Staging fashion brands
The design of the flagship store

Sophia E. van Rooij
Image 1; (cover) Céline fall/winter runway show (Vogue.com, 2013)
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Master's thesis

Sophia E. van Rooij, 1503375
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Delft University of Technology
Faculty of Architecture
Explore Lab 18

Research mentor: D.C. Kooijman
Preface

This master’s thesis is the base of my graduation project at Explore Lab 18. A lot of work is done in the past year. This report describes the outcomes of my research and will be my guide during the design process.

In Explore Lab I received the opportunity to turn my fascination into a graduation project. I was able to combine my love for architecture with my passion for fashion. Therefore the subject of this master’s thesis is retail design. It describes the relationship between the brand identity and the architecture of retail space, by carrying out a literature study and some case studies.

Without the help of a few people this project would have never been possible. I would like to thank Leontine de Wit and Dion Kooijman, my design mentor and research mentor at Delft University of Technology, for their guidance and support while writing this thesis. Special thanks goes to Jeroen van de Laar, for his different angles of view and to my friend Emily van Vught, who shares my fascination for retail design. Last, I would like to thank my parents who have supported me through the whole writing process.

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# Table of contents

**Preface** 5  

**Table of contents**  

**Summary** 9  

1. Introduction 11  
   1.1 Retail & Architecture 11  
   1.2 Problem description 11  
   1.3 Research questions 12  
   1.4 Research method 13  
   1.5 Reading guide 14  

2. The Flagship store & Céline 15  
   2.1 The brand & the logo 17  
   2.2 The building 23  
   2.3 The user 26  
   2.4 Céline 28  
   2.5 Conclusion 41  

3. Fieldwork: cases 46  
   3.1 Viktor&Rolf - Siebe Tettero 48  
   3.2 G-Star - OMA/Pieter Kool 52  
   3.3 Nathalie Vleesschouwer - import.export Architecture 56  
   3.4 Conclusion 60  

4. Fieldwork: Expert interviews 62  
   4.1 Siebe Tettero 63  
   4.2 Pieter Kool 66  
   4.3 Oscar Rommens 69  
   4.4 Conclusion 72  

5. Conclusions & recommendations 74  
   5.1 Conclusions 74  
   5.2 Recommendations 78  

**Literature** 81  

**List of images** 83
Summary

Economy, architecture and fashion have always been closely related. Trends in architecture and fashion respond to changes in the economy. They both change with a different frequency but are defining for the moment in time. The point of focus of this master’s thesis is the contribution of retail architecture to the identity of a fashion brand and to gain a better understanding of the influence of identification and association through architectural aspects of a retail space on consumers and their perception of a brand. The flagship store is especially addressed deeper. This knowledge could be useful in creating new branding concepts in which retail architecture plays an important role.

The contrast between the changing environment of retail spaces and the anticipated recognition of established brands in relationship to the building and the logo form an interesting starting point.

The main research question to be answered in this thesis is: How can retail architecture contribute to the identity and recognition of a fashion brand without relying on the logo?

Because the topic is broad, it is necessary to set focus. Therefore sub questions to answer the research question are divided in three subcategories, namely the brand, the building and the user.

To answer the questions various research methods are used. First the theory about this subject is consulted in the available literature. This gave an extensive idea of the field of research. This field contains retail design, but also consumer behavior and branding, all related to retail design. Secondly, the French fashion house Céline is analyzed. Third, three cases, flagship stores and a head quarter of three different fashion brands were analyzed, and the designers of these projects were interviewed. The results of the various cases and the interviews are compared to each other and to the results retrieved from the literature.

The literature about the topic describes the effects of the retail environment on the brand experience. The brand experience is the point of focus in a flagship store. A qualitatively good experience can be achieved by offering the customer possibilities to create memorable impressions through specific cues and favoring interaction with the environment. The case studies show this experience can be designed in various ways. The experts think the architecture can contribute to a successful experience; in some cases the architectural elements even overrule the logo.

Considering the outcomes of this project I must say that the retail architecture can play a big role in the brand experience. However, it does not necessarily increase the recognition of a fashion brand, more factors play a role in this process. The logo is a big part of the visual brand identity, and imbedded in the memories of the customers, and it cannot be replaced by architecture completely. But architecture can help to enforce the brand, by adding an extra point of recognition. The most important role of architecture within the identity of a brand is supporting the recognizability of the brand.
1. Introduction

This chapter describes the research background. The point of focus of this master's thesis is the contribution of retail architecture to the identity of a fashion brand.

1.1 Retail and architecture

Architects need to keep in mind that the trends in architecture and fashion move in different paces, and so the shop needs to be adaptable to that. Trends in fashion tend to change every season, while trends in architecture have a much longer lifespan. This is the point where the interior and exterior of a retail space start playing different roles. The interior adapts quickly to the different trends, while the exterior forms a recognizable base. To keep this division clear and to avoid confusion it is important to define the terms used in this master's thesis. From the beginning it was vital to set the difference between retail architecture and retail design very clear. Here interpreted as the character of retail design is temporary and flexible whereas retail architecture is more permanent. For example, furniture and 'movable' object are considered as part of the retail design of the store, whereas the retail architecture comprises elements like flooring, fixed spatial objects and the layout of the store. The facade is also part of the retail architecture but the shopping windows are part of the retail design.

The contrast between the changing environment of retail spaces and the anticipated recognition of established brands in relationship to the building and the logo form an interesting starting point.

1.2 Problem description

Under the influence of internet our behavior has changed in many ways. One way in particular is our buyer behavior. The customer has more power than ever, being able to compare prices in different stores with a few taps on his phone. Finding the best deal is the way to go. Or offering the best experience is the way to go. An experience one has to visit a store for that cannot be experienced through (social) media.

Since our buying behavior shifted to online shopping, the role of the store has changed. A new type of store emerged, the flagship store. In this type of store the emphasis lies upon the experience of the brand, or like Kozinets defines it in three characteristics; first, they carry a single brand of product. Secondly, the shop is owned by that brand’s manufacturer and last they are operated with the intention of building or reinforcing the image of the brand rather than operating to sell the product at a profit (2002, p. 17). The intention of offering the customers the ultimate brand experience is to let them feel connected with the brand, and sell products based on client bonding, not based on the best deal.

In the last decade the international retail chains have grown extensively. As a result of this, in every city center you can find the same retailers. They are
recognizable by their logo from afar. This uniformity gives many a safe feeling, but is not very exciting. This almost is a reason to go shopping online, because the experience is not unique anymore.

The logo has taken the leading role in attracting the customer, in some cases even overshadowing the shopping windows as a feature of attraction. But when the logo is removed from the facade, it is hard for customers to tell the difference between the different retailers. However, customers still recognize the market segment the store is targeting. This could be different if the architecture of the building was in line with the brand identity. A place where architecture has become the logo in very flamboyant ways is Las Vegas. The pyramid of the Luxor Casino and the duplicate of the Eiffel tower in front of the Paris Las Vegas Hotel are the strongest symbols of the Las Vegas strip. A more modest example are the Ikea stores, the blue boxes are recognizable from afar. A sign with their name is not necessary; their identity is expressed through the architecture of the buildings.

Retail architecture is a neglected aspect within the faculty of Architecture in Delft. Often it is confused with interior architecture or product design. By neglecting retail architecture is reduced to nothing more than a background. This has to do with the fact that architects are not as involved in the complete design any more like they used to be in the past. Architects like Le Corbusier, Loos and Breuer not only designed buildings, they designed a complete way of life, including furniture and gardens. For modern architects this is a missed opportunity, by narrowing down our abilities and only focusing on the building as a thing and the users are often forgotten. In retail architecture the architecture is a part of the ‘selling’-machine.

Possible solutions for the neglect that will be considered in this thesis are broadening the role of the architect. When the architect is more aware of the identity of the brand a more tailored design can result in better brand experiences. An architecture that is adaptable to different cities and cultures worldwide, with a strong sense of brand identity can support the experience. The flagship store represents the highlight of the experience of the brand. The architecture will become part of the brand, with a strength compared to the one of the logo. Leaders in this field are Apple and G-Star.

From the knowledge gained in the previous paragraphs, a problem has been filtered. The main focus of this research is:
- To gain insight into the influence of the logo of a brand in relation to brand recognition of the architecture of the brand.

1.3 Research questions

The main research question to be answered in this thesis is:
How can retail architecture contribute to the identity and recognition of a fashion brand without relying on the logo?

Because the topic is broad, it is necessary to set focus. Therefore three sub questions to answer the research question are formulated concerning the brand, the building and the user.
Subcategory 1: The Brand
On what is brand perception based?
- What makes a good retail experience?
What is the role of the logo within the identity of the brand?
- How can architecture become a part of the brand?

Subcategory 2: The Building
What are the current programmatic requirements for a flagship store of a luxury brand?
How does the urban context influence the facade and therefor the recognition of the brand?
- Is the interior a more decisive architectural element than the facade considering brand recognition?
How are terms like brand recognition and brand association translated into interior concepts of new flagship stores?

Subcategory 3: The User
What is the experience of the consumer in a luxury retail space?
How can the architecture improve the consumers’ experience?
Why is more attention for branding and perception needed in architecture?

1.4 Research method
The research of this thesis compromises many different methods. To gain a profound understanding of the topic a thorough approach was necessary. Information was not only gathered through literature review and case studies but also through attending lecture series in The New Institute in Rotterdam and a specialized retail summer school at Hasselt University.

The brand chosen to design for during my graduation is Céline. The brand has undergone a big transition since the appointment of Phoebe Philo as the new creative director of the brand. The transformation of this brand is analyzed in three case studies. In addition to three case studies of stores of Céline, also three other flagship stores have been analyzed. The Upside Down Store of Viktor&Rolf, designed by Tettero and Zwail. The G-Star Head Quarters by Kool and his team and the Fragile Lab by import.export Architecture. The case studies differ in the use of scale, the role of the logo and interpretation of the brand identity. To gain even better understanding of the case studies the three designers of the concerning case studies have been interviewed.

The different methods contributed to parts of the thesis. In the end, the knowledge gained through every aspect of research is compared and bundled in a conclusion.
In part 1 the terminology is explained and the research questions defined. In part 2 a closer look is taken at the theory and the brand Céline is introduced. Part 3 consists of different case studies, to which the interviews in part 4 can be linked. In the final part the connection between the research and the graduation design is made. The thesis ends with a conclusion.
1.5 Reading guide

This report is divided in different parts:
- Part 1: Introduction to the subject
- Part 2: Theoretical research and the brand Céline
- Part 3: Fieldwork: the cases
- Part 4: Fieldwork: the interviews

The reason to divide the research report in three different parts is because this corresponds with the different methods used and the different topics of the parts. In the end the results of all the parts are combined in one conclusion.
2. The flagship store & Céline

In this second chapter the subject is further explored through an extensive literature study. This chapter forms the base on which the case studies and interviews are built.

The flagship store
Since the introduction of the internet our society has changed. This development has not only changed the way we communicate but also our consumer behavior. The broad offer of online shops makes it easier for consumers to compare, bargain and find the best deals. The increasing influence of technology in our daily lives has had a shifting effect on the role of the store in our society in the past two decades. Because customers are no longer bound to the shop as a place and space where they purchase their goods, the shop has become a place of interaction between the brand and the customers. In these so-called ‘brand environments’ the brand, its values and its vision are promoted. This type of shop, where the experience is more important than sales, we call a flagship store.

How is the flagship store defined in literature? According to Kozinets et al. there are three important characteristics to meet that distinguish a flagship store from other stores. First, they carry a single brand of product. Secondly, the shop is owned by that brand’s manufacturer and last they are operated with the intention of building or reinforcing the image of the brand rather than operating to sell the product at a profit (2002, p. 17). To sharpen the definition even more a fourth characteristic could be added to this list. Usually there is just one flagship store of a brand in a country. This is to emphasize the uniqueness of the shop but also to point out the difference with the monobrand store, with which the flagship store is often confused. However, only the first two characteristics of the list apply to the monobrand store. “Flagships provide more “anchoring points” (experiential offerings conveying the brand ideology) than brand stores (Borghini et al. 2009). Consequently, shoppers in flagships have more opportunities to experience the brand sensorially, physically, emotionally, and intellectually, which facilitates more powerful brand experiences. Flagships act as a quilting point for a brand as to allow for the grouping of multiple brand meanings into a coherent whole (Diamond et al. 2009)” (Dolbec&Chebat, 2013, p.461).

