents for Starbucks preferred Giant Eagle, Barnes and Noble, Famous Footwear, and Panera, though these respondents preferred Yours Truly over Tartine.

Survey 2: “Shopping, Inside and Out”

The second survey, “Shopping, Inside and Out: Matching Retail Exteriors and Interiors,” had a sample that was also mostly 25-34 years old (63.33% of 30 respondents) and female (86.67% of 30 respondents). For a full breakdown of participant ages see figure 15. Most of the participants also did not have children under 18 living at home (83.33%).

Of these respondents, 78.57% preferred to shop at chain stores for daily necessities (as opposed to local stores), citing price, convenience, availability of brands and ability to get everything in one place as reasons for this preference. Conversely, 82.14% preferred to shop at local stores for unnecessary items, valuing the availability of unique products and supporting local businesses, and enjoying the process of browsing. From this sample, 96.43% enjoyed going to the same stores and restaurants, but the same percentage also noted that they enjoy going to stores or restaurants they’ve never been to in another question.

For the most part, respondents were reliably able to match the exterior photo with the corresponding interior, correctly identifying five of eight options in seven categories (men and women were shown different stores). Respondents correctly matched Nature’s Bin (60.87%), Donato’s Pizza (34.78%), Half Price Books (65.22%) 56 West (57.89%), and Francesca’s Collection (75%). The stores that were not correctly matched were Phoenix Coffee (41.67% chose Root Café and 33.33 chose Phoenix), Wine Styles (41.18% chose Rozi’s Wine and Spirits, 41.18% chose The Wine Spot, and 11.67 chose Wine Styles), and Adesso (50% chose Eddie Bauer and 50% chose Adesso).

Nature’s Bin was the top grocery store choice in the self-concept survey and was correctly matched (60.87%), by the respondents of this survey who characterized it as organic,

clean, healthy, homey, and fresh (see Figure 23). When shown the correct match, 91.30% were not surprised by the result, noting that “The emphasis on organic, fresh produce is apparent in both the interior and exterior,” “It seems to have a lot of fresh produce from the outside of it,” and “they just match!” From this sample 95.65% liked the environment, 69.57% would feel friendly and talkative to a stranger inside, and 78.26% would not try to avoid other people or talking to them. Applying the framework from Aaker’s Dimensions of Brand Personality (J. Aaker, 1997), respondents characterized the environment as cheerful, reliable, up-to-date, and charming, corresponding to the personality dimensions of sincerity, competence, excitement, and sophistication.



Figure 23. Image revealing the matching interior and exterior of Nature’s Bin from the survey “Shopping, Inside and Out.”

In most cases respondents from the survey on self-concept chose Phoenix Coffee as their least-preferred option. Overall respondents from this survey did not match Phoenix’s interior and exterior (see Figure 24). Only 33.33% correctly identified the exterior photo, while 41.67% guessed that the interior corresponded to Root Café, which they identified as cozy

and earthy. Respondents found Phoenix Coffee to be cold, stuffy, and plain. When shown the matching exterior and interior, 69.57% of respondents were surprised by the result, noting that “it looks cold on the outside but inviting on the inside,” “it feels more home like inside than the outside leads on,” and “the outside has zero personality and the inside has a great cozy feel.” Of the respondents, 65.22% liked the environment, 52.17% would feel would feel friendly and talkative to a stranger inside, and 56.52% would not try to avoid other people or talking to them. Respondents characterized Phoenix as domestic, charming, dependable, and efficient, corresponding to the dimensions of sincerity, sophistication and competence.



Figure 24. Image revealing the matching interior and exterior of Phoenix Coffee from the survey “Shopping, Inside and Out.”

