Branding a lifestyle

Creating communities in retail architecture
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Abstract

Although more and more brands go online, a lot of them choose to sell offline as well. Apparently, there is something about the offline that attracts brands. In shops they can make contact with the customer, let them try out their products and give them a look in what way their products can be a part of their lifestyle. The design of the shop plays a really big role in showing this particular lifestyle. The shop could be seen as a 3D translation of the brand and products and it is the role of brand architects to make this translation. Lifestyle brands have to search for new retail concepts, to keep up with retail trends and the experience economy. Literature studies and case studies helped to define the connection between branding and architecture. They gave greater insight in the way architectural elements can contribute in creating a brand community.

Keywords: retail architecture, lifestyle brand, flagship store, community
Preface

This paper on retail design is the result of a fascination, which started during my bachelor Architecture at the TU Delft. The minor Retail Design introduced me to branding architecture. I got a fascination for the methods and strategies they use and the way this can make a really strong and clear design, that almost breathes a certain identity. Because of this, I decided to follow some courses at Industrial Design. I learned to start the designing process with a certain brand identity and from there design a three-dimensional brand space. During a Retail Summer School and an internship at Studio Jos van Dijk I got even more interested in the process of brand-driven architecture.

There is not really a difference between the products of a lot of brands, in terms of quality. By adding immaterial value to this, an identity, a brand can differentiate from others. This can also be implemented in their brand architecture. Buildings are nowadays often seen as a product of the brand as well, and have to fit the brand identity. Brand architects create places with identity, shops with a strong personality. This architecture should appeal to the right customers, whilst repel others.

The way material, composition and other architectural resources are used to create a specific atmosphere in stores, shows the passion of the brands and their retail architects to let the shops function as the extension of the brand in their brand architecture.

For me it was only a logic choice to specialize in this subject during my graduation even more by writing this research paper on retail design. In this way I can use the information I got from the extra courses I followed and learn more about both retail design and architecture.
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1. Introduction

So much has changed in retail design in a short period of time. Online shopping has grown bigger and bigger, and partly because of this, city centers struggle with vacancy. Brands without a really strong brand identity are having difficulties to survive and retail designers do not know how to deal with this. Today’s retail landscapes are monotonous and have resulted copying and imitating one another’s offerings and aesthetics (Klingmann, 2007). New retail concepts need to be examined, which will allow stores to adapt to current and future developments. This research will give insight in the world of branding and retail architecture.

Speaking of branding, people immediately think of advertisements and logos. However, retail design can also play a big role in branding. Shop are not only important because they are the physical surrounding in which the products and services of brands are displayed, they also play a big role in communicating the brand values.

Since the introduction of online shopping, retailers have noticed that something has to change in the way they offer their products and look at their shops. Since people can buy more and more online, they do not necessarily have to go to a physical store. This causes branding and architectural issues, but also new opportunities.

Because of online shopping, brands struggle to show their brand identity to the customer. Communicating this brand identity is essential to both gain and maintain loyal customers. People engage more with a brand if it fits their lifestyle (Van Tongeren, 2013). Pop-up stores, experience centers and flagship stores are recent retail concepts that brands use as part of their branding strategies, to show people their brand identity. Shops should no longer be seen as the main selling point of products. It should be looked at as a place to connect brand and customer.

From the customer’s point of view, online shopping makes it unnecessary to go to a physical store to buy products. Brands notice that customers see the shopping activity no longer as a necessity, but as a
way to spend their leisure time. Shops are trying to meet the needs of the customers, by adopting other functions, like a bookshop with a café. They want to create brand communities, with different values than other brands. This new focus in retail design, based on shopping experience and brand identity instead of buying, can keep attracting customers to the shops and can prevent offline shopping from disappearing. It can even lead to new store concepts in the future. This leads to the following research question:

*How can architecture be used in order to create a brand community by carrying out a specific lifestyle in a future retail environment?*
How can architecture be used in order to create a brand community by carrying out a specific lifestyle in a retail environment?
2. Methods

To answer the research question, this report is divided in two parts that are dedicated to two sub-questions.

What will future retail environments look like?

To answer this sub-question, the first part of this report will describe the current retail landscape and is based on a literature study. This will thus contain information about brands, branding, brandscapes, and retail trends. By researching the retail landscape from the past and present, we can find out more about the future of lifestyle brands and retail design.

The second part of the report, will be based on two case studies, that focus on the following sub-question:

How are the lifestyles of different brand communities translated into retail environments?

In these case studies, a comparison will be made with and between stores of lifestyle brands. They will be compared to each other, but also to other buildings that promote a certain lifestyle. The stores are both flagship stores, which are designed by well-known and highly appreciated architects. They will be analyzed on a set of architectural elements, but also on atmosphere and social value.

The architectural elements are mostly compared by studying the floor plans. The other values come to discussion in mood boards and literature.

By seeing how brands use their store design to create different communities, several themes can be linked to this. The social, cultural and architectural importance of these themes will be discussed in this research paper.
3. Brandscapes

To understand architectural branding, it is important to start at the base: the brand. A brand can be defined as the sum of all the tangible and intangible aspects of a product experience (Wintrob, 2016). It is the immaterial value added to a product or service, which helps customers to engage with it. The brand is all about being recognizable and gaining loyal customers. Lifestyle brands go even a step further. They seek to inspire, guide, and motivate people, and try to contribute to the customer’s way of life (Savolia, 2012).

Brands & Branding
The origin of branding lies in the branding of kettle. It started as a farmers’ sign of property. But as the cows from one farmer were better than from some others, the use of a brand ended up as a way to recognize the quality of the animals by their customers (Van Tongeren, 2003).

Nowadays branding is much more than marking your property or recognizing quality. “Brands define the way we live, the experiences we choose and whom we choose to associate with. They create and change identities to sell new products.” (Klingmann, 2007). Branding is about positioning yourself in society, by granting a certain lifestyle. People can fantasize who they want to be, instead of who they are. According to Naomi Klein, we increasingly define our identity through the brands we choose (Riewoldt, 2002, p. 8).

Customer loyalty
The goal of branding is always to make more profit. However, there are two ways in achieving this. The first one is more focused on a short-term effect. By, for example advertising, customers are directly encouraged to buy a product or service. The other way is focused more on a long-term relationship. By showing the brand image, there is a higher chance of customer loyalty. Eventually, it will be the loyal customers that buy more and more products, creating a stable source of income. Loyal customers even appear to be worth up to 10 times as much as their first purchase (White House Office of Consumer Affairs).
3.1 Brand identity

The core of a brand is the brand identity. It is how a brand wants their customers to see the brand. This can be done with words (slogan), a logo and even architecture. To create a brand identity, it is essential to have a really clear vision on who the (future) customer is and what their interests are. Later on, the brand identity can be translated into products, advertisements and even buildings. To be a successful brand, it is essential to be true to your underlying message while still be flexible. This means that the brand’s appearance has to be able to change over time, place and circumstance (Klingmann, 2007).

The translation from brand to product and architecture, can be captured in a big brand idea circle. The core of this circle is the big brand idea. This should express the above mentioned underlying message of a brand: the vision, mission and purpose in a few words. Examples of big brand ideas are: ‘Think different’ of Apple and ‘For the players’ of PlayStation.

The design principles defines the more emotional characteristics of a brand. So, how would you describe the brand in a few catchy words as if it was a human being? To transform those characteristics into something tangible and be consistent, there should be certain rules for designing: the design language. For retail architecture, this is the set of materials, colors and shapes that should be used in every touch point. This is all about communicating the big brand idea and brand personality to the customers.

Only if these three aspects are consistent, both matching with each other as well as between all the touchpoints of the brand, a brand can communicate their brand identity well enough to be called strong (Floor, 2006).
3.2 Brandscapes

Brandscapes are the places where brand and architecture meet each other. It could be seen as the translation of a brand identity into a 3D environment and thus the brand itself into a location, or even an attraction (Riewoldt, 2002). It is a place where the brand physically meets the customer, and plays thus a really important role in the brand strategy. Customers can engage with the products, but also with the lifestyle the brand tries to communicate.