Kozinets explanation is very clear and broad, but within the genre itself two types of flagship stores can be distinguished. The first being unique flagship stores and the second type is the general format flagship store. A unique flagship store is a one-off a kind architectural design. The brand has given complete architectural freedom to the architect to interpret the brand in his own personal way. A generic flagship store is strongly inspired by the interpretation of the brand identity used for the monobrand stores, only differing in the way this identity is magnified and the focus is on the brand experience instead of on the sales. Image 2 supports this explanation. On the left the unique format is displayed, with a clear differentiation between the concepts for the monobrand stores and the flagship stores. On the right the regular format with the magnified concept for the flagship store is displayed.
Both in the highest segment and in the high street the flagship store is gaining ground. However, the flagship store plays different roles within the context of the sales of both.

In the flagship store, a seed is planted in the brains of the customer. A good in store experience will lead to a customer identifying with the brand, and the desire will arise to commit to the brand. The seed starts growing. At the next purchase of the brand, the customer can turn to every (random) other point of sale of the brand, where the seed is harvested.

In the lower segments, customers often turn to the online stores for their purchases, but luxury brands are often not available online to guarantee exclusivity. The luxury brands want their customers to visit the shop, so the brand can offer the best service and a solid experience every time.

At the same time retailers in all the segments cannot ignore this revolution in buyer behavior. A lot of brands fetch a large portion of their revenue from online sales. The offer of online shops in lower segments is much bigger. For them the sales are more important than the experience.
2.1 The brand & the logo

**Brand & Perception**
To understand what brand perception is based on, we first have to define what we understand as ‘brand’. Kooijman uses in his book *Machine en Theater* the short definition of Dreesmann: the brand is a product on which the name and the logo are present (p.100, 1999). But that is a very concise definition, to which can be added that a brand is a name, symbol, term, design or other feature that distinguishes one seller's product from those of others. Distinction can be achieved through a solid identity. The identity of a brand is a combination of the values, vision, quality and the place within society that the manufacturer wants to carry out to its customers. The way the customers experience this identity is what we call the brand image or brand perception. One can perceive the identity of the brand in different ways, through advertisements in media, in the store or other brand experiences. “Customers and retailers benefit when a brand has a distinctive and enduring personality. Brands acquire symbolic meaning that offers customers the opportunity for self-expression, identity construction, and confirmation (Belk 1988; Elliot and Wattanasuwan 1998). These benefits translate into economic value for the company and build brand equity (Keller 2007; van Rekom, Jacobs and Verlegh 2006). Customers’ (retail) brand personality perceptions can arise from any experience with a brand (Aaker 1996; Plummer 1985). For example, customers draw inferences from the personality traits of the people associated with the brand, such as a company’s CEO, as well as from the brand’s user imagery” (Möller & Herm, 2013, p.439).

**The experience**
Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantello define brand experience as the “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognition) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brands' design and identity, packaging, communications and environments” (2009, p. 6).

Seen from the point of a retailer a retail experience is successful when is confirmed that the customer has experienced the brand identity how the retailer had intended. By returning to the store the customer affirms the success.

Seen from the viewpoint of the customer a retail experience was successful when all expectations of the brand are fulfilled or even exceeded. More service than expected, a wide range of products and offers that do not necessarily involve sales.

Dolbec et al. refines the meaning of these experiences even more by using quotes of Diamond et al. and Borghini et al. The experiences have to deliver cultural meanings uniquely associated with the brand and help consumers to further their life projects. This can be done through multifaceted brand stores and flagships attending to the brand ideology and the display of moral values through physical cues and storytelling (p.465, 2013).

In line with these ideas is the strategy of Tesla Motors. Cars are still associated with exhaust fumes and pollution. The electric cars of Tesla are great progress in the field of affordable and environmentally friendly driving. This company offers a unique product that the customer can adapt to its own whishes and gives the customer the idea he is responsible for the environment at the same
time. Their futuristic retail environment also reinforces the idea of purchasing an avant-garde and state of the art product.

**Powerful in-store brand experiences**
Retailers not only want to offer their customers a unique experience, but also unique products. In flagship stores often the more exclusive products and limited editions are offered in a special designed environment. Pine and Gilmore (1998) recommend to theme the experience, create memorable impressions through specific cues, offer the purchase of memorabilia, and engage the senses. Results of retail research (Borghini et al. 2009; Diamond et al. 2009; Hollenbeck et al. 2008; Kozinets et al. 2002, 2004; Sherry 1998) put forward the importance of creating an environment that leads to the co-creation of experience, this can be achieved, for example, through an environment that favours the interaction with a shopping companion (Diamond et al. 2009) or with the environment (Hollenbeck et al. 2008) (Dolbec et al., 2013, p.465).

In the same way, the architect can contribute to the brand experience in his design through choice of materials, quality of the materials and suiting aesthetics. By taking more responsibility for creating a extensive experience the architect can contribute to the identity of the brand. A brand with a strong relation between the design of their retail environments and their products is Apple. Their simple but strong design concept is applied worldwide. Another aspect that makes the experience in an Apple store very pleasant is their focus on service.

Service is crucial in offering a powerful experience. Service is both tangible and intangible. Many Asian customers on holiday in Europe appreciate it when store personnel can speak their language. Or when a menu is translated in their language.

At last, to create a powerful and lasting brand experience Ariely and Carmon (2000) point to two features: the peak and end intensity of the experience and its trend over time. Since the in-store brand experience in a flagship should represent the most intense (peak) experience of this brand (Borghini et al. 2009), it should have a significant effect on the overall evaluation of the brand, both through a peak experience, as explained earlier, and because it is increasing the average evaluation of experiences (i.e., the trend over time) for that brand” (Dolbec et al., 2013, p.465).

**Logo & Identity**
A logo is a symbol or other small design adopted by an organization to identify its products, uniform, vehicles, etc. (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2010). The logo is part of the visual identity of the brand. “Visual identity makes a product or service visible and its provider (the brand) recognizable. This involves more than a logo and house style, more than a stamp or a trademark. Visual identity represents what the company stands for and what it believes. The whole combination of name, logo, typography, color and visual language reveal this heart and vision of the brand. It is in the blending of these elements and the selected style, color, character, with their collected symbolic meaning that the identity is made visible. This can be so powerful that when it is visualized in another language, the brand is still immediately recognizable” (Van Tongeren, 2013, p. 115).
According to Van Tongeren, to achieve a powerful visual brand identity being recognizable is a necessity. Because of growing competition and the huge amounts of information that consumers are confronted with every day, their attention becomes increasingly selective. They rely more on symbols making their choices. One can say that more than ever before, we live in a visual communications society. People do not have enough time and patience and have therefore become highly skilled in absorbing and understanding iconography: characters and symbols. As soon as we see an image, a whole world opens up to us. A visual brand identity therefore has to carry weight and have meaning for consumers. Therefore it is essential to maintain recognizability and consistency for years at a time (2013, p. 115-116).

As a brand has proven itself over the years, it can become a synonym for quality. The logo of such brands turns into a mark of quality. Customers like to be seen with products of a strong brand. The logo of this product gives them status. They want to express their belief in the brand and its products because of its quality, reliability and service. The logo has become a status symbol and represents a certain lifestyle.

John Hoke explains this in a very clear way. “The brands you select. The things you wear, the car that you drive, express who you are. The interesting thing is that traditional means of expression, such as religion or age, have become largely irrelevant. Instead the focus is on the things that you choose. This gives the design profession a very elevated status: we help determine how people express their personal feelings” (Riewoldt, 2002, p. 109)

The logo is not only present on the products of the brand, but also on their retail venues. The sign with the logo is a point of recognition in the streetscape. As soon as the customer sees the logo and recognize the brand, it will evoke the same feelings he had in his earlier experiences with that brand. This
recognition also evokes certain expectations, which have to be met each time the brand is experienced (Van Tongeren, 2013, p. 115-116). Recognizable architecture can complement and reinforce the recognition.

One of the most important parts of retail architecture is the façade. The signs on the façade communicate the identity of the brand sold inside. The logo is often present. The few studies that consider the exterior generally address the effects of window displays (Edwards and Shackley, 1992; Sen et al., 2002), which are designed to help create and maintain an overall store image (Park et al., 1986). In a study conducted among clothing retailers, Sen et al. (2002) demonstrate that the decision to enter a store relates to consumers’ acquisition of store-related information (e.g., image) from the window displays. The outside of the store thus appears to affect store image and consumer decisions (Cornelius et al., 2010, p. 144).

Experience exhibits that the more expensive the brand, the subtler is the presence of the announcement of the brand on the façade. In contrast, in major shopping streets brands are trying to attract attention from the customers with their large signs.

**Architecture as part of the brand**

Retail architecture effective when it is recognizable and evokes memories of previous experiences with the brand the same way the logo does. A consistent architectural style, a repetition of certain elements and a brand-specific color scheme are ways to create a household style. All the elements of a household style can be used to communicate the market segment, targeted audience and moral values of the brand to the customer.

Some brands have created strong house styles and applied them worldwide, with little differences to suit the countries cultural background and script. McDonalds is one of these brands. Recognizable all over the world, but the menu in each country is adapted to the local cuisine.
There are ways when architecture becomes the logo of a brand, or when architecture becomes as important as the logo. Using three examples what role architecture can play in recognizing a brand is explained. The three examples are ING House, Amsterdam. The Eiffel Tower in Paris and the Luxor Casino in Las Vegas.

The first example is architecture as a tool to define the brand. This type of building is often created in collaboration with a well-known architect, so the brand will be associated with fine taste in architecture. Commissioned by ING along the highway in Amsterdam a very controversial building has risen in 2002. Designed by Meyer en Van Schooten, the building is visible from far away and one is curious who is housed in this building. This is an example where the logo and identity are subordinate to the architecture. The architecture is a tool to differentiate. Through its distinct appearance the building has already received several nicknames. Anyway, this building makes a deep impression and is a landmark in the city.

The second way architecture can become a logo is when it become a symbol for a city. Originally designed to show the public the construction possibilities with steel the Eiffel Tower was built in 1889 on the occasion of the World Expo. Today we associate the Eiffel Tower not so much with the World Expo or with the expertise of Mr. Eiffel, but mainly with the city of Paris. The building has become the ultimate logo of the city.

Image 5; Plaza under the Eiffel tower with Parisians promenading (Tissandier Collection, 1889)
The last manner how architecture can be linked to a brand is when the architecture becomes a logo for itself, and cannot be separated from its function. A sign with the name of the brand has become superfluous because the building is an expression of the name. The best example of this is the Luxor in Las Vegas, the shape of the building is reflected in the X of the logo, complete with light beam from the top.
2.2 The building

The program of a flagship store
Experience is key in the flagship store. It is the place where the consumer can undergo and understand the spirit of the company. Customers do not only buy the product, they are also buying into the ethics of the company. The customer anticipates an environment that embodies the brand identity, theme and values in an innovative and interactive way. “By staging the brand experience in flagship stores, shop designs or entire theme parks, companies communicate the image of the brand and imprint a characteristic atmosphere on the consumer consciousness” (Riewoldt, 2002, p.8). The focus of the flagship store design should be on qualities that the other (and online) stores do not offer.

To create a successful retail environment the design must merge with the brand image down to the finest details. The goal is a total experience. Expressiveness, the purposeful use of characteristic forms, and calculated elements of surprise combine to form an integral whole.

The urban context
“Location, location, location” is a often heard mantra for retail success. For the success of a flagship store the urban context is extremely important. Deciding where to locate a retail business is a major part of the brand strategy and has impact on everything the shop does. The difference between selecting the wrong location and the right site could be the difference between business failure and success. A location in a shopping street among other brands attracts customers who identify with luxury and quality. Store location is a retailer’s most costly expense and a long-term marketing-mix decision. Unlike a bad pricing or promotional decision, a poor store location adversely affects retailer performance for several years. Experience exhibits that retailers prefer to locate close to customers, but by doing so expose them to competition from other retailers that also want to be close to a similar target audience. From the retailer’s point-of-view, proximity to consumers means proximity to other stores.