Fifty-Six West was often identified as one of the least favorite restaurants in filtering of the self-concept survey. For this survey 57.89% of respondents correctly matched the interior and exterior photos and found the exterior to be trendy and unique (see Figure 25). From the sample, 63.16% of respondents were not surprised by the resulting match, noting that “It seems from both the outside and the inside that they’re trying to take something traditional and older

and make it modern without putting too much money into it” and “I figured that from the design of the logo and the name of the restaurant that this was the right interior.” Interestingly, 57.89% of respondents did not like the interior, citing that it was “too dark,” “cold,” and “too trendy.” Consistent with these results, 63.16% would not feel would feel friendly and talkative to a stranger inside and would try to avoid other people or talking to them. There was less agreement over brand personality attributes compared to other environments in this study, but respondents found 56 West to be efficient, strong, dependable, and up-to-date, corresponding to the factors of competences, ruggedness, and excitement.



Figure 25. Image revealing the matching interior and exterior of 56 West from the survey

“Shopping, Inside and Out.”

Interviews

Because responses to the surveys did not explain individual motivation behind shopping choices, I conducted a series of consumer interviews to gain a greater perspective into how individuals make decisions about shopping. I interviewed four subjects, a 29 year-old female from a “medium-sized” city, a 31 year-old female from a small city, a 37 year-old male from a

large city and a 65 year-old male from a suburban area.

I asked each subject a series of questions about where they live, their attitudes and approaches to shopping, and what types of retail environments they find appealing or off-putting (a full list of interview questions appears in Appendix D). I also asked each of the subjects how they can predict from the exterior of a store if they will like it or not and if there are elements of environments that make them feel immediately welcome or uncomfortable, expanding upon the themes of the survey “Shopping, Inside and Out.”

The 29 year-old female lives in a “medium-sized city” and likes to shop. She drives to most places herself. When asked why she likes to shop she stated that, “I like being able to go into a store and visualize myself using the items or wearing the clothes. I like making connections with items.” She also noted that “It’s important to me that I don’t waste a lot of time looking for something in a store. And most of the time I know what I want.” Regarding store exteriors she said that:

For the exterior of a store it usually helps when it matches the mood of the interior. I don’t know why that is for me. I’ve been in stores before that were in strip malls that have really welcoming interiors. And I think part of the way they get people in there is to build up the brand so that people are familiar with it so that they’re not uncomfortable approaching it.

The subject also noted that, “I’ve come to realize that I can’t really predict [if I will like a store from the outside] but there are some things that I usually look for. I don’t really like shopping at stores that don’t have windows.”

The 30 year-old female lives in a small city “in-between two neighborhoods” and also

likes to shop. She relies on a car for transportation but often walks or bikes to destinations nearby. She explained that she prefers to shop alone. When asked what she looks for in retail environments she noted that “I’ve been known to be in love with digging through racks at thrift stores and Gabriel Brothers and... cheap stores.” She also said that “I’ll pretty much go into any place. I’ll walk out if I don’t feel right in there.” When asked to explain what she finds appealing about stores or restaurants she noted that:

The places that I like to go to are really haphazardly put together. That’s kind of how I live my life. That kind of how my house is—it’s kind of a curated mess or weird... A coffee shop has to still feel like a coffee shop even if there’s no coffee in it. My house needs to still feel like it’s my house even if there’s no [name removed] in it... But they’re unique to the place and the owner conveys that with the stuff that’s there and the way that things are set up.

The 37 year-old male likes to shop and lives in a large city. He walks and uses public transportation. When looking for appealing retail environments he seeks out “something that’s welcoming that has some thought to its point of view and style that’s not enormous” and “something that has people that work there preferably that either own or manage it on a full-time or regular basis that actually enjoy being there.” He explained that “It means that somebody has something in common with me and that makes me feel good. That they have a similar vision about what they think is stylish or comfortable or functional. And it makes me feel good that if I’m going to be spending more money that it’s worth it. That’s a skill set that I would like to reward.”

The 63 year-old male lives in a suburb and relies on a car. He does not like to shop and

explained that he likes “simple things, but not cheap.” He noted that “I try to balance things out and if I have to buy something cheap, if I know I don’t need a quality item, I’ll go to someplace where I’m going to get something for a halfway decent price, whether that be a meal or a shirt.” When asked to explain what he looks for when shopping he stated that “A lot of times I don’t feel like going to the simple places anymore; I want some atmosphere. And if I’m buying a dress shirt or something, I’m not going to go to Wal-Mart to get my dress shirts. I want something that looks good so I appreciate paying a little bit more, whether it be food or clothing or something for the house.” When asked what he looks for in a store he explained that “Huge signs that are advertising the special of the day... is just a hint to me that that’s not where I want to go.”