All of the layers of a brandscape have different relationship with the brand identity. They decide whether a brand identity is communicated well enough through all the different scales of the context. Depending on their brand identity, brands decide in which cities they want to open their stores. Luxury brands want to be seen as exclusive and sophisticated, and thus always choose A locations. This means that they are often situated in large cities. The more regular brands choose to be in every town they are profitable. The same as for the cities applies to the streets. High-end brands will mostly situate themselves in high streets. These streets are in some cases even becoming the territory of those brands. The facade is the architectural element that is in between context and content. It is the link between interior and exterior, and has to be used to attract people into the store. It is important to stand out in the shopping street, and yet fit in. Most shop fronts are large glass facades, making the shopping street monotonous. While branding strategies try to create a unique identity for the brand, it often leads to exactly the opposite (Klingmann, 2007). This is translated in homogenization of their retail architecture. The interior is where retail architects focus on most. There are fewer limitations than on the facade, which gives the freedom to show the brand identity.

Brand architecture & the brand architect

Architecture can be a tool for brands to shop their corporate identity, and on the other side, shops are the perfect surroundings for architects to show their creativity at its most extreme (The Atlantic, 2011). Brand architecture is thus in some cases not only focused on a commercial base. Brand architecture has to make connections with the context and not only implement the same concept and formula on the urban or suburban landscape (Klingmann, 2007).

For a lot of architects, the space they create is the goal. However, for brand architects space is a tool. Space is used to create brand experiences. Although retail designers are known with these kinds of branding strategies, for architects this approach on designing is quite unfamiliar. Architects are often focused on researching the location, the context. However, for store concepts, it is essential to translate the brand identity into a three-dimensional space. Retail architects should know how to
design brand and customer orientated, whilst also keep
the context in mind. Retail architecture thus goes be-
yond the boundaries of architecture, since some archi-
tects are even involved in redefining the brand identity
of the brand they work with. Their store designs can to-
tally change the way people look at a shop, and even
the way customers perceive the brand (Jodidio, 2010).

The work Rem Koolhaas did for Prada, took Prada’s
brand identity to a whole new level: from conservative
to innovative. The idea behind the store is that it is seen
as a strategy, a development, to change the perception
of people about the brand Prada. The Prada Epicenter
is, as OMA describes: “an exclusive boutique, a public
space, a gallery, a performance space, a laboratory”
(OMA, 2017). Shopping is redefined as a cultural activity
and shoppers should be seen as visitors, just like mu-
seum visitors etcetera (Skjulstad, 2014). The halfpipe is
used as a space for lectures, exhibitions, presenting
products, performances and more (Floor, 2006). By
making the store such a cultural building, the brand Pra-
da is seen as a manifestation of culture and arts of the
haute couture designer Miuccia Prada.

So, for architects, branding is a good method
to create identities for people, communities and places
rather than a selling tool (Klingmann, 2007).
Instead of taking the brand’s identity as a starting point, a lot of brands use famous architects to implement their own signature on the store design. These well-known signature architects are employed to strengthen the brand image and customer loyalty with their typical designs. There are different scenarios in which it can be profitable for brands to hire a signature architect. The brand is either entering the market, struggling to create a strong brand identity for themselves or needing a shift in the brand image.

A good example of this is the Stuart Weitzman store in Milan. You do not have to know this brand to see that the store is designed by Zaha Hadid. The dynamic shapes and futuristic look add value to the perception of the brand identity. Weitzman argued that “the marriage” of Hadid’s architecture and his collection “helped achieve the next phase of growth and raise brand recognition worldwide” (Frearson, 2013).
3.3 Scope: mono-brand flagship stores

To define the scope of this research paper on retail architecture, it is essential to have a look at the future of retail. The conclusion of this chapter defines the exact study area for the continuation of this research.

The differences between manufacturers and retailers are getting smaller (Floor, 2006). Because of the Internet, manufacturers can sell their products directly to the customers. They can also do this offline, by opening their own mono-brand stores. These stores are great opportunities for the brands behind the manufacturers to communicate their brand identity directly to their customers. Since mono-brand stores can show the complete range of products, it is easier to communicate a certain lifestyle.

A type of mono-brand store is the flagship store. The most important role of these stores is to show the brand identity to the customers. Since this is a leading factor in today’s and future retail design, it is interesting to have a look at flagship architecture. It is a three-dimensional advertisement, offering the customers the ultimate brand experience (Floor, 2006). Since this research paper is focused on communicating a brand identity via retail architecture,

Themed flagship stores will develop the most successful experiments blending virtual and real worlds. Virtual commerce will enhance the place-based appeal of stores that display, divert, delight, and deify through the use of retail theater (Kozinets, 2002).
Figure 2. Purpose of mono-brand flagship stores.

1. Presentation of the brand identity
2. Offering an in-store shopping experience
3. Experimentation of new store concepts
Brands & branding

Brand
1) mark made by burning or otherwise, to indicate kind, grade, make, ownership, etc.
2) Trademark

Branding
All the activities an organization undertakes to bring their brand and products in the minds of the consumer.
Source: van Tongeren, 2013.

Brand identity
How a brand wants to be seen by their customers, in terms of characteristic and what them distinguishes from competitors.

Customer loyalty
Likelihood of previous customers to continue to buy from a specific organization.

Brandscapes
The places where brand and architecture meet each other. Brandscapes could be seen as the translation of a brand identity into a 3D environment.
Retail architecture

Shop
A retail store, especially a small one.

Store
A stall, room, floor, or building housing or suitable for housing a retail business.

Flagship store
The most important store of a brand, in which can be experimented with new retail concepts. They can be distinguished by three characteristics:
1. They carry a single brand or product.
2. They are owned by the brand’s manufacturer.
3. They are operated with the intention of reinforcing the brand identity.
Source: Kozinets, 2002

Boutique
1) A small, exclusive business offering customized service.
2) Prêt-a-porter shops owned by haute couture brands.
Source: Vernet & de Wit, 2007

Pop-up store
A store that temporarily takes over a vacant space and does business there for a short time.
4. Retail evolution

In this chapter the history of the relation between retail and architecture will be discussed, as well as two trends that are currently changing the retail landscape: the experience economy and hybridization. Only then we can see which direction retail design is going to.

Retail architecture is more influenced and exposed to trends than other branches of architecture, because lifestyles come and go. It has to adapt to even the most subtle changes in society. The retail landscape is therefore continually being reinvented, reformulated and reshaped (Chung et al., 2001). There is however a difference between temporary trends and the ones that cause a transition on the retail landscape.

For architecture, trends can easily create conflicts, since buildings are supposed to have a longer lifespan than most trends do. Only the trends that seem to cause structural changes can be taken into account. Whether or not to respond to a trend depends thus on the transiency of the trend. Short-lived trends can effect the product collection, online environment and the promotional material of the brand. However, to change the brand architecture the trend has to last for a longer period of time. For a trend to change current store formats, it has to be part of a chain reaction, changing customer’s behavior. In this way, long-term trends have an influence that can be visible in both the architecture of shops as in the streetscape & urban surroundings.

For potential future retail concepts, it is important to look at the evolution of retail and retail architecture. It is the job of the retail architect to distinguish a short-term trend from a change in society and to react to this properly. This means using trends in such a way that they strengthen the brand identity.

Figure 3. Impact of trends.
4.1 A brief history on retail architecture

To see how retail design will develop in the future, it is important to have a look at the evolution of retail. Where the shift to the online is a very popular development right now, there have been more important changes in the past.

Before the 19th century, most products were sold on markets. Some specialty products were sold in shops. Shop keepers started to put their names on their shops, which meant the start of brand identity and customer loyalty.

The 19th century made retail grow bigger and bigger. In the department stores, that came up in the beginning of the 19th century, middle-class women could enjoy different products while being in a safe surrounding (BBC, 2015). They more and more often went shopping together, as a leisure activity. Women could escape the house and gather with others, making shopping tend to a feminist activity. The department stores became social catalysts, defining city life and bringing people together (Openshaw, 2017).

The industrial revolution was game-changing for the retail industry in terms of construction and materials. Joseph Paxton’s Crystal Palace was a celebration of new materials, a palace of glass and steel. People went there to wonder around and enjoy art and products. Since it was such a social activity, it was also about showing off and being part of a certain community. Chrystal Palace was revolutionary for its concept of commercial entertainment and in that way an example for department stores (BBC, 2015). They noticed that architecture could be used to attract people to a retail environment. By making their stores look attractive they would attract more shoppers.

At the end of the 19th century, large glass plates became available for shop owners as well (OCS, 2016). Their shop fronts could be glazed, and used to display products to lure customers into the shops; window shopping was born.

The escalator meant another huge innovation for (department) stores. It was now easy to get people on different floors, from where they could look down and have an overview on the other levels, the products and other people.