Some streets have become synonymous with luxury and quality. The finest suits in London can be found on Savile Row, known for their handcrafted tailored suits. For luxury goods in Los Angeles Rodeo Drive is the place to be. And everybody knows the Champs Elysees in Paris. The phenomenon of stores locating near one another is called agglomeration. ‘Stores of different types commonly co-locate in shopping centers and malls (inter-type agglomeration). Stores of the same type, such as restaurants, hotels, jewelers, furniture stores, and automobile dealerships, also often locate close together (intra-type agglomeration). Though agglomeration may be driven by retailers’ need to be near consumers, it can also be intrinsically beneficial for retailers. Miller, Reardon and McCorkle (1999) suggested that net gains/losses from agglomeration depend on the balance of two countervailing forces. The first force captures the incremental attractiveness of stores located close together compared to the attractiveness of those same stores individually. This incremental attractiveness reflects a reduction in consumers’ costs of searching among stores and multi-purpose shopping. In effect, an agglomeration of stores becomes a shopping destination. Miller, et al. have
termed this positive force symbiosis. The second force reflects competition for consumer purchases among stores that sell similar products (even if they sell different products, stores compete for consumers’ disposable income). Miller, et al. have called this negative force Darwinism, evoking the process of natural selection. The balance of these two forces can result in either a positive, neutral or negative effect of agglomeration on retailer performance’ (Fox et al., 2007, p.3).

The façade and brand recognition
Visiting the store is usually not the first experience a customer has with a brand. Throughout the day people are bombarded by visual advertisement in the streets and in multimedia. The physical experience of the brand already starts outside the building, when the customer is approaching the store.

At first the customer is attracted by the logo or the façade of the shop. Many potential influences can appear at the front of the store: building signs, neon writing, display windows, merchandise presentation, and so on (Cornelius et al., 2010, p. 143). These elements have to convince the customers to enter the shop, because they are already familiar with the brand and evoke previous memories or because the signs have lured them in. The second step of the experience is entering the store and experiencing the brand environment. This is where the customer will interact and undergo the brand experience.

According to existing reviews of store atmospherics, the exterior of the store is the worst represented atmospheric stimulus in marketing literature (e.g., Turley and Milliman, 2000; Eroglu and Machleit, 2008), even though the exterior is the first set of cues consumers see. If external stimuli are poorly managed, the rest of the atmosphere may not matter (Turley and Milliman, 2000) (Cornelius et al., 2010, p. 144). The customers have high expectations, the environment should embodies the brand identity, have a theme and display the values of the brand in an innovative and interactive way. The purchase should be the highlight of the experience.

The exterior and the interior of the flagship store cannot function without each other. Both architectural elements are really important in the process. When there are no customers lured inside by the looks of the store, there will be no need for a beautiful interior. And it works the same the other way around, when the customer is lured inside by the façade and the interior does not provide an experience that leads to a purchase it leads nowhere.

Depending on what the brand wants to achieve and what the brand wants to project, the façade of the store will be in line with or contrast with the surrounding buildings. Often brands do not have the option to adapt the façade to their liking because they have to rely on the façade of the existing buildings. The shopping window then becomes the place where the brand can distinguish itself. By looking at the shopping windows customers can already catch a glimpse of the brand identity and the experience inside and estimate if they belong to the target audience of the store. The openness of the shopping windows and the amount of displayed products is often associated with the degree of exclusivity of the store. Brands in the higher segments tend to limit the amount of products displayed in their windows, unless it is a luxury department store.
Another indicator for customers to decide to enter a store is the accessibility of the entrance. This does not only include the design of the entrance or if a door is opened or closed but also if there is staff to open the door for customers and guard the store. In a lot of cases a doorman can form a big threshold for customers to enter, and decrease the accessibility of the store by his presence.

**The interior and brand recognition**

The interior of the store is the place where the biggest part of the experience takes place. The brand will benefit by an interior that embodies their values and identity and is recognizable as theirs. Brand recognition can be achieved by choosing the right type of format for the interior of the shop. A flagship store based on a general format will have a strong similarity with the other retail venues of the brand and therefore will be recognizable. Repetition of recognizable elements will evoke old memories of previous experiences with the brand. Magnifying the house style is not remarkable but according to Massimo Isoa Ghini not every space has to be unique. Most important is that brand identity must be translated effectively into each individual context. The recognition factor is key component of design identity, he tells in an interview with Riewoldt (2002, p.113).

Flagship stores based on a unique concept can make a more intense impression. By being unique it can become more exclusive, and the shop will stand out between other stores. A good example is Aesop. This brand attracts a new architect to design the interior for every shop they open, so every store has a different character.
2.3 The user

**Luxury experience**
The consumer experience is defined by many different factors that leave a subjective impression on the customer. It is the intangible, added value that means that consumers take a detour for it or are willing to pay more for it. Each visit the customer has to be offered an innovative, surprising and understandable experience. The experience can be very subtle and personal, as long as it adds value to the bond between the brand and the customer. Brand experience is defined as the "subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognition) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brands’ design and identity, packaging, communications and environments" (Dolbec&Chebat, 2013, p.460).
Van Tongeren compares consumers’ experience with a complex symphony. As experienced observers, consumers judge a store on the totality of impressions they experience. This experience is partly unconscious, and all the senses are fully alert. The consumer ultimately experiences the holistic whole, in which all the elements - from price to presentation and from personnel to service - are inextricably linked together, as a store, in the same way that we experience a symphony as a symphony, and not as a collaboration between a group of musicians (2013, p. 15).

Therefore all of the different elements have to be aligned to each other in order to meet the expectations of the customers. If one element does not perform properly all is not right. Because an experience is so subjective the customer will always draw comparisons with previous experiences and different brands. It is therefore important to meet the expectations or even exceed the expectations. This gives the customer a feeling the experience was successful. With regard to the service a lot can be improved in the Netherlands. Retail architecture and design can contribute to a service-oriented environment by taking the needs of the customer and the staff into account in the design. This also illustrates the close relationship between the various factors that lead to a pleasant retail experience.

**How can the architecture improve the consumers’ experience?**
Earlier the experience of the consumer in a luxury retail space has been compared to a symphony. A smooth interaction between different elements is crucial to create the ultimate brand experience. Architecture can play an important role in this symphony but the success also depends on the other elements like good service and the product that is been sold.

Like the logo, architecture is part of the visual identity of the brand. The brand identity should always be the starting point when designing for a brand. But there are more important factors architects should consider when designing retail venues. Three examples of decisive factors are target audience, market segment and cultural background.

The target audience is a factor architects should be very aware of. Knowing your customer, their gender and way of shopping and age help creating tailor made environments. The shared moral values between the target audience and the brand can also been expressed through the architecture of the store. This helps the customer identifying with the brand.
Last the target audience is not static. One person can be a different customer in different circumstances, a businessman can also be a father and also a son or husband.

Another factor is the market segment. To create an approachable shop for the right target audience it is important to hit the right note. The threshold should not be too high.

Finally the cultural background is an important factor. When designing the architect should consider the local customs of the country the store is build in, the customs of the clients and the cultural background of the country the brand is originally from. An Chinese customer buying Louis Vuitton in Amsterdam still expects an environment with the French touch the brand is known for but also appreciates it when the sales personnel speaks Chinese.

More attention please!
Since the competition in retail has increased by the introduction of online shopping, the role of the store has changed. The store can never win it from the Internet in the way an online shop is accessible 24 hours a day, so they should outdo them in other areas. That is where good architecture can make the difference. The new type of architecture suiting the changing role of the store should be focusing on the experience of the customer, rather than on selling the product although that is of course what it is all about in the end.

Nowadays a lot of star architects get retail jobs. Brands use their venues to define themselves through striking architecture and association with certain well-known architects. Their approach to the design is often more an expression of their own style, than a good expression of the brands' identity. More competition of really skilled retail architects would lead to more daring designs, new approaches and a healthier market with room for newcomers.

Within Delft University of Technology retail focused courses start to disappear. At IDE the master specialization in retail has ended this year and at Architecture there is only one minor that matches the subject. Knowledge begins to disappear or shifts to other fields. It is a big loss as this knowledge disappears from Delft, because the interplay between architecture, design and marketing & sales is very interesting. Retail architecture is a suitable challenge for the broad interested architect as multiple disciplines come together in one project.
2.4 Céline

Introduction
The luxury fashion house of Céline has a long history but is not so well known to the general public as other brands in the highest segment. Recently it has undergone a big transformation and the brand is on its way to grow into one of the most prominent brands of today.

A short history of the brand
In 1945 the couple Richard and Céline Vipiana open Céline, a store specialized in children’s footwear, at 52 Rue de Malte, Paris. The division of roles is clear, he runs the business while she takes care of the design. The client base and assortment quickly expand and Céline starts selling women’s footwear and leather goods in addition.

The company keeps growing and the production is moved to Italy, where they establish a leather-goods factory in Florence in 1966. In the same year the company begins to make pioneering at the Japanese market. In de following decades the brand grows out to a fashion house selling perfume, clothes and leather goods until in 1994 it is announced that Céline will become part of LVMH. “The old image of Céline is dead, and we have a much younger-oriented fashion house now,” Nan Legeai, company chairwoman and CEO, tells Women’s Wear Daily (Vogue, 2013). Michael Kors is appointed in 1994 to lead the French fashion house to this younger approach. His debut as a designer for Céline in 1998 is highly appraised. Later that year a new flagship store opens in Paris at 36 Avenue Montaigne, next to the company headquarters at number 38.

After almost a decade with Céline, Kors shows his last collection for the fashion house in 2004. A chaotic period follows, with designers coming and going until in 2008 Phoebe Philo, the former creative director of Chloé, is named creative director of Céline. To convince the designer, LVMH had offered Philo an atelier in her hometown of London, so she can stay close to her young family. The first fashion show in 2009 designed by Philo makes a huge impact. ‘A minimalist camel-colored coat is picked by the critics as a crucial, game-changing piece. Vogue runs “Fast-Forward Phoebe,” a profile with photos by Annie Leibovitz. Philo makes her official runway debut for spring 2010; Vogue.com describes it as “bourgeois, sensual, austere, and, frankly, urgent. Her khaki trenches, lean-line trousers, leather shorts, white shirts, mini sheaths, and A-line skirts have a precision and a proportion without equal.” The magazine will later credit Philo with igniting “the cool minimal trend” (Vogue, 2013).

As part of the new approach Céline shuts down 30 percent of its retail points of sale in 2010. This is an effort to sharpen its brand image to one of greater exclusivity and to start with a clean slate. Vogue’s Hamish Bowles marks the return of Phoebe Philo at Céline as an important turning point of the decade. “I’m making it about fashion—about fabrics, proportions, volumes, and attitude,” she tells the magazine. (VOGUE.COM) The successful year ends
with another highlight; in December Philo wins Designer of the Year from the British Fashion Council for her work at Céline.

The innovation continues in 2011. The fashion house embarks on a focused expansion plan, opening two flagship stores. One on Madison Avenue in New York and a temporary one at Rue François 1er in Paris, both designed by Peter Marino, that reinforce its sleek, revamped image.

Phoebe Philo and the new vision
Phoebe Philo started work at Céline in the middle of 2008. She devoted the first year to rebuilding the business by opening a design studio in a derelict Georgian town house on Cavendish Square in London, put together a new design team (some of whom she knew from her former position at Chloé) and wrote a new strategy for the company’s branding, marketing and stores.

For Philo the most important starting point for the new approach was a sense of quality. Designing with integrity and building a brand that stood for something was her goal. She said that, when she started at Céline five years ago, "What I found attractive was that it wasn't an iconic brand, it didn't have a very strong silhouette or a very famous historical designer, and I found that quite liberating – I didn't have the follow a path that had been trodden. But it did stand for quality – it had never licensed itself out, in the 70s, 80s and 90s, like so many other companies." (Marriott, 2014)

As part of the new brand strategy and to sharpen the image of Céline, Philo and her team decided not to offer online sales. Part of this strategy was also to limit the number of retail venues and to increase the price of the products. This way the brand increased its exclusivity. The customer has to go to the store to purchase the product and has to experience the brand. By doing so Céline is able to guard the quality of their service and build up a personal relationship with their customers. By always offering the customer an experience the customer also gets the feeling that the high prices are justified.

As part of the reinvention of the brand the logo was also updated. The accent on the first E was restored in its former glory. “I don't think I’ve ever worked with anyone so precise and detailed as Phoebe,” said Peter Miles, the New York-based graphic designer who developed Céline’s new brand identity. “She sees things microscopically. ‘Can you just make the logo two millimeters shorter?’ ‘Can you move it down there by three millimeters?’ I had to change things by the smallest margins on boxes, bags, ads, business cards, everything, but always for good reason.” (Woods, 2009) The logo of the brand is always discretely present on the products, but from afar they cannot be seen. The same applies for the shops. The logo is always present, both on the façade and in the interior but in a very discrete way. The customers of Céline buy the product for their good design and quality, not to show of.