One question that yielded particularly interesting responses about individual attitudes to shopping was, “In an imaginary scenario, you have unlimited funds to shop for what you most enjoy buying and all of your favorite stores are together in one environment. Describe this environment. How long would you like to stay here?” The 29 year-old female described this as “a clothing store” and explained that “One thing I would take from H&M is the way they color code their sections. So they might have a batch of neutral colored clothing which is really helpful for me when I’m trying to find clothes for work.” She valued neutral colors overall and said that “I would say it that it would have kind of a neutral atmosphere like the Gap, nothing to distract me from the product. Like natural wooden floor or neutral colors on the wall.” She said this would be a single store “with multiple sections or multiple levels” and have “clearly defined sections.”

When asked the same question the 30 year-old female said that “I think that I would really like to have everything mixed in together, as weird as that is. I would like all the stores to

be one store and I would like to have things in sections.” She also noted that “I think it would probably have a couple restaurants on the outside, not chain restaurants” and “maybe like a little coffee shop in the middle where I can hang out.” While explaining this ideal situation she said, “Ew. It’s basically like...I think I just created a high-fashion Wal-Mart.”

The 37 year-old male seemed to know exactly what he was looking for. He explained: It’s in a downtown. I would walk to it or take public transportation. It would probably be in a city. I would hope that it would have a lot of windows. It might be near water. It would have a friendly staff. It would be styled very well and clean and all the stuff would be well laid out. I wouldn’t feel like I was being shoved or rushed or hounded. It would be medium-sized, not necessarily small, but definitely not huge. It would have a diversity of items that would be selected by the retailer or restaurateur that are of importance to him and showing his concern for quality. It would be comfortable. It may even have someone who brings you something while you’re shopping... And it would not be outrageously expensive.

The 63 year-old male outlined a scenario shopping for a specific item:

Let me pick an item first. Say I want to get a dress-up combination to go somewhere. New sport coat, pants, the whole deal. And I have all these stores in front of me where I can go in. The front of the store is probably going to affect me. That storefront means a lot to me. Again, for that type of item that I’m hunting for I’m kind of looking for the product I want, not overdone, classic conservative, no modern stuff and I think that’ll be portrayed in that front where there’s awnings hanging down on windows. That catches my eye. That whole sense, that old feel.

He also explained that “I want things to look nice and neat. I want to see the shirts over here. I don’t want to see all these little exhibits of what’s new trying to lure me into that table. That turns me off. Just a nice presentation to how it looks.” He noted that the environment would be in an indoor mall and “if I could, I would get it all in one spot.”

Chapter VI

Discussion

Implications

Although I was unable to assess broad trends from the survey responses, but a number of observations valuable to research in consumer behavior, retail environment, and brand personality emerged.

Based on the rich responses from survey participants, it is clear that consumers have clear reasoning for why they would shop at a given store, even if they've never seen it before. Some respondents compared stores in the survey to other retailers they were familiar with in order to communicate why they would or would not shop at a store. In many cases, especially chain stores, familiarity was a powerful motivator. Sometimes merely resembling a product or building a consumer is familiar with may increase consumers' comfort in the environment.

Additionally, consumers are able to convey whom they think shops at a given store. I was not concerned with respondents' ability to correctly assess a store's typical clientele, but was instead interested in how these perceptions are formed and applied. The question, "Who would shop at this store?" elicited a variety of responses from reasoned ("I would think people would shop here because it is in their neighborhood and it is consistently a good store.") to visceral ("A girl from '16 and Pregnant' when she realized she was out of Cheeze Puffs and Lunchables."). Overall, what emerged was the fact that consumers make clear judgments about retail locations—based on exteriors alone—that influence whether or not they would shop at a given location.