The invention of self-service brought retail to another expansion. Customers could now get their own products, making them independent shoppers. It was globally implemented in supermarket concepts and twenty years later other store typologies, like the department stores and malls, followed (Quartier, 2016).

In the 1980’s there was an increase of brandscapes, since companies switched from a manufacturing to a commercial function (Chung et al., 2001). But the big-
gest transformation of retail came with the Internet: online shopping. At the end of the 20th century the Internet opened up for commercial use. People are able to buy products online and let them deliver at their homes. It has even become possible to follow people’s interests on social media, creating big advantages for advertising. Physical stores have to deal with online competitors and are searching for new strategies to survive. They are even abandoning the idea that stores mainly serve to sell products (Quartier, 2016). However, there is also a movement from online stores that open a physical one. Offline retail will not yet disappear.

A brief time-line on the evolution of retail from the 19th century can be found on the next page.
1800 1820 1840 1860 1880 1900

1834
Opening Harrod’s London.

1851
Opening Crystal Palace.

1872
First catalog. Access to shopping for people in the suburbs.

1883
Cash register invented by James Ritty.

1896
First escalator (Bloomingdales).

Figure 4. Infographic about the evolution of the retail landscape.
Selfridges: “Excite the mind & the hand will reach for the pocket.”

1930 Supermarket with self-service.
1950’s Malls.
1985 TV commercials.
2009 QR code.

1917 Self-service invented.
1937 The shopping cart.
1970’s Barcode.
1995 Ebay is founded.
2000 Social media led to social commerce
2013 Omni-channel retailing.

1920 1940 1960 1980 2000 2020

1991 Birth of e-commerce.
4.2 The experience economy

Since people can buy almost everything online, it is not necessary anymore to go to a physical shop. This makes us wonder why brands are still investing in their offline shops. The experience economy forces brands to offer experiences to their customers. They have to entertain their customers to keep attracting them. The experience is a long-term investment and pays off in loyal customers. It is the added value to the products that decides whether people want to be part of the brand community and invest in their lifestyle products.

The online

In these virtual times, where it is way more expensive to own an offline shop than an online one, we can ask ourselves if we even need offline stores. However, in-store shopping is still the most used shopping channel. What makes them pay off is the creation of customer loyalty. Brands can win in terms of level of excitement, engagement and interest from consumers, according to Michael Stephenson (Jesdanun & Ortutay, 2015).

Customers used to interact with only one channel of retail, the physical store. This is called a single-channel retail environment, because there is only one moment of contact with the brand (Diract, 2017). Since the online is always available, it is now essential to create a seamless brand experience of online and offline channels together: omni-channel retailing. In an omni-channel retail environment the customers get in touch with the brand during different moments in their lives. The online and the offline are nowadays forced to work together, to create a constant brand experience.

The experience economy changes the vision on retail from the customer’s and the brand’s point of view. These changes on the vision will again lead to a different focus in retail design.
Leisure time

A big part of the retail space is nowadays dedicated to retailing experiences. The experience economy indicates a significant change of considerable social importance to the customers (Kozinets et al., 2002). Customers are going to shop for fun as a way of social activity. They spend their precious leisure time, and therefore expect a valuable experience in return (Floor, 2006). The design of the stores have to contribute to the customers’ experience. Taking the consumers’ experiences and personal values into account has even become just as important as supplying them with products (Jahn & Heller, 2016). This shift is encouraging retail designers to increase the usage of leisure elements into the shopping experience (Kent, 2003). They have to rethink the role of the physical store, as a space that embraces social life, culture, education etcetera (Openshaw, 2017).

Immaterial added value

From the brand’s perspective, the experience economy is often seen as a challenge for their retail designs. Providing the right in-store experience is namely a very difficult task. However, when executed properly, it can actually offer a lot of opportunities. When a brand is able to control the experience economy, they can offer their products and services for a much higher price.

A brand that manages the experience economy very well is Starbucks. Instead of just selling a cup of coffee, they offer their customers an experience. As Howard Schultz, the CEO of Starbucks says: “We’re not in the coffee business, serving people. We’re in the people business, serving coffee.” They do this among other things by personalizing the customer contact (writing down name on cup). Because of this, people are willing to pay a way higher price for a cup of coffee. Especially teenagers are really sensible for being part of a brand community, since they want to fit in with the rest.
They actually want to live that lifestyle and accept that it comes with a certain price. They are okay with paying way too much for a cup of Starbucks coffee, because they want to show on social media that they are part of the Starbucks community and share the same lifestyle.

**Retail landscape: sales-led to experience-led**

Because of the experience economy, stores will not only function as a place to buy product. In the future, there will be a shift from sales-led stores to experience-led stores. This again, will change the way retailers offer their products, because it will be more important to let people engage with the products and present your product in the right way. It is more important to exhibit your product and show your brand vision, than sell them in store. After all, the products can be bought online as well. Stores are becoming the museum of the brand, and the products are the pieces of art. According to Pieter Kool, an offline purchase will therefore be an optional souvenir of the experience in the store (Banks, 2016). A combination of merchandise and in-store experience can be used to beat the competition (Floor, 2006).

**Public showrooms**

The created interiors are more and more becoming a showroom, serving the products. This concept is already applied in some flagship stores, but will be even more important for other retail concepts in the future.

Shops are going from sales-oriented to identity-oriented, seducing customers to join their brand community and practice their lifestyle. They will become spaces for people to try out their products, ask questions, follow workshops and attend lectures. The design of the shop has to adjust to this.

In short, by offering an experience, shops can sell their products for a higher price, make people brand loyal and distinguish themselves from competitors.

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**Figure 5. The influence of the experience economy on the retail landscape and store design.**

- **Sales-led to experience-led**
  - Include leisure elements
  - Add immaterial value
  - Identity oriented

- **Public showrooms**
  - Sell products for a higher price
  - Gain and sustain loyal customers
  - Beat competition
4.3 Hybridization

A more and more popular way for brands to reach the individuals of their community is by approaching them in different parts of their daily lives. Shopping therefore becomes not only part of the city centre, but among others also part of airports, train stations, schools and museums. It is melting into everything and everything is melting into shopping (Chung et al., 2001).

Mixed-use concepts
Mixed-use concepts are becoming more and more common. Look at bookshops with a café or museums with a museum shop. Shopping is integrated in other functions, and is adapting other functions itself as well. By offering a varied program and multiple experiences, the verb ‘shopping’ will get a different definition. It will focus more on being a cultural and social activity, while the act of buying will be done more often in online shops. Shopping is becoming a bigger part of public life.

Brand houses
Because of the expansion of retail spaces, retail is becoming a bigger part of the public space and activity. Brands can profit from this, since it is easier to connect with people in this public retail space. Brands can now give a public space to their brand community, a shop. They can gather a group of people with the same lifestyle as the brand. In this way, it is less difficult to communicate their brand identity to the customers. In other public spaces in the city, this is already happening: a gallery attracts artistic people, a church attracts believers and a theatre attracts people that are culturally involved. These people feel immediately connected to each other, because they share common interests.
Brand museums
As said before, buying products in-store is like buying a souvenir in a museum. Instead of taking a piece from a museum collection, customers take home a piece of the brand. Some brands literally create a museum of their own brands. They show the customers their manufacturing function, instead of their commercial function. Factories organize guided tours to show the visitors the story behind their brand. Breweries set up beer tastings. These experiences are very effective ways in communicating the brand identity. People learn about your brand and are even willing to pay for it.

An example of this is the World of Coca Cola Museum in Atlanta (see image on the left). This themed attraction charges an entree fee to enter a Coca Cola celebrating museum. It is an elaborate brand community building strategy that features themes of interaction, nostalgia, American history, Santa Claus, and globalization (Kozinets, 2002).

4.4 Conclusion
Retail design has always been subject to technological, social and cultural change. It is essential for brands and their stores to on the one hand keep up with these developments and on the other hand do not loose their specific brand identity.

The challenge that shops are having right now is to cherish their loyal customers and keep attracting new customers. This is a result of the increase of online shops. To prevent competition between the online and the offline stores, they have to work together in an omni-channel retail environment.

Shopping becomes spending leisure time instead of a necessity, so customers expect an in-store shopping experience. The experience economy results thus in a shift from sales-led to experience-led stores. A shop is no longer a space to store products, but becomes a public place to present the brand identity and a showroom for products. These public spaces of consumption do not only restrict themselves to the traditional retail landscape, they pop-up in different sectors as well: museums, libraries etcetera. Shops and public life are becoming more and more united.