The reinvention of Céline under the direction of Phoebe Philo has already proven to be successful, even though she has just started recently. A large group of admirers, referred to as Philophiles, have made Céline part of their life style. Around the personality of the designer quite a cult has emerged. Being shy, and wanting to protect her privacy, Philo rarely gives interviews and tries to control her own image.
Image 8; Phoebe Philo (David Sims, 2010)
The three cases
The brand owns three stores in Paris, and is also sold in the luxury department stores. During the redefining of the brand under the direction of Phoebe Philo these shops closed. To continue to serve their customers a temporary shop was opened close to the location of the current flagship store. This store does not exist anymore but is interesting because it marks the transition period of the brand.

Two of the stores studied in this thesis are located in Paris, the current flagship store at Avenue Montaigne and the former temporary store. The third case study is the flagship store on Mount Street, London, designed by the same architect and designers as the French equivalent. The flagship stores are based on a similar general format, which later has been applied to more shops. By choosing for one type of general format the brand opts for recognizability. This general format is designed by FOS, pseudonym for the Danish artist Thomas Poulsen. He got the job through Phoebe Philo’s husband, Max Wigram, who owns an art gallery on London. FOS had several exhibitions at Wigram’s gallery. However, also influences of the former design of Peter Marino are clearly visible in the format.

The concept of luxurious and colorful marble consoles, shades of white, black and grey, is applied in both the London and Paris flagship store. However, they still have their own character due to the given location and cultural background. A more toned down version of the general of FOS is applied in boutiques of the brand worldwide, and the recognizable style of the shops has become an important part of the brand (identity).

The analysis of the general format will form the starting point for my graduation design.
The general format already has a lot of androgynous qualities but in order to create a masculine version of the concept has to be reinterpreted. For extra emphasis of the male characteristic of the store the expression can be made less polished like the examples seen in the temporary store. Another way how the concept could become more masculine is by changing the color scheme to a darker version. The way marble is used in the stores of Balenciaga and Yves Saint Laurent is a good example how a darker color scheme with similar materials gets a more masculine vibe.

The experience of the customers at Céline
Since the brand decided not to sell online they can guarantee every customer a unique experience. Céline offers her customers a luxurious and a one of a kind experience every time they visit a retail point of the brand because that is the only touch point the customers have with the brand. The experience of the customer is successful if it meets the expectations raised by previous encounters with the brand. The retail environment embodies the same level of attention to detail as the beautifully crafted clothing. The superb service and the customer-oriented approach of the staff and the discrete handling of purchasing make the experience complete.

Alex Ukropen of KNSTRCT described the experience in the newly designed Céline flagship store in New York strikingly: ‘Famous for truly unique installations and artwork, it’s no surprise that FOS has forged some really new
and absolutely beautiful pieces for Céline’s fifth U.S. store. His somewhat quirky and almost magical touch melds with Philo’s minimalistic approach to create a fresh and fantastical vision of luxury. Providing functional furniture, notably fantastical floor lamps, a chandelier and a gravity-defying table, the Soho store offers connoisseurs an entirely new experience that distinctly defines the excitement of shopping.

The French House serves as the perfect pedestal to display Philo’s line: split into three sections the clean and crisp white walls glide shoppers into a vast and beautiful place that excites the senses. With carefully orchestrated lighting, marble inlaid stone floors, embossed walls that serve as stages for various designer fashion pieces and a modest yet lively array of unique furniture and patterned floors make the store front feel open and alive. The new Wooster Street location really is more than a store: it’s a one-of-a-kind experience.

Echoing the aesthetic found in its London location, the store manages to keep the Céline brand consistent while offering its own flavor that blends with Soho’s particular flair. If you’re looking for a top-tier line of fashion and an exciting chance to delve into the Céline experience, then look no further than Soho’s new center of fashion.’ (knstrct.com, 2014)
The first flagship store with the new concept designed by FOS was opened in London in 2013. It marks the new policy of Phoebe Philo after closing the former London shop in 2009. The store is designed to uphold the respect for fine craftsmanship, rare raw materials, research and innovation the house is known for. Located in the posh area of Mayfair it is the only retail venue of the brand in the United Kingdom. The brand is available at high-end department stores in other parts of the country.
The incredible marble floor immediately attracts attention. It is a patchwork of 12 different types and colors of marble, inlaid with semi-precious stones. This floor is a unique feature of the London store because it was the result of a combination of circumstances.

In May 2012 the Emilia Earthquake caused enormous damage in Northern Italy. The force of nature left a trail of destruction behind. Also the stock of marble slabs and most precious stones in the warehouse of Budra, a marble firm based in Mirandola, were damaged. The Spanish designer Patricia Urquiola saved the company from a devastating turn of events, by creating the Earthquake 5.9 collection. She designed a collection of furniture and coverings in marble and onyx, created by using hundreds of fragments of quake-struck slabs. The incredible floor at the Céline flagship store in London was created by Budra (Freedman, 2014).
In all the stores of Céline six key elements are present. Together they form the retail design of the store. Long shelves up to eye level, cubical display blocks, freestanding clothing racks, offset short shelves, large heavy counters and the use of marble are provided in every store.

In addition to these household elements the danish artist FOS, who is represented by Philo’s husband Max Wigram, has also contributed the design of the flagship store. Especially for Céline he created a series of unique, commissioned objects with a collection of display units, furniture and hardware. The display units are a strong reference to his own art work, in which he uses niches as a returning theme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1; Physical Features - London</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Façade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Shopping) Windows</td>
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<tr>
<td>Logo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphics</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2; Design Characteristics – London</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target audience</td>
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<td>Core value design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The long awaited flagship store in Paris was opened a couple of months after the store in London. In the meantime the Parisians had to rely on a temporary store and some small boutiques of the brand.

The beautiful Hausmann façade of the flagship store in Paris is set back a couple of meters from the sidewalk. Customers have to go through a gate while approaching the store. As a result of this set back the logo is much more present on the façade, over 8 times, to attract more attention from possible customers. This is quite unusual for Céline, normally known for their understated use of the logo in their facades.
Although the concept of the store in Paris is the same as the store in London, they have a completely different ambiance. While the colorful marble flooring in London is a bold statement, the Parisian store has a more modest character. Marble is still very present in the interior; it is not the leading element.

The unique objects and niches of FOS are also used to dress the flagship store at Avenue Montaigne. But in the context of the Parisian store they seem to look different, in the white walled rooms they form a starker contrast with their surroundings, while in London the fit in more.

Another striking difference with the London store is the way of lighting. The store in London (and also the flagship store in New York) has big panels that spread a daylight-like light, while in this case the products are illuminated by smart ceiling spots. Emphasizing the products and different areas of the store by using spots gives the customer clear focal points. It also helps the customer to navigate through the store; the staircase is highlighted extra to lead the customer upstairs.
Table 3; Physical Features - Paris I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Façade</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Shopping) Windows</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logo</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routing</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color Scheme</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting</td>
<td>★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphics</td>
<td>★★★</td>
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</table>

Table 4; Design Characteristics - Paris I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target audience</td>
<td>Highest segment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Core value design</td>
<td>Minimalistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Sophisticated, timeless, avant garde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetics</td>
<td>Cubistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color scheme</td>
<td>Green, white, stone, gold, terracotta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Marble, brass, terracotta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>General format</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even though this store does not exist anymore, and it is not a flagship store, it is still relevant in the context of this thesis. This temporary store of Céline marks the transition of the brand. During the time Phoebe Philo closed most of the shops, this ‘construction site’ was the main retail venue of the brand in Paris.

The cubical display blocks, freestanding clothing racks and offset short shelves are elements featured in this store that have become household staples of the retail design of Céline. Without the posh marble finish and combined with the undone walls they give the store a shabby chic appearance. This look forms a nice contrast with the smooth designs of the clothes and leather goods.
Table 5: Physical Features - Paris II

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Façade</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(shopping) Windows</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logo</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routing</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color Scheme</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphics</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 6: Design Characteristic - Paris II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target audience</td>
<td>Highest segment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Core value design</td>
<td>Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Sophisticated, timeless, avant garde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetics</td>
<td>Rough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color scheme</td>
<td>White, pink, beige</td>
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<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Plaster board, concrete, wood, steel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Unique format</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.5 Conclusion

The flagship store

“Flagships are designed to provide powerful brand experiences (Borghini et al. 2009). They offer a dramatic stage that embodies the essence of a retailers’ brand (Kozinets et al. 2002; Sherry 1998) through ‘multi-sensory sensual opportunities’ (Dolbec&Chebat, 2013, p.461).

There are four characteristics that distinguish flagship stores from other stores: a flagship store carry a single brand of product. Secondly the shop is owned by that brand’s manufacturer. The shop is operated with the intention of reinforcing the brand and the last characteristic is that there is usually one flagship store of a brand in a country.

Two types of flagship stores can be distinguished based on their design concepts. The first is the one of a kind, unique flagship store, with a lot of possibilities for the architect to express his own interpretation of the brand identity. The second type is the flagship store based on a general format. The concept of the store is a magnification of the existing brand identity but with more emphasis on the experience.

The Brand

A brand is a product on which the name and the logo are present. To distinguish itself from other brands a solid identity is needed. The identity of a brand is a combination of the values, vision and quality the owner wants to carry out. The brand perception is the way the customers experiences this identity. Brand experience is the subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings and cognition) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of the brands’ design and identity, packaging, communications and environments.

The goal of a flagship store is offering the customer the ultimate brand experience. A good experience fulfills or even exceeds the expectations of the customers. The retailer can be satisfied when it is confirmed that the identity of the brand has been perceived the way it was intended. This confirmation often comes in the way of a purchase.

Dolbec et al. (2013, p.465) have compared the different approaches of Pine and Gilmore with the approach of Ariely and Carmon towards creating a powerful in-store brand experience. Pine and Gilmore recommend giving a theme to the experience to create a powerful in-store brand experience. By offering the customer possibilities to create memorable impressions through specific cues and favoring interaction with the environment. Ariely and Carmon point out two other features that lead to a long lasting impression: the peak and end intensity of the experience and its trend over time. When a flagship represents the most intense experience of the brand, this will increase the average evaluation of experiences for a brand.

The logo is an important part of the visual identity of the brand. It is a symbol or other small design adopted by a brand to identity its products. The intention of the logo is to provide a point of recognition. As a brand has proven itself over the years, it can become a synonym for quality. The logo of such brands turns into a mark of quality.
One way how retail architecture can become a part of the brand is when the style becomes as recognizable as the logo. By creating a house style, and applying this in a consequent manner the design of the store the customer will start identifying the brand through the color scheme, materials, quality and theme that is applied in every store. This way the customer can also recognize the market segment by the appearance of the store. But there are also ways when architecture becomes the logo of a brand, or becomes as important as the logo. There are three manners how this can be achieved.

The first is architecture as a tool to define the brand. This type of building is often created in collaboration with a well-known architect, so the brand will be associated with fine taste in architecture. Louis Vuitton did this recently through collaboration with Frank Gehry for the design of their Fondation LV building in Paris.

The second way architecture can become a logo is when it becomes a symbol for a city. Almost every city has one, the Erasmus Bridge is the symbol for the city of Rotterdam, the architecture of Gaudi is inextricably linked to Barcelona and the Eifel tower is the ultimate logo for the city of Paris.

The last manner how architecture can be linked to a brand is when the architecture becomes a logo for itself, and cannot be separated from its function. A sign with the name of the brand has become superfluous because the building is an expression of the name. The best example of this is the Luxor in Las Vegas, the pyramid-shaped building will be associated with the brand forever.

The Building
The flagship store is the place where you can experience and understand the spirit of the company. Customers do not only buy the product, they are also buying into the ethic of the company. The customer expects an environment that embodies the brand identity, theme and values in an innovative and interactive way. When designing a retail store the focus should be on qualities that the other (and online) stores do not offer.

The design of the retail environment must merge with the brand image down to the finest details. Expressiveness, the purposeful use of characteristic forms, and calculated elements of surprise combine to form an integral whole.

For the success of a flagship store the urban context is extremely important. A location in a shopping street among other brands attracts customers who identify with luxury and quality. Some streets have become synonymous with luxury and quality. The finest suits in London can be found on Savile Row, known for their handcrafted tailored suits. For luxury goods in Los Angeles Rodeo Drive is the place to be.