The interview subjects outlined their idealized situations with a surprising amount of detail. Questions that ask subjects to imagine scenarios may be especially useful to consumer or design researchers as they reveal not only a consumer's perfect shopping environment, but also glimpses into how the individual approaches the act of shopping (or dining), what they like about existing environments, and what types of environments generate positive emotions.

It is important for retailers to have an understanding of their target audience in order to connect with them. I spoke at length with a number of business owners during the process of taking photos for the surveys and found that they were very invested in the mission of their business. Some however, were better at understanding their audience than others, as demonstrated in the respondent preferences from this survey. One clear opportunity for understanding what motivates a target consumer group is looking at what other stores and restaurants they are drawn to and what aspects of the environment communicate belonging to the audience. While clear trends did not emerge among personality type, predictive value may lie in consumer preference for similar store types, in the broadest application as chains or local stores.

Comparing the images in Figures 20 and 21, it is apparent that the general sample preferred businesses with dimensionality or points of interest in the exterior architecture. With the exclusion of Brio Tuscan Grille, all of the least-preferred businesses have flat exteriors with limited dimensional signage and little architectural detail (Figure 21). The favorite locations, however, display a variety of building styles, porches, awnings, and unique signage (Figure 20).

While some respondents appreciated environments they considered "modern," on a whole the respondents from this survey were drawn to businesses they perceived as "clean," "cozy," "local," "familiar," and "charming" rather than "stark" and "modern." Of course, the elements

of an environment that evoke these feelings can differ widely, but some of these elements appear to be cleanliness (especially in the case of grocery stores), landscaping, unique architecture, and windows that allow customers to see the products or environment inside.

In “Shopping, Inside and Out: Matching Retail Exteriors and Interiors,” it seemed that respondents were able to create varied portraits of brand personality, not defaulting on common, positive terms like “friendly” and “organized” as was the case with the Big Five personality factors. With a large enough sample it would be possible to identify the factors of brand personality that apply to a particular business. However, J. Aaker advocated using positive terms to describe brand personality because she felt consumers responded to brand in largely positive ways (J. Aaker, 1997). I did not find this was the case from the responses to an open-ended question allowing respondents to voice any negative impressions they had of the subjects in the survey. Even so, the responses for brand personality factors appeared to be more accurate than the traits respondents applied to themselves in ““I Shop, Therefore I Am.””

Suggestions for Future Research

With each of these surveys my aim was to develop models to predict consumer behavior and perception. With some adjustments, the surveys could be re-formatted to elicit a more easily measurable data set. In this case though the data set was too rich for time constraints. In “I Shop, Therefore I Am: The Connection Between Self-Concept and Retail Choice” I wanted to find out about participants by comparing where they live to where they want to live, evaluating perceptions of their personality and their favorite aspects of self, and looking for trends between hobbies and store choice, but this proved to be too much data. I also erred by not building an

evaluation of brand personality into this survey. As they were presented, the question formats did not produce comparable data. While open-ended questions produced evocative responses, they were not useful in connecting self-concept to store choice. It would have been more productive to match brand personality dimensions to the Big Five factors.

A more effective method of generating personas may have been to expand the consumer interview pool as these provided great depth into how individuals make decisions. It was also possible to get them to think through the mental processing that usually happens in a split second and explain their motivations. Finding trends among styles of decision-making may have been a more successful method to create personas rather than attempting to assess trends from prescribed personality traits. Insights into modes of decision-making or thought processes would likely be more valuable to researchers or business owners than knowing that individuals that describe themselves as “sensitive” prefer certain types of stores.

In this study the Big Five personality factors were too broad to produce reliable trends. They were not reliable predictors for store choice behavior as most breakdowns favored the choices from the entire sample. Respondents may not have been honest or understood certain words as results trended towards broad, easily-understood positive terms. Additionally, the Big Five factors are traditionally applied as a personality test and resulting data used to create a personality type based on these factors. It's possible that by asking respondents to apply the terms to themselves rather than taking a test skewed the results.