The following chapters will be dealt with according to this future perspective on retail design. What does this mean for the layout and atmosphere of these mono-brand flagship stores? Which social aspects should be taken into account?
Figure 7. The influence of the experience economy and hybridization on the retail landscape and store design.
“The architecture of 21st century retail theater will increasingly incorporate the tacit meanings of form to interact with consumers as they co-create brand essence. By combining the ordinary with the mythic, the profane with the sacred, and the innovative with the familiar, producers will build environments that entice even as they reassure.” The marketplace will once again become a festival, a border-place full of mystery, cultural exchange, community, and delight.

Kozinets et al., 2002
Image 8. Experimental Retail Space Under Armour, Shanghai. Source PSFK.
5. Case studies

This chapter is about finding out what factors play a role in translating the ‘immaterial value’ or brand identity into a specific atmosphere in brand architecture. Therefore, the store concepts of two brands with a really strong, but different, brand identity are being analyzed: Apple and Valentino. These analyzes can be found in appendix 1, 2 and 3. Both of the stores are flagship stores that have adapted to the two trends discussed in the last chapter.

In the first case a comparison is made between the Apple store in London and a church: the Church of Consumerism. In the second case the Valentino store in Rome and a Palazzo are compared: the Palazzo Boutique. Finally, both stores are compared with each other. The architectural components of the floor plans were compared on five fixed, and if needed, some other project specific subjects. The five fixed subjects were: symmetry, subdivision of space, public/ private space, furniture and routing.

These comparisons will show what the architectural post-shopping age can learn from other types of community architecture. This is important, since shops will no longer only be places to buy, but more and more public spaces with a wide range of functions. For both case studies it is all about loyalty; of the customers, churchgoers and citizens. How can the architecture of their buildings contribute to the creation of loyal customers?
5.1 Cathedral of Consumerism

With their flagship store in London, Apple has tried to create a town square. Customers can learn and connect with others in an inviting community space (Lynch, 2017). The store is thus not just another shop, but has to inspire visitors to connect with the Apple lifestyle.

The Apple store will be compared with a catholic church: the cathedral of consumerism. It looks like a far-fetched comparison, but isn’t the church the best retailer of all times? After all, the church sells religion to the people and uses their architecture in achieving this. In floor plan, it is easy to see some similarities between the Apple store and a church. Are there, besides the floor plan, other atmospheric comparisons that can be linked to branding purposes? What are the influences of the social and cultural aspects of going to church on church architecture and can this be applied to retail architecture?

The church of consumerism is a building with a clear head entrance, a high ceiling and an open floor plan. The high ceiling creates a welcome, but void entrance. The open space layout of the store creates a sense of harmony, overview and social control. The more you get into the building, the more private the spaces seem to be and the more knowledge is acquired. The people with the most knowledge about Apple product are the so-called ‘geniuses’. The genius bar is situated in the back of the building. The geniuses could be seen as the priests of the Apple religion, spreading knowledge on technology.

When entering one of both buildings, you can expect to be educated and included in either the brand or the church community. There is space reserved for trying out the products, asking questions and for joining presentations and discussions. The church of consumerism is a place to escape from the busy life outside and just have a break. The loyalty of the Apple customers is influenced by their architecture and makes us wonder if retailing in general is the new religion.

Figure 8. The Cathedral of Consumerism.
5.2 Palazzo Boutique

The Valentino store concept combines old and new in order to generate a kind of Palazzo atmosphere. It distances itself from being solely a showroom and promotes a new retail architectural format based on a more traditional retail boutique structure (Valentino, 2015).

In this case study, a comparison between the Valentino store in Rome and the Palazzo Medici- Riccardi will be made: the palazzo boutique. In contrast to the previous case study, the palazzo is mainly a private building. What social and cultural aspect of these types of buildings can stimulate future retail design concepts? And what will the architectural consequences be like? Palazzo’s were designed to represent an important family. They do not sell religion, but power and respect to a family. How do they use architecture to achieve this? And can this be related to the power of brands nowadays?

The palazzo boutique is a space that feels often more private than public. This is because of the sequence of smaller rooms. The entrance atrium is the most public place of the shop. Since it is quite spacious. Products are displayed as if they are artworks and should be admired. They stand alone in the middle of the rooms, presented on massive tables and cylinders. The usage of columns and arches in the different rooms remind of the renaissance palazzo architecture, a time of artistic enrichment and the Medici family. The contrast between symmetry and asymmetry, causes the customers to wander around. This feels like walking through a palace.

The goal of this retail concept is to make the customer feel like they are part of an intimate community and show the exclusivity of the brand. Customers have to feel at home in ‘their’ private palazzo, wander around a bit and see the Valentino collection as pieces of art. The customers look up to the lifestyle of the brand and want to live it.

![Figure 9. The Palazzo Boutique.](image-url)
5.3 Conclusion: Church of Consumerism versus Palazzo Boutique

The links between the stores and their reference buildings (church or palazzo) can be seen as the differences between the stores. The two brands have applied different store concepts. The biggest differences between the two stores are their lay-out, symmetry, the way social control is created and the contact with the product. Where the Apple store is one giant open symmetrical space, the Valentino store consists of different rooms, separated by thick walls.

Themes
After analyzing the Valentino store and the Apple store, and comparing both, some values turned up that, together, result in loyal customers. Each of this theme is represented in the architecture of both the stores as in a Church or Palazzo.

- Accessibility
- Hierarchy
- Imagination
- Interaction

These themes can be applied to both a community as well as their mono-branded flagship stores. They define the in-store relationships between customers and between brand and customer that can be reached with architecture. How are these relations translated into space and architecture. And how do these relations differ for different brand identities?
Church of consumerism

Is about...
• Being part of a community

Architectural features
• Overview - open space layout
• Symmetry
• Social control
• Direct contact with product

Palazzo Boutique

Is about...
• Living a exclusive, luxurious lifestyle

Architectural features
• Entrance hall + smaller spaces - wondering around
• Asymmetry
• No direct contact with product, only seeing the lifestyle

Figure 10. Specific characters of both the Church of Consumerism and the Palazzo Boutique.
6. Themes

The following chapter will be divided according to the earlier mentioned themes:

5.1 Accessibility
5.2 Hierarchy
5.3 Imagination
5.4 Interaction

These themes all describe a social aspects of a brand community that will be very important for future mono-branded retail concepts. They can also be seen from an architectural point of view. Can the social aspects be linked to architectural features? And are differences between the two brand communities visible in the organization of their brand architecture?
6.1 Accessibility

To gain loyal customers, it is important for brands to create a community around the brand. The customers who see themselves as a part of this community, share certain interests of their lifestyles. It is the reflection of the brand identity on everyday life that people can recognize in their own lifestyle. People feel safe and secure in communities, whether it is a sports-, church-, or brand community. Creating such a community is essential for maintaining loyal customers, since it feels unsafe to try products of a different, unknown, brand. From the previous case studies derived two types of brand communities: a more open church-like community and a more intimate family-like community.

Flagship stores should be a places where these communities can gather and where the right in-store experience for them is created. Stores are in between public and private buildings: they are open to the public, but only during their opening hours. However, some stores feel way more accessible than others. This difference is made very clear in the case studies. Which architectural elements do retail architects keep in mind to control the accessibility of the store that is suitable for the brand community?

Brand = religion

Brand and religion have a lot of similarities. Capitalist consumerism is, according to Hosoya & Schaefer (2001), even the last global religion. They both want people to access and gather in their communities, which says a lot about the lifestyles of their consumers. They tell a lot about who you are and show others how you are living your life, whether it is about religion, fashion, sports, technology or just having fun with friends. Shopping is becoming a ritual, a pilgrimage to a desired lifestyle (Chung et al., 2001).

Their buildings are a part of their communication strategy. Shops can be seen as churches to honor the brand, selling belief in the brand and its products (Chung et al., 2001). Sometimes they even literally come together when a store takes over a church building. This space, previously reserved for religion, spirituality and culture is now dedicated to a brand. A brand zone can be seen as a place of communion with the pantheon of brands (Chung et al., 2001). These cathedrals of consumption contain enchanted, sometimes even sacred and religious characteristics for many people (Ritzer, 1999). Retailers invest a lot of attention in the design of their buildings to impress, communicate their vision and gain respect.

Brands demand the loyalty of the customers, to compete with others, like competition between different religions. A lot of customers who are part of these communities worship the brand like believers worship a god.
Gather in a community space
Like a church, the Apple store tries to get people together and join the community. The Apple store has taken over some principles of church architecture.