Depending on what the brand wants to achieve, the façade of the store will be in line with or contrast with the surrounding buildings. Often there is no choice, because the brands have to rely on the existing buildings. The shopping window then becomes the place where the brand can distinguish itself. The experience of the brand already starts outside the building. First the customer is attracted by the logo or the façade of the shop. These elements have to convince the customer to enter the shop, because they are already familiar with the brand or because the signs have tempted them. The second step of the experience is the interior. This is where the customer will interact
and hopefully purchase in the end. This should be the highlight of the experience.
They cannot function without each other. Both architectural elements are really important. When there are no customers lured inside by the looks of the store, there will be no need for a beautiful interior. And it works the same the other way around, when the customer is lured inside by the façade and the interior does not provide an experience that leads to a purchase it leads nowhere.

Brand recognition can be achieved by choosing the right type of flagship store that suits the identity of the brand. A store based on a general format will have a strong similarity with the other retail venues of the brand and therefore will be recognizable. Repetition will evoke old memories of previous experiences with the brand.
Massimo Isoa Ghini thinks not every space has to be unique. Most important is that brand identity must be translated effectively into each individual context. The recognition factor is key component of design identity (Riewoldt, 2002, p.113). However a flagship store based on a unique concept can make a more intense impression. By being unique it can become more exclusive, and stand out between other stores.

### The User
Many different factors influence the experience of the consumers, and leave a subjective impression on the customer. The experience is the intangible, added value that means that consumers take a detour for it or are willing to pay more for it. The literature confirms it is a very subjective subject. Dolbec et al. define brand experience as the “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognition) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brands’ design and identity, packaging, communications and environments (Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello 2009, p.53)”. The experience is composed by many different factors that leave a subjective impression on the customer.
Van Tongeren compares the experience of the user to a symphony. It is a totality of impressions, in which all the elements, from price to presentation, are linked together.

The architecture of the retail environment is part of the brand-related stimuli and is a very important supportive element of the brand experience. Retail architecture and design can contribute to the experience by offering an optimal environment for service and sales that exceeds the expectations of the customers.

The role of the shops has changed since online shopping has been gaining ground so fast. The stores need to offer more than the online shop. The focus is now on creating a strong brand identity and binding the customers through unique in-store experiences. This is also a new challenge for architects. Their design has to contribute to the gesamtkunstwerk the flagship store has become.

### Céline
The French fashion label Céline was found in 1945 by the Vipiana family. Originally focusing on children’s footwear the brand has evolved to a luxury brand that has a large group of loyal fans. Among them are a lot of celebrities.
Since the appointment of Phoebe Philo in 2008 as creative director of the brand a new approach has been set. By closing most retail venues and going back to the core values of the brand, Philo carefully rebuild the brands’ identity. Her reinvention of the brand has been really successful and the brand has reestablished its position within the fashion world. The designs of Céline are sophisticated, timeless and avant-garde.

The Brand
As part of the new brand strategy Philo designed for Céline, there was decided not to offer online sales. This way the brand gains exclusivity. The customer has to go to the store to purchase the product and has to experience the brand. Céline is able to guard the quality of their service and create a relationship with their customers this way. By always offering the customer an experience the customer also gets the feeling that the high prices are justified.

The design aesthetics of the products of Céline have a very recognizable style. The logo of the brand is always discreetly present on the products, but from afar they can not be seen.

The same applies for the shops. The logo is always present, both on the façade and in the interior but in a very discrete way. The customers of Céline buy the product for their good design and quality, not to show of.

The Building
The flagship stores of Céline are based on a general format designed by the Danish artist FOS. The same concept of luxurious marble consoles, shades of white, black and grey, is applied in both the London and Paris flagship store. However, they still have their own character due to the given location and culture. A more basic version of the concept of FOS is applied worldwide, and the recognizable style of the shops has become an important part of the brand identity.

The facades of the existing buildings are not drastically changed to suit the brand identity. The logo is the convincing factor in attracting the customers and in the shopping windows of the store a minimal amount of merchandise is presented. The focus is on the interior.

Within this general format it is possible to create a male version of the concept since the architectural design has androgynous qualities. For extra emphasis of the male characteristic of the store the expression can be made less polished like the examples seen in the temporary store. The concept could become more masculine by changing the color scheme to a darker version. The way dark marble is used in the Balenciaga stores is a good example how a darker color scheme contributes to a more masculine vibe.

The User
The customers of Céline expect a luxurious experience every time they visit a retail point of the brand because that is the only place where the products are available. The clothing of the brand is crafted with a lot of care and precision, and the retail environment should embody this attention to detail at the same level. The customer-oriented approach of the staff and the discrete handling of purchasing are in line with this.
Image 16; Campaign Céline ft. Daria Werbowy (Juergen Teller, 2014)
3. Field work: Three cases

In this chapter three case studies will be analyzed. According to the set up of the literature study in the previous chapter, the three aspects the brand, the building and the user will be discussed. Then the physical features, the elements the architect can influence, will be analyzed. Finally the recognizability of the brand will be discussed.

Introduction
Within the design of the flagship store, 11 important architectural features can be distinguished. By analyzing the importance of these features within the design of the three case studies it will become clear which tools the architects used to express the brand identity.

The façade
The facade is the place where the first physical impression of the store is given. It should communicate the brand identity in a clear way. Depending on the surroundings of the store, the architecture of the façade is in line with the design of the surrounding shops, or stands out from the surroundings to attract attention.

The (shopping) windows
The presentation of the product and the brand in the windows is a way to seduce the customer to go inside.

The logo
The architect often can not influence the design of the logo since most of the time it has already be in use for years. But the architect decides where the logo is placed within the design of the façade and the interior of the store.

The size
The dimensions of the spaces and the amount of levels is of importance for the layout of the store.

The routing
The way the customer is able to orientate and navigate in the store. A clear overview and structure can guide the customer in the right way.

The color scheme
A recognizable palette can be a strong element of the household style. It is an important point of recognition.

The furniture
The movable elements in the interior, they are often especially designed for the brand.

The display
The in-store presentation of the brands’ products.

The materials
The applied materials in the interior.
The lighting
Light can be used as a marketing tool, to accentuate products and services. It can also be used to hide certain elements, by simply leaving it in the dark.

The graphics
The graphics are a part of the visual identity of the brand. They are used to communicate with the customer. The architect has to decide where the graphics are placed.

The first of the three case studies chosen is the UsipdeDown Store in Milan. It was the former flagship store of Viktor & Rolf and it was designed by Tettero and Zwail. The focus will be on the role of the shopping window, the furniture, the color scheme and the way the architects translated the brand into an expressive architecture.

The second case study is a comparison of the Headquarters of G-Star designed by OMA with the design of their stores. The headquarters are probably the best advertisement for their brand they can have, mainly due to the location. Materialisation will be one of the focal points in this case study.

The final case study is Fragile Lab in Antwerp. The design made by import.export Architecture houses the brand of Nathalie Vleeschouwer. The building contrasts strongly with its environment and the concept of the extension is a literal interpretation of the brands’ name into architecture.
The flagship store of Viktor&Rolf in Milan has been closed since August 2008, but has left a lasting imprint in the design world until today. The store opened in 2005, and has only existed for three years. The flagship store has a Swedish neo classicism interior with a modern twist; it is literally flipped upside down. This unique concept was designed by Siebe Tettero and Sherrie Zwail of SZI DesignSiebe. Their interpretation of the brand identity of Viktor&Rolf...
reflects the bold and avant-garde attitude of the brand. The surrealistic and alienating ambiance was a one of a kind experience.

The work of Viktor Horsting and Rolf Snoeren is characterized as couture with a statement. Every show is build around a specific theme. Their first haute couture catwalk show, in January 1998, was followed by four more inspirational collections that secured their reputation. To announce their global aspirations Viktor & Rolf presented their first prêt-a-porter collection based on the American flag in March 2000. The brand became a household name through the widely popular perfume, Flowerbomb, launched in 2004 by L’Oréal Paris and a sell-out collection for high street giant H&M in 2006. The fashion house became a part of the OTB Group in 2008.
To avoid mistakes and to optimize the optical perspective the interior of the Upside Down store was initially assembled offsite and then disassembled and reassembled onsite again at the Via Sant'Andrea. This way the architects could control execution of the technical details and the design.

The ceiling of the flagship store is clad with a soft brown herringbone oak parquet, marble mantelpieces, as well as custom made gold leaf chandeliers to light up the store. The ceiling also includes furnishment such as chairs, tables and shelving units, which are used as hanging systems for the clothes and perfumes.

The archways throughout the store function as cushioned sitting areas as well as space dividers. The detailed intricate ceiling cornice is applied as flooring skirting and vice versa for the ceiling.

The walls of the store are clad with square panels and flute columns and further decorated with mirrors to make the space seem even more spacious.
The multiple reflections of the interior in the mirrors contribute to the illusive ambience of the store, like there is another room behind the mirror. The color scheme of the store consists of a monochrome and neutral palette of dusted white, light grey, mint green and gold to accentuate and add vibrancy to the rather calm environment. By maintaining a tranquil color scheme the architecture of the Upside Down store comes to its full advantage. It unites the surrealist concept with the strict rules of the Swedish neo classicism and forms a contrast with the bold clothing of Viktor&Rolf. Whilst the customer approaches the store he becomes aware of the applied concept. The shopping windows give a glimpse of the interior of the store and the customers experience the upside-down effect before they enter the store partly because the front door of the store is also placed upside down. The logo plays also a prominent role in the design of Tettero and Zwail for the flagship store. It is visible in the façade and it is milled over a thousand times in the interior, yet it is done in a subtle way. Since the logo is painted in the same colors as the rest of the interior it does not distract much.

After the closing of the store other architects made various designs for new store of Viktor&Rolf. Some have elaborated on the concept of the Milan flagship store, for example the store OMA designed for the brand in London. The press did not successfully receive this design. A new interpretation of the concept which was of a lot of international interest, was the design of Architecture & Associés for the flagship store of Viktor&Rolf in Paris a couple of years later. The neoclassical arches were abstracted to their base form and the entire interior was covered in grey felt, which results in a muted store environment. The concept of alienation is less strong as the Upside Down store but slightly oppressive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7; Physical Features - Upside Down Store</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Façade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(shopping) Windows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8; Design Characteristic - Upside Down Store</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core value design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 Hangar Headquarters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>G-Star</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>OMA/G-Star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Joan Muyskenweg, Amsterdam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This case study is an exception. It is the headquarters of G-Star and not one of their flagship stores. However, it breathes the G-Star identity the same way their flagship stores do.

Along the A10 highway, in the southeast of the city of Amsterdam, the headquarters of G-Star can not be failed to notice. Stretching 140 meters along the road, the hangar shaped building is placed on a concrete pedestal. The dramatic cantilever towards the road, wrapped in advertisements of the latest fashion, protrudes from the dark concrete shell that embraces the glass volumes of which the building is composed. This building is as close to
building-as-billboard as OMA has yet come, labeled with a 20 meter long G-Star logo it is almost a literal expression of Robert Venturi's “decorated shed”.

The location along the motorway is exploited to its maximum; the building is thus part of G-Star's branding. "You experience the building in motion, from the car," says De Graaf, "so we did a lot to make it as long as possible, to maximise your exposure to the brand. It surrenders to the notion of being a billboard, rather than resisting the idea of highway architecture" (Wainwright, 2014)

OMA has envisioned the G-Star RAW headquarters as a timeless piece of architecture, much like how the brand approaches their garments. The uncertainty of trends and of what G-Star would look like in the future has lead to a neutral and geometric anatomy of the building. The prefab and industrial materials used in its construction which include black concrete, recycled aluminium and prefab cement floor panels, speak to both the practicality and lasting quality of the garments conceived within, while continuing to be relevant with the changing times.
G-Star RAW, which presents itself as a modern metropolitan denim brand, has always been focused on innovative uses of denim since it has been found in 1989. The fashion brand has positioned crude, untreated denim as a wearable and desirable material, and developed a 3D denim silhouette through the application of architectural and three-dimensional denim design. Looking at the later work of OMA, both brands share in an innovative nature and a raw urban urbanity.

In the interior the dark construction looms, steel columns and cross connections dominate the rooms. The large open floor plan provides visual connections between the different departments through the application of split levels and double high studio spaces.

The interior expresses the RAW identity in a different way than the exterior. Raw it is, but it never really rough. The color scheme really embodies the brand identity; various shades of gray in the finishes and furnishings create a layered image. But the sleek aluminum finishes and the white resin floors have
sometimes an almost clinical appearance and form a stark contrast with the industrial exterior. But precisely this contrast works well as a backdrop for the ongoing fashion show taking place inside.

Currently G-Star has over 6000 points of sales in 70 countries.