While the open-ended questions were valuable in providing insight into choices and impressions of stores, they made it difficult to create linear comparisons of self-concept data and why individuals might feel connected to certain stores. I asked respondents why they

would shop or dine at a given location and who would typically shop there, but without a comparable personality metric for retail locations it was difficult to assess what, if any, aspects of individual self-concept would be affirmed by the stores or restaurants. Individuals who identified themselves as conscientious may have consistently preferred what they perceived to be clean, organized grocery stores, but this reveals little about how cleanliness affirms a conscientious person.

I also realize that while I made efforts to shorten each survey, they were still far too long with too many store choices. A survey with three to four retail choices would have elicited the same rich data as one with seven to eight categories. I ended up removing clothing stores from the data analysis because the results were either inconsistent or from too small a sample (due to the low percentage of male respondents). I also believe that the clothing stores featured were too age-specific.

Additionally, the sample was too narrow across age and gender to reliably assess trends across these factors (consult Figures 14 and 15 for this data). The limited sample may have been related to the mode of distribution (social media and personal correspondence) or the possibility that more women in this age segment were drawn to the survey topic. It is also possible that the low occurrence of trends within the data was due to the featured stores and restaurants. These choices may have been too varied to prompt nuanced responses or included choices that were too polarizing. This is apparent in the questions related to grocery choice, in which Nature's Bin was consistently ranked first and Marc's last, and restaurant choice, in which Tartine emerged as the clear preference.

As I created the surveys, I attempted to use existing factors to simplify data, in this case

the Big Five factors and Dimensions of Brand Personality. This effort followed research on narrowing down consumer responses to universal categories by Aaker, who began with a large list of personality terms from “psychology, personality scales used by marketers (academics and practitioners), and original qualitative research” and refined them to the 15 dimensions of brand personality. (J. Aaker, 1997, p. 349). Additionally, Zimmer, who was concerned that terms provided by researchers might limit the honesty or depth of responses, also went through a series of refining processes and found that the resulting terms were largely consistent with consumer research terminology (Zimmer, 1988). However, I found the Big Five factors to be cumbersome for the methods of analysis I wanted to employ. It might have been more valuable to use a series of behavior/personality factors and compare that data.

Chapter VII

Conclusion

The theory of self-consistency states that individuals are motivated to act in accordance with their self-concept. Applied to a retail context, this would imply that consumers are inclined to shop at stores that affirm their self-concept. Individuals use mental categories to process information and guide behavior, including decisions related to store preference and store choice. If a consumer has several choices for a grocery store, he will evaluate those choices using ad hoc mental categories such as “place that will have my favorite soda” or “disorganized store.” Even if the consumer has never seen the store before, it is likely that he is able to make these category distinctions based on comparing the new options to the prototypical category examples.

While consumers are able to make judgments about a location based on architecture or parking lot layout, retail design and brand identity contribute greatly to the evaluation of a retail location. A consumer may perceive a location to be dirty merely by the style of type used for the sign and dominance of disorganized signage in the window. Any aspects of visual communication associated with a store or restaurant contribute to the perception of its brand. It follows then, that the identity and environmental design of a business, whether created intentionally or not, attracts customers because it affirms some aspect of the customer’s self-concept.

Though connections to self-conflict were not conclusive for this research, there is much potential in the application of self-concept to retail design. It is clear from the results of two online surveys and interviews that consumers make judgments about the quality and availability of merchandise and service based on the exterior of a business. They are also able to convey

whom they think shops at a given store, which contributes to the affirmation of self-concept. If a consumer identifies with those whom they perceive to shop at a retail location, they are more inclined to feel they would belong at this place. In order to connect with their target audience, it is vital for retailers to have an understanding of the motivations, personality attributes, likes, and dislikes of the consumers that make up their target. Merely knowing other stores that a consumer prefers can provide valuable insight into the types of environments that will appeal to the consumer.