Stepping into the Apple store in Loncon, people enter a 7.2 meter high entrance hall (Foster + Partners, 2016). This is the area where they can test the Apple products. There are twelve trees standing in this space, bringing the human factor into the building. The set-up of the public space is perfectly symmetrical. This gives the Apple store and the church a clear appearance. Even the furniture, the entrances and the staircases are symmetrical. The furniture is placed in a clear alignment.

In a church, the routing is quite clear. You can walk on the aisles and a small stroke of the nave, because of the placing of the furniture. The entrance is in the middle, but it feels more public to walk on the aisles. In the Apple store this is a bit different. When you enter one of the two doors, you do not arrive at the center, but actually in front of the trees and columns. The most popular products are in the center of the store, so a lot of people will stand still in the middle. The sides are used more for direct routing, because they lead directly to the stairs.

The store is a harmonious whole, which makes it a pleasant place of residence. People feel anonymous and dare to engage with the brand in this accessible space.

It is the home of free speech, by having large open spaces, space to roam, sit down and talk (Chung et al., 2001). Even the tree planters have a gathering function. People can sit on them and have a chat with each other. By offering a space where people can sit, they will stay in the store for a longer period of time. When nobody sits on the planters, it is not as awkward as an empty bench.

The staircase is centrepiece to get people to the first floor without noticing (Floor, 2006). The banister is made...
out of stone, but detailed in such a way that it feels really soft.

Brand= family
The Valentino community is very different than the Apple community. Since Valentino is a more intimate brand, in terms of price and community, their brand community feels like a family. The head of the family is Valentino Garavani, the fashion designer of the brand. The Valentino stores should therefore not function as a public space to gather, but more as a place to escape the public life outside.

Family gathering
The Valentino store has a large entrance hall, the atrium, like the Apple store. However, the doors to this space are closed and are opened by guards. For the loyal customers it feels like a privileged service, but for new customers it can feel really intimidating. They wonder if they look like they are part of the brand community and what happens if they do not. The message is really clear: the store is meant for a select group of people. The store does not feel accessible for everyone. This is the best way to host the Valentino brand family, because they want to feel an exclusive community.

When inside, the store feels quite formal. Since there are less people inside and the store is less dynamic than the Apple store. Customers feel being watched, like in a museum. There are a lot of different spaces, so the only place to really gather with other Valentino family members is in the larger space, the atrium.
Results
Accessibility is recognizable in the brand community as well as in the brand architecture. Apple’s mission is to make their products accessible for everyone. Therefore their stores feel like large public spaces. The Valentino community is meant for a selective group of people so their store should feel more private than the Apple store.

The differences of the Apple and Valentino communities are recognizable in their store architecture. The Apple store has large open doors to enter the store, like a church. When a brand wants to attract all sorts of people to come in their stores and join their community, they can have a look at how churches organize their communities within their buildings. It is important to create in-store harmony, which makes the shop look spacious and makes people want to stay. The Apple store consists of one open space, so there is only one room to enter. In this harmonious space, several gathering points should be created. The Valentino store has closed doors, that are opened by a guard. However, this is not the only moment of entering. The store consists of a lot of different spaces, that have to be accessed one by one. The store concept of the Apple store is way more accessible than the Valentino concept, which is in perfect balance with their different vision on brand communities.
6.2 Hierarchy

In almost every community there is a status system, a hierarchy, a ranking on importance for the community. In a brand community, people get assigned to different roles as well. Hierarchy is thus a subject that should be considered when designing the store concept.

Both case studies have a different approach in reflecting hierarchy in their stores to create a perfect retail environment for their brand communities. These different visions are determining for the lay-out of their shops. Hierarchy results especially in a combination of public and private spaces within the store. Brands can play with the atmosphere of the store to create the perfect balance that fits their brand identity and attracts the right customers.

Gradient of publicness

The Apple store itself functions as a public building. As said before, it is a place for people to gather. The open floor plan creates a sense of publicness to the whole store. This layout makes the store easily accessible and does not predefine specific routes for the visitors. A retail model like this abandons spatial formalities and hierarchies, causing customers to interpret the store in their own way and to create their own spatial experience (Psathiti, Sailer & Palaiologou, 2015).

However, within the Apple store, there are still gradients between the public and the private notice-
thing about their own Apple products. For this reason, especially people that are already part of the Apple community come at this place, giving it a more intimate feeling.

In both situations, the customers are assigned the role of a student. They listen carefully to the experts and respect them for their knowledge. These different roles (visitors, customers, members of the Apple community, staff members and Geniuses) are subtly translated into the design of the store.

The more visitors enter the building, the more private the spaces feel and the more knowledge about the brand and its products is needed. This gradient going from public to more and more private can be compared with the gradient of publicness in church. When entering, people firstly experience the spaciousness of the building. Tourists look up, walk around for some minutes and then leave the church again. The same happens with the Apple stores. The concept of the stores is the same in every place on earth, but people still want to check out the interior to see what is going on and then leave, often without even buying something. Loyal members however, come to these buildings with a purpose: they go to the worship service, which can be compared to the function of the Forum. They gather in the middle of the building, absorbing the atmosphere and listen to the provided information. The further customers enter the Apple store, the more knowledge about the brand is expected.
The Apple store could also be divided into three parts, resembling the nave and isles of a church. The columns and furniture emphasize the length of the store, creating a focus on the most important people within the store. The perspective leads to the big screen and to the geniuses upstairs. Two beautiful staircases are going up. They drag the customer to the first floor. Besides serving accessibility of the mezzanine, it is luring customers to the community space. Because of the store design, the geniuses are not only literally raised above the others, but also metaphorical.

Private Palace
Hierarchy was a leading theme in the renaissance society. Some families were more important and thus powerful than others. The luxurious fashion brands still refer to this social status system. Their clients should feel as if they are part of a community with a higher status than others. In the Valentino store in Rome we can see that the exclusive Valentino community gathers very intimate stores, with clear references to a Palazzo.

Where Apple wants to be there for everyone, Valentino uses a more exclusive approach. Since Valentino is a high class ‘fashion house’, they should host in a high class house: a palace. The store thus houses high-class fashion and members of high-class families. The customers are welcomed as guests to a Palazzo. Visiting the store is a symbol of achievement, because few people can afford the Valentino fashion (Floor, 2006). The employees make sure that the customer feels like a king.

Chain of rooms
After the door is held open for the customer, they enter the atrium. There are however a lot more rooms around the atrium, with different homely atmospheres. The atrium feels more public than the other rooms do, because of it’s size and location. It is, as the courtyard of the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, in relation to the rest of the building the only large open space. It has an free structure, with arches and columns and a quite neutral appearance.

In contrast to the atrium, the rest of the rooms are divided with solid walls and make clear references to a home. Also the staircases are hidden within the system.
of thick walls. The thickness of the walls is perceived as a barrier to a more private space. A visit to the Valentino store thus starts in the open atrium, gets more intimate when entering the smaller rooms through openings in the thick walls.

Results
Both stores use social and architectural hierarchy in their own way to appeal to their customers. The Apple customers are part of an open community, while the Valentino customers expect an intimate and exclusive treatment. The Apple store has therefore an open store layout. However, there are subtle gradients that create different zones within the store. By offering different activities within the store, zones are generated in which a different level of knowledge is acquired. The further and higher the customer positions themselves in the building, the more knowledge about the brand is expected. The Valentino store uses a more obvious approach to create a system of hierarchy. Separate, smaller rooms divided by thick walls creates a sense of intimacy. They contrast with the more public atrium.

Both store concepts take their layout, size, levels and the role of the people inside into consideration, to create an in-store system of hierarchy that fits their brand identity and brand community.
6.3 Imagination

Imagination is a stimulating factor of customers’ senses. Sharing certain visions, dreams, is what is keeping the brand community together. It is forming ideas about the past, the future and the brand identity. What customers think of the brand identity (a.k.a. brand image), is for a large part dependent on their fantasy. According to Steve Jones “An enchanting and engaging environment can shape perceptions about the brand” (Agadoni, 2017). They can be triggered by linking hero’s to the brand: Steve Jobs has become the hero of future technology and Valentino Garavani of Italian haute couture. Hero’s instantly create associations to themes related to them. Customers of the brand look up to these hero’s and want to join them.

The retail environments another instrument for triggering the imagination of the customer. Blending fantasy with reality in retail environments will become more important, since retailers are starting to recognize that branding is a “magical affair in which fact and dream must merge together” (Kozinets, 2002).