Table 9; Physical Features - G-Star

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Façade</th>
<th>★★★★★</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(shopping) Windows</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logo</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routing</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color Scheme</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphics</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10; Design Characteristics - G-Star

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target audience</th>
<th>High street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core value design</td>
<td>Industrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Young, daring, flexible, comfortable and functional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetics</td>
<td>Industrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color scheme</td>
<td>Blue, grey, white, brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Concrete, steel, wood and denim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>General format</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 Fragile Lab

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Fragile by Nathalie Vleeschouwer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>2005-2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>import.export Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Kammenstraat, Antwerp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In old inner cities usually is opted for a more conservative approach towards building interventions but the principals of Fragile Lab wanted something different. The company gave the architects of import.export Architecture the free hand. The transparent building with its slender columns that rose on the narrow plot next to the existing shop forms a striking contrast with the old buildings in the street. By distinction the building stands out, and only on the existing building the logo is therefor present.

Selling colorful maternity wear, Fragile was a suiting name. It expresses the vulnerability of a pregnant woman. The white construction of the expansion of the flagship store looks also very fragile. The architects were inspired by Asian bamboo rack structures and together with an engineering firm they searched
for the thinnest possible floors and columns. The fragility of the white, bend construction, the faceted glass facade and the interaction between old and new asked for a simple color palette (Meplon, 2008, p. 56). White for the construction, black for the old building and additional red from the logo and to accentuate was accompanied by a green indoor garden and green accents in the furniture. This way all the attention would go to the colorful maternity wear. Like the Upside Down Store of Viktor&Rolf, big mirrors provide a slightly disorienting effect on the first floor. The mirrors enhance the light in the space and give the store a bigger and more transparent look. The combination of materials and colors also gives it an airy feel.
The logo of Fragile is based on the image that appears on packaging of fragile goods; a red wineglass and the word fragile. The packaging offers protection to its fragile load. Mind to handle with care! The red logo is only present on the façade of the old part of the store. It is not present on the façade of the new addition because it expresses the identity of the brand in its own way. However there are visible references toward the logo in the extension. By using the color red at several places in the interior, the architects refer in a subtle way to the logo.
The expansion of the store was also a chance to make over the existing building. To merge the old and the new not only the interior was updated, the façade was redesigned too. In contrast to the expansion the update of the old façade has a more classic appearance. The curved glass and the recessed door remind of the past but have the same transparent qualities as the new part of the flagship store.

Import.export architecture has also been involved in the designs of the other stores of the brand. However no literal references where made to the design of the flagship store, the stores breathe the same lightness. Since these projects where mostly remodelings, the design was led by the circumstances on site.

The subtle but strong use of the color of the logo, the slender columns that reach to the roof and the transparency of the design show that the architects of import.export Architecture know how to translate the identity of the brand in an artful way to an appropriate architecture. By being different the store stands out, it forms a welcome contrast with the surrounding shops. Although the design embodies the identity of the brand very well, it is created by opportunity and the architecture it is not a part of the brand identity. The design of this flagship store is based on a unique format.

Table 11; Physical Features - Fragile Lab

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Façade</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Shopping) Windows</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logo</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routing</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color Scheme</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphics</td>
<td>★★★★★</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12; Design Characteristics - Fragile Lab

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target audience</td>
<td>High street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core value design</td>
<td>Fragile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Elegant, feminine, flexible, comfortable and functional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetics</td>
<td>Transparent, light weight and fragile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color scheme</td>
<td>White, red, green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Glass and steel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Unique format</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 Conclusion

In the three case studies the architects interpreted the identity of the brand from different angles, which is reflected in the interaction between the architecture, the design and the logo.

Viktor&Rolf flagship store

Although the logo of Viktor&Rolf is very much present, both in the façade and interior, the strong and simple concept of the upside down store makes that it stands out conspicuously. The alienating effect suits the often shocking and surrealistic identity of the brand seamlessly. The unexpected twist in the interior creates a lasting brand experience in the minds of the customers.

Tetteros’ and Zwails’ interpretation of the brand identity resulted in a grey, upside down, Swedish neo classicistic interior. Their work has clearly inspired the design and color scheme for the design of Architecture & Associés for the flagship store of Viktor&Rolf in Paris that was realized a couple of years later. The interpretation of Architecture & Associés of alienation comprises the employment of felt to coat the interior of the store with, which results in a muted store environment.

G-Star Head Quarters

The design of the G-Star Head Quarters is the result of the collaboration between OMA and the G-Star team led by Pieter Kool. The big hangar like building is designed by OMA while the industrial looking interior is designed by G-Star’s own team in a similar way to their retail venues. The two interpretations of the identity of the brand are very alike, probably due to the co-operation.

The location of the building has clearly influenced the way the design of the façade is treated. Since there are no customers to attract, the building literally fulfills a role as a huge billboard along the highway. The logo is very present in the facade, and functions as a big advertisement together with the huge images.

Inside the building the logo is less present although the interior architecture of the head quarters is very recognizable as being G-star. The aesthetics and materialization of the interior clearly carry out the daring, young and industrial vibe G-Star is known for.

The looks of the interior and the exterior of the building are characteristic for the brand; however the logo is decisive in this case, because without it the building could be just another hangar. If the logo and the images would be removed the architecture is not necessarily recognizable as being G-Star. The image of the hangar and the logo of the brand complement each other in achieving the G-Star identity: individually, the appearance would not be so powerful. By reinforcing each other they embody the identity of the brand.
Fragile Lab/Nathalie Vleesschouwer

The design of the flagship store of Fragile Lab/Nathalie Vleesschouwer is largely an expression of the name of the shop. The architecture of the building embodies the brand in a way that looks fragile. The light, transparent and white extension of the original shop forms a big contrast with the surrounding buildings. By doing this the shop gains recognizability through distinction.

The use of the logo is minimal in this case study. The logo of the brand is only present on the facade of the old part of the store. It is not present on the facade of the new addition because it expresses the identity of the brand in its own way. In the extension the architects refer to the brand’s logo by using its color, bright red, to accentuate. By using the color red at several places in the interior, the architects refer in a subtle way to the logo.

To summarize, in all three case studies the logo and architecture play a different role within the identity of the brands.

In the case of Viktor & Rolf the concept of the upside down store is so strong that it is more persuasive than the logo, even though the logo is present in the store over a 1000 times. By creating a contrast in convention the store is quite distinct from the surrounding context. The architecture of this store has (unintentionally) led to a certain, alienating style, now newly applied by other architects in different flagship stores of the brand.

The large hangar along the highway, by contrast, only becomes part of the G-Star identity by the presence of the logo and the big ads on the facade. The architecture reinforces the identity of the brand by repeating the same concepts that G-Star is so well known for. The design and architecture of the head quarters constitutes a substantial part of the identity of the brand.

The architects of import.export. Architecture know how to translate the identity of the brand in an artful way to an appropriate architecture; the reference to the logo by means of color is subtle but strong. The store stands out because of the big contrast with the surrounding shops. Although the design embodies the identity of the brand very well, it is created by opportunity and it is not a part of the brand identity.
4. Expert interviews

**Introduction**
In this chapter three professionals from the field are asked about their point of view on the research topic. Each of them was involved in the design of one of the case studies. Their answers will be compared to the results of the case studies in the end of this chapter.

**Methodology**
Interviews have proven to be a very useful way of research, because the information is coming straight from the source. The interviews are used to gain understanding of the motivation for the design decisions of the professionals and how they interpret the role of architecture within the identity of the brand.

The persons who are interviewed:
- Siebe Tettero, of Tettero Art Consultants
  Together with Sherry Zwail responsible for the Upside Down Store of Viktor&Rolf *(interviewed May 28, 2014).*
- Pieter Kool, art director 3D design at G-Star
  Together with OMA responsible for the interior of the G-Star HQ *(interviewed May 30, 2014).*
- Oscar Rommens, owner of import.export Architecture and teacher at TU Delft
  His office is responsible for the design of Fragile Lab by Natalie Vleeschouwer *(interviewed June 10, 2014).*

To structure the interviews in a clear way several questions are proposed to each interviewee. First, the professional is asked what he thinks makes a good retail experience. Accordingly is asked how architecture can improve this experience. Third, what is the difference between retail design and retail architecture. The flexibility and adaptability of the retail environment is the focus of this question. Fourth, the interviewees are asked if they think more attention for branding is needed in architecture. Fifth and sixth, what is the role of the logo within the identity of the brand and can architecture become a part of the brand. Second last the main research question is asked, how can the retail architecture contribute to the identity and the recognition of a fashion brand without relying on the logo. And to conclude, what is leading when designing a retail space.
4.1 Shock effect
Interview with Siebe Tettero

Siebe Tettero is not only an architect, he is also an art historian. The concept of his design for Viktor & Rolf was derived from an old painter’s trick; turning a painting upside down to see it with new eyes and spot it weaknesses. This unexpected twist has a shocking effect. He wanted to design something different from the current approach, which is a variation on the same cubistic theme.

When the store was approached, the alienation was already visible in the façade. Where the surrealistic design would meet the public space there was a bit of friction. Everything was turned upside down, the door, the logo but not the clothes. Tettero tells that they struggled with the way the clothes should be presented to fit the concept. By displaying the clothes in a regular way, and giving them all the attention the logo is not so important anymore according to Tettero. The customers can recognize the brand by the iconic fashion pieces showed in the windows. Despite the logo is present over a 1000 times in the store, Tettero does not consider it important, for him the grey based color scheme is also a very strong reference to the brand. He thinks all the elements together make the identity of the brand. The most important Viktor & Rolf element is the shock effect. By throwing people off balance they became more aware of their surroundings. This gives the experience an extra dimension.

Most of all, the Upside Down Store was a spatial statement. Viktor&Rolf did not have a flagship store before. It truly served its function. Experience learned that the sales did not live up to the expectations but everybody was wildly enthusiastic about the store. Tettero thinks that also has to do with the kind of
customer Viktor&Rolf attract; the focus was not so much on sales but on undergoing to brand experience.

At least as important as the logo are returning elements (colors, materials and shapes) that help people identify in what kind of space they are located. By working as iconic as possible and by creating a recognizable design language a strong brand identity can be created. For him, the logo is not the ultimate icon; the coherence between the various elements creates a much stronger retail architecture.

The shock effect echoes still long after the building has been demolished. It was the most published store of 2006 and still inspires a lot of people. Tettero is often asked about this work. He thinks people are attracted to the design because simultaneously the concept is adventurous but is also puts you in your place. It suits the character of the mad genius duo of Viktor&Rolf. At the same time the spirit of the brand oozes craftsmanship and has aspirations that reach beyond sales. It is a brand for the progressive world citizen.

![Image 28; Viktor&Rolf at Harvey Nichols London (OMA, 2011)](image)

Tettero is very strong in his opinion when asked about the place of architecture within the identity of the brand. In case of Viktor&Rolf it is not part of the identity. It is not big enough to be recognizable. Moreover it was a single job, and his own personal interpretation of the brand. Later, OMA designed a shop in shop at Harvey Nichols for the brand. Their concept was based on Tettero’s basic principles. The result was not satisfying due to the fact the experience did not have any impact. Tettero tries to stay polite, since he is close friends with Rem Koolhaas but the message is clear. The Swedish neo classicism used in the Upside Down Store was a tool to create a pattern of recognizable elements and support the shock effect. The style elements like the baseboards, columns and capitals are easy to identify, even when they where turned upside down. OMA interpret the neo classicist elements as a household style, but they were never designed to become part
of the brand identity. The identity of Viktor&Rolf is pluriform.

Other big brands like Louis Vuitton, Viktor&Rolf does not have a very long history. This can be a disadvantage but can also be a big plus. Viktor&Rolf can permit themselves more freedom since they are not bound to certain guidelines and expectations from their customers. Radical statements like the Upside Down Store are more likely to be accepted. This kind of flexibility is in line with the difference between retail architecture and retail design. Viktor&Rolf, but other brands like MM6 and Comme des Garcons too, tend to lean more to temporary stores. Their retail design strategy is very strong. Older, established brands like Louis Vuitton, Ralph Lauren and even Prada have a clientele with certain expectations of the in store experience. This results in ever repetition of the same form language. These brands try other ways to achieve a kind of flexibility; Louis Vuitton has mainly focused on art in their flagship stores since art has gained more mass appeal. It is interesting to see that the flagship store of Louis Vuitton has become number 7 on the list of top touristic attractions in Paris.