If retailers understand who their consumers are they can tailor environments and exteriors to reach these consumers, increasing the likelihood of repeat shopping. This is a unique opportunity for graphic designers, as well, to educate retailers and restaurateurs on the elements of the environment most meaningful to their customer base. The responses from the surveys in this research revealed that consumers can evaluate a business by exterior alone. Inherent in that evaluation is the decision to patronize the business. Whether on foot, in a bus, or in a car, consumers make quick decisions about the appeal of a business related to their mental categories. It is up to retailers to make sure their business falls in the category “place I want to shop.”

APPENDIX A

Survey Landing Page Text

Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in this study.

Do you enjoy shopping or hate it? Are there stores that you love going to? Stores that you swear you'll never visit? Have you ever said, "I could live in this store!"

Just like people, retail environments evoke their own unique personality. As consumers, we respond to these environments just as we would meeting a new friend or seeing an old acquaintance. The purpose of this study is to evaluate what kinds of connections people make based on their impression of retail environments.

The two surveys below are part of a Visual Communication Design MFA thesis project focused on the connection between self-concept and retail environment. They are both secure, anonymous surveys hosted by the Kent State University Qualtrics account and will take about 30-45 minutes to complete. You may exit and return—your browser will open the survey where you left off, provided you don't clear your browsing history. You may take one survey or both. Although, if you enjoy taking one of the surveys I hope you'll consider taking the other one too!

The first survey explores the choices we make as consumers. It consists of the following sections:

Thoughts about yourself

Behaviors and thoughts about shopping

Choosing your preferred retail environments from a selection of photos

The second survey looks at how we decide what's on the inside of a store based on what we see on the outside. It consists of:

Matching store exterior photos to expected store interior photos

Opinions about retail environments from a selection of photos

Both surveys are secure and anonymous—your answers will not be linked to your name or contact information. Please answer questions with the first thought that comes into your head.

Because this study deals with emotions and opinions, your gut reaction is more valuable than a carefully composed response. In other words, don't think too much about it!

At the end of each survey, you will be asked if you would like to participate in further research related to this topic. The link will take you to a separate site not affiliated with the survey.

Would you like to participate? Please click on one of the links below to begin.

Survey One

I shop, therefore I am: The connection between Self-concept and Retail Choice

Survey Two

Shopping, Inside and Out: Matching Retail Exteriors and Interiors

I greatly appreciate your time and thoughts.

Cheers,

Sarah Rutherford

MFA Candidate, Visual Communication Design

Kent State University

APPENDIX B
Consumer Interview Questions

Intro questions

How old are you?

How would you describe the city or neighborhood where you live?

Briefly describe your job and the hours you typically work.

How do you typically spend your free time?

What type of transportation do you typically use?

If someone who had never met you followed you around for a day where you weren't working, without interacting with you, could they get an accurate sense of who you are and what's important to you? Why?

Shopping questions

Do you enjoy shopping?

What do you shop for most often?

What do you most enjoy shopping for?

What things are important to you when you go shopping?

What kinds of environments do you look for when deciding where to shop for NON necessities for yourself?

What kinds of environments do you look for when deciding where to shop for necessities?

How can you predict from the exterior of a store that you've never been to before if you will like it or not?

What elements of a store exterior immediately make you feel you belong in an environment?

What elements of a store exterior immediately make you feel you don't belong environment?

Restaurant questions

Do you enjoy eating out?

How often do you eat out (including takeout) each week?

What things are important to you when dining out?

What do you look for when choosing a bar or restaurant?

How can you predict from the exterior of a restaurant that you've never been to before if you will like it or not?

What elements of a restaurant exterior immediately make you feel you belong in an environment?

What elements of a restaurant exterior immediately make you feel you don't belong environment?

Store environment questions

Are there stores or restaurants you go to that you feel "get" you or are an expression of yourself?

Why?

Are there stores or restaurants you dislike going to?

Why?

What elements of a retail environment make you feel welcome?

What elements of a retail environment make you uncomfortable?

In an imaginary scenario, you have unlimited funds to shop for what you most enjoy buying and all of your favorite stores are together in one environment. Describe this environment. How long would you like to stay here?