To create a brand space that responds to the fantasies of the customers, this fantasy should be reflected really subtle in the stores. This leads to a type of architecture that leaves room for the imagination of the customers, while at the right time shows a glimpse of this fantasy to remind the customers of their desires.

Overview

Sight-lines are a really important aspect of retail architecture. They can make customers curious about the different spaces and influence the path people follow and the products that they see.

When entering the Apple store, people are overwhelmed by the size and height of the store. It makes them imagine what is all in there. The sight-lines in the Apple store go all the way to the back. After entering, customers see the entire store at a glance. This overview makes the store feel like a public space. People know what to expect from the space when they get in. The Apple store is not about wandering around, it is about exploring the space and products. Customers seek for inspiration.

Even the mezzanine is visible from the ground floor, and the other way around. The overview creates a sense of togetherness. People can individually explore the store, whilst feeling part of a bigger whole. Because of the open floor plan, the store is prepared for future changes.

When entering the Valentino store, customers can only see a small part of the entire store; almost only the atrium is visible. When they turn their heads, they can catch a glimpse of some adjacent rooms. The lack of overview makes customer curious and wander what more rooms are to be discovered. From the atrium,
they follow their sight-line into another room. From there on they approach every single room with the pre-discussed chain of rooms. Because the different rooms all have another atmosphere, created by subtle contrasts in lightning, size, material and furniture, different parts of their imagination is triggered.

The fact that the store resembles an ancient Palazzo, makes the customer dream about the past. They imagine themselves in luxurious places and start accommodating the space like it was their own home. As the brand mentions themselves: "heritage and style unite in a new concept of the future that is not nostalgic yet suggestive of memories past" (Valentino, 2012).

Where some sight-lines end fast others seem to come close to infinity. The arches, as can be seen at some image in the appendix, are enhancing this perspective even more.

Symmetry
The public part of the Apple store is perfectly symmetrical. The columns, doors, trees, tables and chairs are put in a symmetrical grid. This makes the store layout really clear to the customers. On the other hand, the Valentino store is not symmetrical in itself, but also the different rooms on their own tend to be asymmetrical. The columns and tables are slightly shifted, to create a more exciting whole. This shifting encourages the customers to wander around. So, both shops have a big entrance hall, but for the Apple store it is the whole store and for
Valentino only a part of the store.

Results
Imagination has a lot of different interpretations. It is about dreaming of the unreachable, like future technology or the history of haute couture.

In-store imagination can be triggered using different architectural elements. The customers’ imagination can be provoked by offering a symmetrical, flexible open space, where people can explore the brand for themselves. An overview of the whole store gives individuals the freedom to decide their own route, and yet still feel that they are part of a community. This is the case in the Apple store. Even the organization of the products makes customers dream about being part of the Apple community. Visitors can see how to use the different products together and dream about the possibilities the products can create in their own lives (Floor, 2006). Imagination in the Apple store results into inspiration, ideas, inventiveness and exploration.

Another way to trigger the in-store imagination is by using almost the opposite architectural features. In the Valentino store imagination is created by referring to the past. A pre-decided route through small asymmetrical spaces with different atmospheres. Customers wander around through these spaces, having no overview of the store. They let the view-lines guide them to different rooms. The Valentino store creates a mysterious tour through the past, different homely atmosphere and collections. Imagination in the Valentino store results into artistry, fantasy, vision and illusion.
“In the flagship stores in the brand zones of the global cities experiences must be provided, image sustained, myths created.”

Hosoya & Schaefer, 2001
In Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping
6.4 Interaction

A flagship store is the opportunity for the brand to communicate their brand identity to the customers. They are meeting points for a brand community to see the brand and meet each other and thus have a powerful effect in defining people’s view of ‘who they run with’ (Di Somma, 2014). Interaction between customers, staff members, the products and the space have a big influence on how they perceive the brand. It should be the end goal of the retail architect to provide spaces of human interaction to compete with the digital (Openshaw, 2017). The different layers of in-store interaction are addressed in this chapter.

Mannequins

In the Valentino store, the mannequins have more than just one reason. They are there to show the clothing, but also to guide the customers through the palazzo boutique. They stand just around the corner of the rooms, so people see that there is another space. They guide the customers to the staircases and walk with them on the stairs. It is almost as if they are alive, taking different positions in the store. The customers see who they can be when wearing Valentino clothing, looking at the mannequins. They follow them and get a guided tour through the earlier mentioned mysterious chain of rooms.

In the Apple store, the customers are the mannequins themselves. They see other people using the product, which makes them want to try these product as well. Because they see actual people touching the products, they know that it is allowed to physically interact with them for themselves.
Product display
The product display is a key feature of the retail interior. As in all other Apple stores, the one in Regent street uses the signature Apple tables. The placing of the furniture plays a really important role in the presenting of the products, and the routing through the building. The furniture of the Apple stores is quite basic as the Apple tables are solid and made out of wood. The design is so simple, because they do not have to distract attention from the product. They are purely functional and because the material is known, people are comfortable to use them. People gather around the tables, making the spots around it occupied places of interaction with the gadgets. In this way not only the Apple store is accessible for everyone, their products are as well. Interaction with the products is a characteristic feature of the Apple store that enhances static relationships and the occupation of the space (Psathiti et al., 2015).

In the Valentino store the interaction between product and customer is almost the opposite. The products are presented on pedestals, acting as the stage of the products. Since they are made of luxurious materials, like the products themselves, people are not supposed to just touch everything they see. They walk along the displays as if they visit an exposition on the Valentino haute couture. It is a mistake to state that there is no interaction between customer and product, just because it is a different kind of interaction than in the Apple store. The interaction is more passive and static, but focuses on admiration of the products.

Co-presence
Because of the open-plan layout, the mezzanine and the mid-height furniture customers are aware of the product location, but also of the presence of other people in the store (Psathiti et al., 2015). Customers have an overview of the store and see other people using, and owning, the Apple products. In this way, there is a strong feeling of reflection and co-pres-
ence. This feeling encourages social interaction and supports the concept that people in the store share interests while they become part of the ‘Apple community’ (Psathiti et al., 2015).

The interaction between the floors makes the people downstairs see the persons on the first floor and the other way around. It makes them curious what is on the first floor. They want to stand there as well, see and be seen, creating a sense of social control. This is also recognizable in a church community. Church-goers meet each other and know who was, or was not, at the church service. They keep an eye on each other, have a chat about the service of today and in this way control their own community.

Since a lack of overview is created in the Valentino store, the feeling of co-presence is not as strongly present as in the Apple store. The Valentino store is more focused on individuality than co-presence and the different rooms support this.

**Staff**

The behaviour of the staff can be essential in communicating the brand to the customers. In the Apple store, the employees all carry iPhones and iPads. The customer gets the impression that the employees not only work for Apple, but that they even live the lifestyle that Apple tries to sell (Floor, 2006).

The staff members in the Valentino store are not as notable as the Apple staff members. In the Valentino store the customer is treated like a king. The employees make sure that the customer is served well, and at the same time place themselves to the background.

**Photogenic spaces**

Becoming more and more important is the communication on social media. Customers post photos of the stores on social media, shared by others and in that way spreading the brand image. Both the Apple store as the Valentino store create a surrounding that is very fit for taking pictures, consisting of beautiful details, materials and compositions.

**Results**

In-store interaction occurs on many levels with many different architectural communication strategies. Mannequins are be used to communicate a lifestyle to the customers and make them want the products. They can also be replaced by the customers themselves, presenting the products to each other. The store design has to take the passive or active role of the customer in the product presentation into account.

The size, shape and material of the furniture and product displays has a big influence on this, since it can encourage customers to either look and admire or also access the product. Interaction between customer and product establishes interaction among customers and between customer and staff mem-
bers.

Overview does not only trigger imagination (chapter 4.3), but also creates a feeling of co-presence. This makes the customers feel like they are a part of the brand community.

The Apple store is a place of dynamic social interaction. Customers actively involve with the brand. The Valentino store is more a place of admiration, individuality and static interaction.
6.5 Conclusion

There are connections between the four different themes and the retail architecture of the case studies, which can be seen in the scheme on the right. The four different themes take an important position in the brand community, from a large to a very detailed scale: after accessing a community, the customers position themselves within the hierarchy system of this society. They explore the ambiance and interact with other people of the community. From a large scale (the group as a whole) we end at a small scale (interaction between individuals). The different scales of the brand community can clearly be found back in the different scales of their retail architecture. After accessing the building, the brand positions itself in the hierarchy of different spaces. Customers can explore the atmosphere and will eventually interact with each other, the employees, the furniture and product displays.