The durability of architecture differs clearly per brand. Tettero thinks it also depends on the zeitgeist how long architecture, or a trend, in general will last. But where architecture and fashion overlap, architecture has to go to the wall. It will always remain purely decorative, the background for beautiful clothes.
4.2 ‘Retail space is more than a background for a product’
Interview with Pieter Kool

The new headquarters of G-star oozes the same atmospheres as their shops. Wood, concrete and denim predominate the interior. Most of the staff is dressed in G-Star merchandise and the vibe is relaxed.

Pieter Kool, head of the 3D-design department, normally responsible for the interiors of the shops, worked closely together on the design of the headquarters with OMA.

Like all their collaborations, G-Star choose for another brand that matches their own approach, in this case an architecture office with a certain status, OMA. According to Pieter Kool OMA’s solution-oriented design was the answer for their search for a type of architecture without a strong identity that would leave room for their own interpretation of the brand G-Star. This resulted in a conceptual, boxy volume along the highway near Amsterdam, being the best advertisement for G-Star at the same time.

G-star RAW is very aware of their brand identity. The image they want to project is young, daring, and flexible. The product is the essence, functionality is key and it should be comfortable in use. Their denim clothes can be worn on different occasions, both formal and informal. Recently the focus has also been on sustainability.

Part of their strategy is to collaborate with brands with the same values. Often the brands G-Star is associated with have a long history, a robust character and a little edge. In the past couple of years furniture company Prouvé, car manufacturer Land Rover and the cognac brand Hennessy are a few brands G-Star has collaborated with. Kool especially liked the collaboration with Prouvé. The head quarters are filled with furniture from this temporary partnership. By choosing other brands from a broad spectrum G-Star has started to create a complete RAW lifestyle.

Central in creating a good retail space is according to Kool, a strong relationship between product and the shopping environment. The relation between denim, original worn by workmen, and the industrial appearance of the G-Star stores is in line with this method.

‘Being approachable is also very important, try to avoid exclusivity.’ With that mindset G-Star strives to create a more welcoming store, where every line is available. Elaborating on this strategy is displaying the stock to the customer. By incorporating the stock as part of the shopping experience the customers will have the feeling they will never leave empty-handed because his size will be available. It is a form of service that is in contrast with luxury brands where they tend to suggest exclusivity with a secretive backroom where the stock is stored. They want to give the impression that the product being purchased is scarce, but in reality they have more copies in stock.

Another service G-Star provides its customer is a comfortable fitting experience. Fitting is often seen as a necessary evil and was one of Kools biggest frustrations as a customer. Waiting in line, bad lighting and feeling unwelcome are just a few annoyances people experience when trying on clothes. During his graduation at G-Star he developed a 5 step action plan for the ultimate shopping experience, with an emphasis on fitting. At G-Star client
is king, and a comfortable experience of the client is priority. The surrounding should be serving to its function, which means good lighting, offering the staff tools to provide good service and a robe in the case of a fitting room.

As head of the 3D design team Kool leads a diverse group of people. He admits there are differences between industrial design students and architecture students. ‘Architects tend to be less commercial and are often focused on sight lines and the visual connection in the store’ says Kool. He likes it to have people of different backgrounds in his team. Each has their own qualities. Also furniture designers and artists are important contributors to the design team.
Pieter thinks the logo plays an important role within the identity of the brand, however it is not crucial. Therefore the logo is not applied all over the stores. Then we discuss the logo-mania that has been in fashion lately. Merchandise with big logos of (expensive) fashion brands has become a status symbol. People want to show off. G-Star products have become part of a uniform of a new subculture. When I ask him if he thinks if this new audience subvert the image of G-Star he thinks for a while. He considers himself as the perfect target audience of G-Star: a young professional, with an eye for quality and money to spend. But he also admits that the brand started to become more cautious in placing logos on everything because they recognize this trend of logo-mania.

‘Architecture can become a part of the brand in a way that the brand is recognizable without logo, definitely. The industrial look of the G-Star shops is after 25 years still up to date, and applied to our stores all around the world’, says Kool. He believes that the G-Star identity is solid and not so sensitive for trends, however they opt to keep evolving. Reinterpreting the RAW concept over and over again is what keeps the brand relevant. That suits their brand identity of being innovative, defiant, flexible, comfortable and functional.

The shop as a retail environment is more than a decor in front of which the products are presented; this environment is part of the brand. By using the same formula over and over again G-Star achieved a recognizable design aesthetics. The color scheme of whites, greys and blues and the choice for rough materials like wood, denim and concrete is applied to their stores worldwide. However, the clothes are not necessarily presented and sold against this backdrop. The clothes are an entity and propagate the brand identity. For G-Star the shop interior is a catalyst for the brand, a way to inforce the identity of the brand. The function of the architecture is therefor supportive. For Kool the most important quality of a retail space is recognizability. "Every shop, every space is different. We try to get the most out of every space. Sometimes we are lucky and find architectonical ‘gifts’ on location." Every shop fits the G-Star ideology and is set around the same theme with the same furniture.

Reflecting back on his graduation in 2004 about the shop of the future (2015), Pieter Kool says that a lot of his prediction came true. He was able to apply his vision for a new shopping cycle to the G-Star stores and a lot of his prediction has become reality. However he underestimated the influence of technological and digital developments on our shopping behavior.
4.3 ‘Is it necessary to think commercially as an architect?’

Interview with Oscar Rommens

At first Oscar Rommens was a bit hesitant to accept the commission of the expansion of the store at the Kammenstraat because it concerned the business of his friends. Furthermore, import.export Architecture did not have any experience with designing retail architecture. Fragile Lab was the first retail environment import.export Architecture designed and was received with much praise from critics.

Prior to the draft, in a conversation about the expansion, the client pulled out a standard work with the 500 best buildings in the world. The client asked for a building of the same level. The bar was set high. Luckily the client had a lot of knowledge of design, coming from a background of furniture design, and his opinion had positive influence on the process.

The architects have not studied examples of other retail projects before they started drawing. Their design decisions were based on their gut feeling. The fragility of the store was a very conscious decision, and did not occur accidentally during the design process. The slender construction, based on Asian bamboo structures, was the starting point from the beginning. Another important factor was to create a connection between the surroundings and the new expansion. In the expansion also an entrance to the superjacent house of the owners needed to be made. A narrow staircase, which strongly reminds of a garden alley, connects old and new. The slender shape of the construction forms a contrast with the surroundings but reunites past and present, makes the building stand out and this contributes to the recognizability of the flagship store.

According to Rommens there are a few things that contribute to a good retail experience. Classic elements you can not deny. The best place for fitting rooms and the best height to show merchandise on are just two examples. However there are ways to reinterpret them. Small variations and unexpected twists can have a big impact on the experience. In the case of Fragile Lab the architecture of the expansion was such a big contribution to the appearance of the flagship store that the owners decided to make the whole ground floor of the building the shop, instead of the lobby how it was originally intended.

The reactions on the expansion in the neighborhood were mixed. The response was not so enthusiastic as from people from the field. ‘You love it or you hate it’ says Rommens. He thinks his architecture does not differ much from the surroundings. It is a modern interpretation of established architectural elements. He calls the design of the Fragile Lab classicism with a twist. The black color of the old, existing building has a more invasive impact than his design, he thinks. Black contrasts more that white.

The reason why there is no logo present on the façade of the extension is because the new building was initially not intended as a store. The ground floor was designed to be the entrance of the flagship store, a lobby for the offices. It was supposed to stay empty. Having a void, a place of emptiness, in the
middle of the city is expensive. The possibility to omit things has a certain decadency; that is why emptiness is often associated with luxury.

Rommens even calls it snobbish, not putting a label on something. He refers to major luxury brands that just place very small and subtle logos on their products. Wearing or not wearing a logo (visibly) is a deliberate choice. The building is now a landmark instead of a signboard for the brand. He understands that the chance he got designing a retail space from scratch is a luxury position to be in. It does not happen very often that buildings are built on behalf of a brand. Often brands have to adapt shops in existing buildings to their taste.

Most architects miss a feeling for branding, but the retail business is a niche market. On this topic Rommens agrees with Kool. Architects often have great taste, know what they like and design incredible buildings. But they do not know what kind of architecture will be commercially successful. If asked if architects should change, looking back on the crisis of recent years, Rommens give a question in reply. ‘Is it necessary to think commercially as an architect, do you believe in the market? I prefer to be hybrid.’ Not only focusing on the market but also on niche segments.
In case of the Fragile Lab, the architecture embodies the brand. According to Rommens architecture can become part of the identity of the brand but it is not essential. He claims one can always rely on the logo. He gives the example of a long forgotten design Mies van der Rohe made in pre-war times for the pavilion of Nazi Germany for the expo of 1935. Once the flags with swastikas were removed, there was nothing about the building that would identify with what the regime stood for. This illustrated the power of symbolism and ways of communication.

Architecture can become logos or icons of places, brands and cities. Sometimes this is unintended, Eiffel Tower as the logo of Paris, sometimes buildings commissioned based on their iconic character, like the Erasmus Bridge in Rotterdam.
4.4 Conclusion

The three interviews were a very interesting addition to the case studies since they gave insight to the background of the projects and the thought process of their designers. In general the answers of the professionals were as expected. In this conclusion the answers to the eight questions are combined.

First, the professionals is asked what they think makes a good retail experience. For Tettero that is a surprising experience that suits the brand identity, and that lives up to the expectations of the customers. Kool believes that a good experience is based on a strong relationship between product and the shopping environment. Being approachable is also very important, try to avoid exclusivity. The answer of Rommens focuses more on design possibilities. There are some classical elements which can not be ignored. However they can be reinterpreted.

According to Siebe Tettero architecture can improve the retail experience by being as iconic as possible. Kool focuses more on accessibility and the recognizability of the store. To improve the retail experience Rommens thinks the architecture of the flagship store should contribute to the identity of a brand.

All three designers think that the difference between retail design and retail architecture is a matter of flexibility. Tettero adds it is also the amount of freedom that is granted. For Rommens the emphasis is more on the aspect of temporality.

The fourth question asked, if the interviewees think more attention for branding is needed in architecture, results in agreeing answers. Kool and Rommens both think architects know how to design beautiful buildings but miss a sense of commercial thinking. Rommens also thinks being commercial is a choice. Tettero does not have a strong opinion on the matter.

All the designers think architecture can become a part of the brand identity. But each has their own interpretation of how it should be executed. They also agree that the logo is not so important. Siebe Tettero believes the logo is not iconic, it is a tool like other architectural elements. For Viktor&Rolf a very important element was the color scheme, perhaps more decisive than the logo. Architecture can become part of a brand identity but it is not in the case of Viktor&Rolf and the Upside Down Store. It was a single job. Pieter Kool thinks the logo plays an important role within the identity of the brand, however it is not crucial. The industrial look is a big part of the brand identity. G-Star strives for a recognizable design aesthetics. For Oscar Rommens the logo is merely a sign, and you should be aware of its impact. In the case of the Fragile Lab the architecture has become part of the brand identity. It embodies the literal translation of the brand name.

The three designers all think very differently about the answer to the followings the question. The answers on ‘How can the retail architecture contribute to the identity and the recognition of a fashion brand without relying on the logo’ vary widely. The interior of the store is purely decorative according to Tettero. The
product should be the center of attention and the architecture should support this purpose in an original way. Kool, working for a business with a very strong brand identity thinks a recognizable household style does the trick. For Rommens a household style is less important. The architecture can have a strong identity by itself, and by becoming a landmark in the city it can contribute to the recognizability of a brand. The logo becomes less necessary in these cases.

His long experience in the field leads Tettero when he designs a retail space. Previously he worked for Ralph Lauren and he works now as a curator. Kool is lead by the sites he has to remodel. “Every shop, every space is different. We try to get the most out of every space. Sometimes we are lucky and find architectonical ‘gifts’ on location.” Oscar Rommens has the most unbiased approach; his design decisions are based on his gut feeling.

Together the three abovementioned designers give a complete impression of the role architecture plays in the retail industry. Depending on the possibilities of the existing building, location or the wishes of the client the architecture plays a greater of lesser prominent role.
5. Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The point of focus of this master's thesis is the contribution of retail architecture to the identity of a fashion brand. From this the next research question has arisen:

*How can the retail architecture contribute to the identity and the recognition of a fashion brand without relying on the logo?*

To answer the main research question the topic is divided into three subcategories. In a brief statement, the theory and the answers that emerged from the case studies and interviews are compared. The results from the subcategories constitute the answer to the main research question.