References

- Aaker, D. A. (1996). *Building Strong Brands*. New York: Free Press.
- Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of Brand Personality. *Journal of Marketing Research (JMR)*, 34(3), 347–356.
- Arora, R., & Stoner, C. (2009). A mixed method approach to understanding brand personality. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 18(4), 272–283.
- Baker, J., Grewal, D., & Parasuraman, A. (1994). The influence of store environment on quality inferences and store image. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 22(4), 328–339.
- Barsalou, L. (1983). Ad hoc categories. *Memory & Cognition*, 11(3), 211–227.
- Calver, G. (2003). *Retail Graphics*. Rotovision.
- Cohen, J. B. (1982). The Role of Affect in Categorization: Toward a Reconsideration of the Concept of Attitude. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 9(1), 94–100.
- Darden, W. R., & Babin, B. J. (1994). Exploring the concept of affective quality: Expanding the concept of retail personality. *Journal of Business Research*, 29(2), 101–109.
- De Botton, A. (2006). *The Architecture of Happiness* (1st American ed.). New York: Pantheon Books.
- Donovan, R. J. R. (1982). Store Atmosphere: An Environmental Psychology Approach. *Journal of Retailing*, 58(1), 34.
- Dornoff, R. J., & Tatham, R. L. (1972). Congruence between personal image and store image. *Journal of the Market Research Society*, 14(1), 45–52.
- Fowler, F. J. (1995). *Improving Survey Questions: Design and Evaluation* (1st ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Hume, D. (1965). *Of the standard of taste, and other essays*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.
- J.C. Penney Opening “Hip” In-Store Shops. (2012, July 30). *Merchandising Matters*. Retrieved from <http://merchandisingmatters.com/retail-localization/jc-penney-opening-hip-in-store-shops/>
- jcpenny. (2010, August 18). MNG by Mango Launches Exclusively at JCPenney. Retrieved from http://ir.jcpenny.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=70528&p=irol-newsArticle_print&ID=1461053&highlight=

- jcpenny. (2011, February 22). jcpenny Transformation Takes Shape With Bold New Logo. Company News. Retrieved from <http://ir.jcpenny.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=70528&p=irol-newsCompanyArticle&ID=1531199&highlight>
- jcpenny. (2012a, January 25). Jcpenny Partners with Ellen DeGeneres. Retrieved from <http://www.jcpmediaroom.com/posts/16/JCPENNEY-PARTNERS-WITH-ELLEN-DEGENERES>
- jcpenny. (2012b, January 25). Jcpenny's Transformation Plans Revealed at Launch Event in New York City. Retrieved from <http://www.jcpmediaroom.com/posts/18/JCPENNEY'S-TRANSFORMATION-PLANS-REVEALED-AT-LAUNCH-EVENT-IN-NEW-YORK-CITY>
- jcpenny. (2012c, March 12). Jcpenny Assembles Team of the Industry's Best to Drive Transformation. Retrieved from <http://www.jcpmediaroom.com/posts/45/JCPENNEY-ASSEMBLES-TEAM-OF-THE-INDUSTRY'S-BEST-TO-DRIVE-TRANSFORMATION>
- jcpenny. (n.d.). About Us. jcpenny. Retrieved July 23, 2012, from <http://www.jcpenny.net/About-Us.aspx>
- JCPenny Plans New Stores and Renovations at Existing Stores. (2010, January 30). ShoppingBlog.com. Retrieved from <http://www.shoppingblog.com/blog/9301029>
- Kent, T. (2007). Creative space: design and the retail environment. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 35(9), 734–745.
- Kotler, P. (1973). Atmospherics as a Marketing Tool. *Journal of Retailing*, 49(4), 48.
- Kristen. (2012, September 17). Paper Source Live Chat.
- Lindquist, J. D. (1974). Meaning of Image. *Journal of Retailing*, 50(4), 29.
- Mangan, D. (1976). Design System Transforms Mass Retailer. *Industrial Design*, 23 (Sept/Oct), 43–47.
- Martineau, P. (1958). The Personality of the Retail Store. *Harvard Business Review*, 36(1), 47–55.
- Mazursky, D., & Jacoby, J. (1986). Exploring the development of store images. *Journal of Retailing*, 62(2), 145–165.
- Menchie's. (2012, June 14). Ella - Menchie's Mix Master. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=gbiJzdCckT0