So, to make sure the store concept serves the brand community, the four themes should be considered. The case studies have shown in which way they can be translated. From the total store concept, to layout, to routing and atmosphere and eventually to furniture and product display. These subjects should not only be considered looking at the possibilities of the offered space, but also by looking at the needs of the brand community.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community 1</th>
<th>Community 2</th>
<th>Retail architecture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Involving</td>
<td>• Exclusive</td>
<td>• Closed door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Brand - religion</td>
<td>• Brand - family</td>
<td>• Different spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ranks: visitor, staff, Geniuses, members</td>
<td>• Customer is king</td>
<td>• Private atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Educational ranking on knowledge</td>
<td>• Hierarchy on status</td>
<td>• One big atrium versus small separate rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dreaming about the future</td>
<td>• Dreaming about the past</td>
<td>• Solid walls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Technology</td>
<td>• Haute couture</td>
<td>• VIP rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Employee shows lifestyle</td>
<td>• Passive consumer</td>
<td>• Routing through rooms</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Active consumer</td>
<td>• Mannequin is guide</td>
<td>• Wander around</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Employee serves customer</td>
<td>• Mysterious tour through different atmospheres</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• No overview</td>
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Figure 21. Translation of the four values within a brand community into the identity of their store architecture.
The research question was divided into two sub-questions. The first question is about the future of retail environments. Retail design has always been subject to technical, social and cultural change. It is essential for brands and their stores to on the one hand keep up with these developments and on the other hand do not lose their specific brand identity.

The challenge that shops are having right now is to maintain their loyal customers and keep attracting new customers. This is a result of the increase of web-shops. The offline world has to start competing with the online world, or even better, work together. Shopping becomes spending leisure time instead of a necessity, so customers expect an in-store shopping experience (the experience economy).

What will future retail environments look like?

Retail environments of the future will be experience-led stores in stead of sales-led stores. A shop becomes a public place to present the brand identity and a showroom for products. These public spaces of consumption do not only restrict themselves to the traditional retail landscape, they pop-up in different sectors as well. Brands can communicate with their customers through different interfaces in all the parts of people’s life. The brand identity of the brand has to run synchronously with the lifestyle of the customer. Shops and public life are becoming more and more united.

The second question will be answered using the case studies. The two case studies showed two successful store concepts: the church of consumerism and the Palazzo Boutique. They are different in store layout and atmosphere, but both create a perfect brand environment for their customers. They have a different view on their social positioning and translate that into their architecture.

The Apple store is involving everyone, has a subtle approach to hierarchy, creates imagination by clearness and let customers interact. The Valentino store involves an intimate group of customers, has a clear hierarchy system, creates imagination by offer-
ing a mysterious route through different atmospheres and let people admire the products.

**How are the lifestyles of different brand communities translated into retail environments?**

The different brand communities of the case studies had a big influence on the design of their flagship stores. However, four themes could be distinguished that both stores considered in their retail design pro cess, but that were executed in a different way:

1. Involving or exclusive
2. Hierarchy or equality
3. Imagination or reality
4. Interaction or exposition

These themes were translated in layout, public/private space and everything in-between, routing and display of products. The scheme on the right shows the how these different layers of a brand community (the four themes) translate themselves into architectural features. The themes go from group to individual and the architectural features that fit them also seem to go from a large to a small scale.

The link between the two parts of this research paper can be found with the answer of the research question:

![Diagram of retail design themes](image-url)

**Figure 22. How to keep all aspects of a brand community in mind during the different scales of retail designing.**
How can architecture be used in order to create a brand community by carrying out a specific lifestyle in a future retail environment?

By translating the brand community into all scales of the brand architecture, makes sure the brands communicate their lifestyle into every aspect of the customer’s life. Leisure experiences in public places of consumption, will keep attracting new customers while satisfying the loyal customers.

The four addressed themes can be used as a guide to see which part of the brand community can be translated into which architectural feature. The store of the future becomes a community building, where costomers with the same lifestyle can gather and honor the brand.
This reflection will evaluate on the process and outcome of the research paper, regarding the research question, the socio-historical relevance and the appliance of the results in other fields and my own design project.

The research question
During the researching process, the research question developed into its final shape. In the beginning it focused mainly on the use of branding strategies in retail architecture. However during the execution of the research, it got focused more on retail architecture. Brand identity, context and future retail concepts became predominant themes of the case studies. Eventually, the research question was transformed in such a way that it could be divided into two sub-questions; one focusing on the future of retail design and the other focusing on the relation between brand communities, their lifestyle and the translation into retail architecture.

As this points out, the research question developed itself during the researching and writing process. In the beginning the research question had a steering function, but when the research got its final shape, the question got a determining function.

Socio-historical relevance
An analyzation of communities of the past was executed in the case studies. The relation between a church and the conservation of their communities is clearly reflected into some spatial aspects of their architecture. The same counts for a palazzo and their powerful residents. The way the architecture of their buildings keep the communal aspects in mind was compared to store concepts of the present. This connected historical values with the future scenario of shopping: it is increasingly becoming a social activity.

The online creates difficulties but also opportunities for retail design. Some online shops are seeing these opportunities and setting up physical stores as well. Apparently, offline shopping is not disappearing, it is just getting another definition. Stores will have to reposition themselves within the social life of people, going from sales-led to experience-led. Giving a place for people of the brand community to gather in appropriate architecture is becoming a significant element of the brand strategy.

The themes discussed in this paper define
some social aspects, linking them to architectural features. This research does of course not predict the future of retail design, but tries to prepare it for the evolution of current trends.

Appliance
The themes and description of the different architectural layers are not only relevant for retail architecture. They can be taken into account in all buildings that want to attract and host a certain identity- and lifestyle-based community. Think of faith-based, interest-based, leisure-based and business-based communities. Their buildings are often public or accessible by membership and consist of churches, offices, event spaces, museums etcetera. They all deal with themes like accessibility, hierarchy, exploration and interaction and have to adjust their architecture on their vision of these themes.

In my own design project, I will create a retail environment for the Japanese lifestyle brand MUJI. The four themes can help me to implement the creation of a community in every scale of the building. Since it will be the first MUJI store in the Netherlands, it is essential to create a strong brand community from the beginning. The architecture will be a crucial instrument in establishing this. This research paper will be used as a tool for considering the right spatial features during the right moments of the project, to eventually create an inspiring environment for the MUJI brand community.
Literature


Images


Appendices

Appendix 1. Cathedral of Consumerism
Appendix 2. The Palazzo Boutique
Appendix 3. Apple versus Valentino
Appendix 1

Cathedral of Consumerism
Mood board Apple
With their newest stores, Apple has tried to build what they call a “modern-day town square,” where visitors come not just to shop, but to be inspired, learn and connect with others in an inviting community space. The Apple store in London, designed by Foster + Partners, is situated in a historic building in the busy shopping district at Regent Street. According to architect Stefan Behling, the store goes beyond retail, by being a place for people to meet and collaborate, and thus offer an exciting experience.

The used materials (luminous ceiling, stone, wood, terrazzo) were selected to function as a calm background for the products, but on the other hand create a warm and inviting atmosphere. The craftsmanship with which the materials are used, make the space human and respectful to the existing building. Not only can customers test the products, there are also places for presentations and discussions. These events take place in The Forum, a space in the middle of the building. It has a big screen and chairs, so that experts can give presentations. They wanted to create and “experience that goes beyond retail" (Foster + Partners, 2016). The first floor is the territory of the Geniuses, who can give customers assistance and answers questions.

Nature has been brought into the building by adding twelve trees, put in specially designed planters, which are also places to sit down and take a break. Two staircases on each side of the big screen go up to the first floor. The balustrades are made of sandblasted stone, making them feel nice and look beautiful. The first floor is the territory of the Geniuses, who can give customers assistance and answers questions.

At the back of the store is the Boardroom. This is a place for meetings.

While it is often referred to as a town square, in this study it will be compared with a church. The loyalty of their followers is comparable. “We can even wonder if retailing is the new religion (Jo didio, 2010).
Symmetry

Cathedral of consumerism

The set-up of the public spaces of both floor plans is perfectly symmetrical. This gives the Apple store and the church a clear appearance. Even the furniture, the entrances and the staircases are symmetrical.
The Apple store could be divided in three parts, which look a bit like the nave and isles of a church. They are divided like this because of the placing of the columns. The columns places in a church divide the church into different spaces: nave, aisles and apse. They make the church seem even more stretched out in length. The columns in the Apple store also enhance the length of the building. The lines on the ceiling emphasize this even more. It creates some sort of tunnel vision, which draws people to the back of the store. This division enhances the depth of the store. The columns, together with the black lines on the ceiling, create a clear perspective towards the end of the store. This makes customers wonder what is upstairs.