The three subcategories are:
- The brand
- The building
- The user

Particularly the flagship store in the highest segment has been addressed deeper. This type of store is designed with the intention reinforcing the image of a brand rather than operating to sell the product at a profit. “Flagships provide more “anchoring points” (experiential offerings conveying the brand ideology) than brand stores (Borghini et al. 2009). Consequently, shoppers in flagships have more opportunities to experience the brand sensorially, physically, emotionally, and intellectually, which facilitates more powerful brand experiences. Flagships act as a quilting point for a brand as to allow for the grouping of multiple brand meanings into a coherent whole (Diamond et al. 2009)” (Dolbec & Chebat, 2013, p.461).

**The brand, the building and the user**

A brand is a product on which the name and the logo are present. To distinguish itself from other brands a solid identity is needed. The identity of a brand is a combination of the values, vision and quality the owner wants to carry out. The brand perception is the way the customer experiences this identity. Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantello define brand experience as the “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognition) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brands’ design and identity, packaging, communications and environments” (2009, p. 6). This brand experience is the point of focus in a flagship store. A qualitatively good experience can be achieved by offering the customer possibilities to create memorable impressions through specific cues and favoring interaction with the environment.

When this topic was presented to the professionals they had a slightly different vision on the matter. For Tettero, who designed for Viktor&Rolf, a good experience has an element of surprise that suits the brand identity, and that lives up to the expectations of the customers. As head of the 3D-design department of G-Star, Kool believes that a good experience is based on a strong relationship between product and the shopping environment. The
answer of Rommens of import.export Architecture focuses more on design possibilities. According to him there are some classical elements that cannot be ignored. However they can be reinterpreted.

The logo is part of the visual identity of the brand and has the intention to provide a point of recognition. Visual identity makes a product or service visible and its provider (the brand) recognizable. This involves more than a logo and house style, more than a stamp or a trademark. Visual identity represents what the company stands for and what it believes. The whole combination of name, logo, typography, color and visual language reveal this heart and vision of the brand. It is in the blending of these elements and the selected style, color, character, with their collected symbolic meaning that the identity is made visible. This can be so powerful that when it is visualized in another language, the brand is still immediately recognizable (Van Tongeren, 2013, p. 115).

All the designers think architecture can become a part of the brand identity. But each has their own interpretation of how it should be executed. Contradicting to what Van Tongeren states in the literature, the designers all agree that the logo is not so important within the context of the architecture. I partially agree with both statements, depending on how the logo is implemented in the design of the products it plays a more or less present role in the architecture too.

There is also a possibility of architecture becoming the logo of a brand, or as important as the logo. There are three manners how this can be achieved. The first is architecture as a tool to define the status of the brand. The second way architecture can become a logo is when it become a symbol for a city. The last manner how architecture can be linked to a brand is when the architecture becomes a logo for itself, and cannot be separated from its function.

The flagship store is the place where you can experience and understand the spirit of the company. By buying the product, the customer indirectly agrees with the moral values of the brand. The flagship store should embody the brand identity, theme and values in an innovative and interactive way and live up to the expectations of the customer. The location of the flagship store is an important part of the experience. Some streets have become synonymous with luxury and quality, and by locating there these characteristics can rub off on a brand.

‘Most important is that brand identity must be translated effectively into each individual context. The recognition factor is key component of design identity’ (Riewoldt, 2002, p.113).

Dolbec et al. define brand experience as the “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognition) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brands’ design and identity, packaging, communications and environments” (2013, p.460). The three professionals is asked what they think makes a good retail experience. For Tettero a surprising experience that suits the brand identity, and that lives up to the expectations of the customers is the basis of a good
experience. Pieter Kool believes that a good experience is based on a strong relationship between product and the shopping environment. By designing a welcoming and approachable environment, he tries to avoid exclusivity. The answer of Rommens focuses more on design possibilities. The key ingredients for a good experience are based classical elements that cannot be ignored. However they can be reinterpreted.

Céline
The fashion house Céline was found by the Vipiana family in 1945 in Paris. Originally focusing on children’s footwear the brand has evolved to a luxury brand that has a large group of loyal fans. Among them are a lot of celebrities. For a brand with such a long history, the fashion house is quite unknown. This is due to a shifting brand identity. But since the appointment of Phoebe Philo in 2008 as creative director of the brand a new approach has been set. She decided to close most retail venues and to go back to the core values of the brand; Philo has successfully rebuilt the brands’ identity. The brand has reestablished its position within the fashion world again and the sophisticated designs of Céline are more popular than ever.

All the flagship stores world wide of Céline are based on a general format designed by Peter Marino and the Danish artist FOS. The recognizable style of the shops has become an important part of the brand identity. The logo is applied very subtle, both on the façade and in the interior. This is in line with the design aesthetics of the products of Céline; the logo of the brand is always discreetly present on the products, which have a very recognizable style. The quality of the design and the materials of the product are chosen over a big logo.

As part of the new brand strategy Philo designed for Céline, there was decided not to offer online sales. This way the brand gains exclusivity. The customer has to go to the store to purchase the product and has to experience the brand. Céline is able to guard the quality of their service and create a relationship with their customers this way. By always offering the customer an luxurious experience every time they visit a retail point of the brand the customer also gets the feeling that the high prices are justified.

How can the retail architecture contribute to the identity and the recognition of a fashion brand without relying on the logo?

The research question can be answered from different points of view. The results from the literature, the case studies and the interviews are combined to give an all-covering answer.

The logo is a big part of the brand, and imbedded in the memories of the customers, it cannot be replaced by architecture completely. But architecture can help to enforce the brand, by adding an extra layer of recognition. There are several ways architecture can contribute. In conclusion the most important factor is recognizability.

Retail architecture is on point when it is recognizable and evokes memories of previous experiences with the brand the same way the logo does. A consistent
architectural style, a repetition of certain elements and a brand-specific color scheme are ways to create a household style. All the elements of a household style can be used to communicate the market segment, targeted audience and moral values of the brand to the customer.

The architecture of the flagship store can contribute to a unique experience by communicating the brand values in a clear and recognizable way in a brand related environment. The Viktor&Rolf case study illustrates this. Customers do not only buy the product, they are also buying into the ethic of the company. The customer expects an environment that embodies the brand identity, theme and values in an innovative and interactive way. The experience can be very subtle and personal, as long as it adds value to the bond between the brand and the customer.

The three designers also answered the research question. Their answers varied widely. For Tettero the interior of the store is purely decorative. The product should be the center of attention and the architecture should support this purpose in an original way. Kool, working for a business with a very strong brand identity thinks a recognizable household style does the trick. On this point I agree with Kool. Rommens thinks the architecture can have a strong identity by itself, and by becoming a landmark in the city it can contribute to the recognizability of a brand.

In the case of Céline is also chosen for flagship stores and boutiques based on a regular format since the start of Philo. This not only contributes to a recognizable image worldwide, but also secures the customers of similar experiences of high quality in every single store. Within this general format there is also room to create a male version of the concept, simply by changing the color scheme and applying the materials in a rougher way.

Architecture is an important part of the brand identity, but will never be as strong as the logo. However, repeating a distinctive architecture over a longer time period can contribute to the recognizability of a brand the same way the logo is repeated. A flagship store design based on a regular format seems to be the most effective.
5.3 Recommendations

As to every master’s thesis, there are always aspects of a research that cannot be investigated, because of time limitations. The results of this project must be seen in perspective. The interview is limited to three professionals, and the original twelve case studies have been cut back to three. All the case studies are located in Europa, and with the growing Asian market in mind the results may be applied in different ways there due to the cultural background. This leads to several recommendations for further research.

Recommendations when designing a flagship store
The experience in the flagship store needs to offer more than the monobrand store or the online shop. The focus is now on creating a strong brand identity and binding the customers through unique in-store experiences. The online store should not be seen as a competitor, but as an addition to the service the flagship store offers the customers. Both have their pros and cons.

The retail architecture should support the service element of the brand. Service is crucial in offering a powerful experience. Service is both tangible and intangible and is a decisive factor in the returning of the customers. Lowering the threshold and avoid exclusivity by creating a welcoming ambience.

Recommendations for further research
For further research, one must think of broadening the amount of case studies. The interviews provided a lot of background information, so I recommend the combine every case study with an interview if that is possible.

A field that I did not go into was the socio-psychological aspect of identity, although I find it really interesting to understand how people behave. The relation between personal and brand identity and the evolvement of trends is a topic I would love to explore further. But that is my personal interest and it is not relevant for an architecture thesis.

The focus of this thesis was the flagship store in the highest segment. For further research the results could be compared to the experience in a flagship store in a different market segment, for example H&M. The larger multinationals in the lower segment try to create proximity with more expensive brands by locating close to them, as seen on the Champs Elysees for example. How does this influence their brand perception?

Recommendations for other students
This project was the second thesis I wrote. From my former experience I already learned that I am not a skilled writer. This time again, I struggled with the same problems. However I gained a lot of knowledge, it also took me a lot of time. I would recommend other students to start in time, plan carefully and find a mentor that can push you in the right direction. A very helpful trick is to explain your story to a person without any knowledge about the topic, to write a story that is also understandable for a layman. Often the topics are very broad and it helps a lot to narrow down your subject
as soon as possible. It is also vital that the subject stays part of the curriculum; multiple disciplines come together in one topic.

Overall it was an interesting process, you not only learn a lot about your topic, you will also learn more about yourself.

Unfortunately in Delft retail architecture is slowly disappearing from the curriculums, both in architecture and industrial design. This is a pity because it can be the ultimate challenge for a broad interested engineer. To students with interest in this subject I recommend to explore the field outside of our university. Often the offer abroad is much wider, but the most knowledge is gained through experience.

The experts interviewed also agreed more attention for branding is needed in the field of architecture. Kool and Rommens both think architects know how to design beautiful buildings but miss a sense of commercial thinking. Rommens also thinks being commercial is a choice. I think for architects it is important also to develop in other fields of interest so we will become valuable team players.
Literature


List of images

Image 1; (cover) Céline fall/winter runway show (Vogue.com, 2013)  Page 1
Image 2; Visualization unique format/regular format  Page 16
Image 3; Winter 2012 ad campaign ft. Daria Werbowy (Juergen Teller, 2012)  Page 19
Image 4; ING House (Meyer en Van Schooten, 2002)  Page 20
Image 5; Plaza under the Eiffel tower with Parisians promenading (Tissandier Collection, 1889)  Page 21
Image 6; Luxor Las Vegas at Night (Traveloka Jaya, 2015)  Page 22
Image 7; Facade Céline store New York (Garance Doré, 2014)  Page 25
Image 8; Phoebe Philo (David Sims, 2010)  Page 30
Image 9; Interior London Flagship Store (Céline, 2014)  Page 33
Image 10; Counter and display London flagship store (Céline, 2014)  Page 34
Image 11; Interior Parisian Flagship Store (Margaux Krehl, 2014)  Page 36
Image 12; Display Parisian Flagship Store (Margaux Krehl, 2014)  Page 37
Image 13; Entrance Parisian Flagship Store (Céline.com, 2014)  Page 38
Image 14; Interior Temporary Boutique Paris (Kristen Pelou, 2009)  Page 39
Image 15; Layout Overview Temporary Boutique Paris (Kristen Pelou, 2009)  Page 40
Image 16; Campaign Céline ft. Daria Werbowy (Juergen Teller, 2014)  Page 45
Image 17; Interior Upside Down Store (Tettero, 2005)  Page 48
Image 18; Interior Central Axes Upside Down Store (Tettero, 2005)  Page 49
Image 19; Shopping Window Upside Down Store (Tettero, 2005)  Page 50
Image 20; Façade G-Star Head Quarters (Designboom, 2014)  Page 52
Image 21; Interior G-Star (Designboom, 2014)  Page 53
Image 22; Staircase and mannequins G-Star (Designboom, 2014)  Page 54
Image 23a,b; Façade and court yard Fragile Lab(Filip Dujardin, 2007)  Page 56
Image 24; Working in Fragile Lab (Filip Dujardin, 2007)  Page 57
Image 25; Staircase and light weight construction (Filip Dujardin, 2007)  
Page 58
Image 26; Logo Fragile (Nathalie Vleeschouwer, 1990)  
Page 59
Image 27; Siebe Tettero (Philip Riches, 2011)  
Page 63
Image 28; Viktor&Rolf at Harvey Nichols London (OMA, 2011)  
Page 64
Image 29; Pieter Kool (Roger Cremers, 2013)  
Page 67
Image 30; Oscar Rommens on top of the Urban Camping (Filip Dujardin, 2009)  
Page 70