Menchie's. (n.d.-a). History. Menchie's. Retrieved July 23, 2012, from <http://www.menchies.com/frozen-yogurt-store-history>

Menchie's. (n.d.-b). Vision. Menchie's. Retrieved July 23, 2012, from <http://www.menchies.com/frozen-yogurt-store-vision>

Nedungadi, P., & Hutchinson, J. W. (1985). The Prototypicality of Brands: Relationships with Brand Awareness, Preference and Usage. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 12(1), 498–503.

Paper Lover's Heaven: Paper Source. (2012, October 13). Time for Dinner. Retrieved from <http://timefordinner.wordpress.com/2010/10/13/paper-lovers-heaven-paper-source/>

Paper Source. (2011, August 2). Hoots to All You Night Owls! Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151155289738125&set=a.416324318124.211524.31302143124&type=3&theater>

Paper Source. (n.d.-a). About Us. Paper Source. Retrieved from <http://www.paper-source.com/cgi-bin/paper/about/index.html>

Paper Source. (n.d.-b). Pinterest: Paper Source. Paper Source. Retrieved from <http://pinterest.com/papersource/>

Paper Source. (n.d.-c). Facebook: Paper Source. Paper Source. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/PaperSource>

Paper Source. (n.d.-d). Twitter: Paper Source. Paper Source. Retrieved from http://twitter.com/Paper_Source

Robinson, Patrick. (2011, September 7). Menchie's Frozen Yogurt coming to the Admiral District will let you mix it up yourself. *West Seattle Herald*. Retrieved from <http://www.westseattleherald.com/2011/09/07/news/menchies-frozen-yogurt-coming-admiral-district-wi>

Schenk, C. T., & Holman, R. H. (1980). A Sociological Approach to Brand Choice: The Concept of Situational Self Image. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 7(1), 610–614.

Sephora. (n.d.). Sephora: About Us. About Us. Retrieved from <http://www.sephora.com/contentStore/mediaContentTemplate.jsp?mediaId=10800104>

Sherman, E., Mathur, A., & Smith, R. B. (1997). Store environment and consumer purchase behavior: Mediating role of consumer emotions. *Psychology and Marketing*, 14(4), 361 – 378.

- Sirgy, M. J. (1982). Self-Concept in Consumer Behavior: A Critical Review. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(3), 287–300.
- Sirgy, M. J. (1985). Using self-congruity and ideal congruity to predict purchase motivation. *Journal of Business Research*, 13(3), 195–206.
- Sirgy, M. J., Grewal, D., & Mangleburg, T. (2000). Retail Environment, Self-Congruity, and Retail Patronage: An Integrative Model and a Research Agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, 49(2), 127–138.
- Sirgy, M. J., Johar, J. S., Samli, A. C., & Claiborne, C. B. (1991). Self-congruity versus functional congruity: Predictors of consumer behavior. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 19(4), 363 – 375.
- Sproles, G. B., & Kendall, E. L. (1986). A Methodology for Profiling Consumers' Decision-Marking Styles. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 20(2), 267.
- Tauber, E. M. (1972). Why Do People Shop? *Journal of Marketing*, 36(4), 46–49.
- Vit, A. (2012, January 26). jcpenny Nails the American Look. Brand New. Retrieved from http://www.underconsideration.com/brandnew/archives/jcpenny_nails_the_american_look.php
- Ware, C. (2008). *Visual Thinking: for Design* (1st ed.). Morgan Kaufmann.
- Wheeler, A. (2006). *Designing Brand Identity: A Complete Guide to Creating, Building, and Maintaining Strong Brands* (2nd ed.). Wiley.
- Yogurtland. (n.d.). Why Yogurtland. Yogurtland. Retrieved from <http://www.yogurt-land.com/franchise/why-yogurtland/>
- Zimmer, M. R., & Golden, L. L. (1988). Impressions of retail stores: A content analysis of consumer images. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(3), 265–293.