In a church, the length is enhanced to create a focus on the most important people and things of the church. The altar and the priests are all in the back of the church. In the Apple store the perspective leads to the big screen and to the geniuses.
Coming through one of the two door openings, people enter a 7.2 meter high hall. This is the area where they can test the Apple products. There are twelve trees standing in this space, bringing the human factor into the building. The pots of these trees are also benches to sit on and have a chat. Foster + Partners calls this space the 'town square', because it is flexible and welcoming. It has a very public feeling and a lot of people just pop in for a moment. In the middle of the space ‘the forum’ is situated. Lectures and presentations can be held on the big screen and people can sit on low wooden cubes. Experts from various fields can come to entertain, inspire and teach people about Apple products (Foster + Partners, 2016). This space is made to teach people why Apple is so great, and attending a lecture already means that people are interested in the brand. The first floor is the territory of the Apple Geniuses. Customers can ask these staff members everything about their Apple products. For this reason, especially people that are already part of the Apple community come at this place, giving it a more private feeling. The boardroom is a place that can be used by app developers, digital entrepreneurs and other small start-ups to become part of the Apple family (Foster + Partners, 2016), and is thus even more private. The more you enter the building, the more private the spaces
feel and the more knowledge about the brand and products is needed. We can compare this with the public function of a church. When entering, people always look up, since the space is so high. If you are a tourist, people just enter, walk around for five minutes and then leave the church again. Believers however, go to the worship service, which looks a bit like function of the Forum. The average church-goer sits in the middle part of the church. The more important people sit in front. The priests take their places in the choir of the building. The further you get into a church, the more knowledge about Christianity is expected.
As in all other Apple stores, the one in Regent street also uses the signature Apple tables. The placing of the furniture plays a really important role in the presenting of the products, and the routing through the building. As in the church, the furniture of the Apple stores is quite simple. Both the church benches as the Apple tables are solid and made out of wood. The design is so simple, because they do not have to distract attention from the product/service. They are functional, but not more than that. They are places in a clear alignment, steering peoples view all the way to the back.
Guiding function of furniture

Mezzanine Apple store
Walkways

Cathedral of consumerism

In a church, the routing is quite clear. You can walk on the aisles and a small stroke of the nave (because of the furniture). The entrance is in the middle, but it feels more public to walk on the aisles. In the Apple store this is a bit different. When you enter one of the two doors, you do not arrive at the center, but actually in front of the trees and columns. The most popular products are in the center of the store, so a lot of people will stand still in the middle. The sides are used more for direct routing, because they lead directly to the stairs.
Hight differences

Because of the mezzanine, people can have an overview on the front of the store. They see other people trying out Apple products, but the people on the ground floor see them as well. In this way, there is a certain amount of social control. This social control is also recognizable in a church community. Church-goers meet each other and know who was, or was not, at the church service. They keep an eye on each other, have a chat about the service of today and in this way control their own community. In the case of the Apple store, people see what kind of other people are using, and maybe owning, the Apple products. Since the space is so open, it is immediately visible when someone does something inappropriate. On the other hand, the people downstairs see the persons on the first floor. It makes them curious what is on the first floor. They want to stand there as well, being seen and having an overview on the complete store.

Cathedral of consumerism
Conclusion

Both a church and the Apple store have 1 clear head entrance. The more you get into the building, the more private the spaces are. In the church a priest stands in front of the people. The space in which he stands is reserved for him, which makes it a private space to the public. In the Apple store, the more private rooms are linked to the stairs. Going up the stairs automatically makes the space after feel more private. Calling it the genius bar reminds us of the priest. They are the people with the most knowledge on the subject within the building. When you enter that space, you already own products of Apple and you can ask the staff for help. People that are not part of the Apple community yet, don’t have a reason to go upstairs, which makes it feel like a semi-private space.
Appendix 2

The palazzo boutique
Mood board Valentino
Valentino flagship store

Rome, Italy
Designed by David Chipperfield
Opened in 2015

The brand identity of Valentino is strongly related with the Italian background and is all about being elegant and modern. Their flagship stores in among others, London, Rome and New York show a combination of classical buildings with a rather minimal interior. “The store concept combines old and new in order to generate a kind of palazzo atmosphere, steering away from a pure showroom and promoting a new retail architectural format in place of a more traditional retail boutique structure,” said Valentino (Howarth, 2016).

A continuously concept for their stores is based on the Italian palazzo (Palace). For Valentino, this means, expensive materials and classical buildings. The idea of a palazzo is that it is the home for a family, in this case the Valentino family. Italian materials are used, and the arch is a returning architectural element.

The flagship stores of Valentino take the direct context into account, by adjusting their facades to the identity of the surrounding buildings. The facades try to be both classical and to connect with the adjacent buildings. Chipperfield tries to make a new retail concept. As said before, retail design is more about showing products and a lifestyle than selling them directly. Instead of going towards a showroom-like architecture, Chipperfield reverts to the traditional boutique in a modern way.

In this chapter, the Valentino flagship boutique will be compared to the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi in Florence. This is a renaissance building, probably designed by Michelozzo in the 15th century.
Symmetry was one of the general characteristics of palazzo architecture in the renaissance. The courtyard of the palazzo is perfectly symmetrical and lies in the middle of the building. The smaller rooms are not symmetrical. Also the stairs are on different places. The Valentino store is also not symmetrical on it’s own, but the different rooms separately come close to being symmetrical.
Subdivision of space

The atrium of the Valentino store is a large open space, just as the courtyard of the Palazzo Medici. The rooms around the courtyard are smaller and feel more intimate and thus private.

We can see the same happening for the Valentino store. The rooms around the atrium are smaller and have different dimensions. For the fashion brand, this is a way to separate the different collections. Each room can now host a different collection, and be equipped according to this.
David Chipperfield’s “interpretation of the space and its sequence of areas, almost as fast-paced as a tracking shot in a film, express a solemn, intimate mood that you rarely find in a traditional boutique. A sense of cosiness and intimacy gradually grows as one moves from the entrance, which separates the palazzo and street, to the dressing rooms: the true heart of the home, in fact, is protected from the outside world” (Valentino, 2012).
As said before, the courtyard is, in relation to the rest of the Palazzo, a large open space. It has an open structure, with arches and columns. In contrast to the courtyard, the rest of the rooms are surrounded with solid walls. Also the stairs are hidden, surrounded by thick walls. This clarifies that the other floors are meant to be private.

The same approach is used for the Valentino store. The walls are thick divisions between the smaller rooms. The staircases are also hidden within this system.
In principle, the whole palazzo is a private home to the Medici family that is living there. However, some spaces are more public than others. The ground floors of the Italian palazzo’s were used for the more public functions, open for tradesmen, customers and the public. The upper floors were more private. The courtyard and garden of the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi are the more public places of the palazzo, since visitors could be welcomed there. They are quite big and directly connected to the entrance. While a palazzo is private, the Valentino store is semi-public, although it doesn’t feel that way. The atrium feels more public than the other rooms do, because of it’s size and location. For the other rooms you have to go through entrances in thick walls. That barrier is bigger than going through a glass facade. We can see this references especially in the interiors of Valentino flagship stores.
Arches are used a lot in palazzo architecture. As we can see in the section of the Palazzo Medici, they are used in the courtyard but also in the walls. In the Valentino store, arches are added to relate to this kind of architecture. A repetition of these arches creates long hallways of fashion.
The palazzo boutique is a space that feels often more private than public. This is because of a sequence of smaller rooms. The entrance atrium is the most public place of the shop. Since it is quite spacious. Products are displayed as if they are artworks. They stand alone in the middle of the rooms, presented on massive tables and cylinders. The usage of columns and arches in the different rooms remind of the renaissance palazzo architecture. Symmetry, or actually the contrast between symmetry and asymmetry, causes the customers to wander around. This feels like walking through a palace.

The goal of this retail concept is to make the customer feel special and show the exclusivity of the brand. Customers have to feel at home in ‘their’ private palazzo, wander around a bit and see the Valentino collection as pieces of art. The customers look up to the lifestyle of the brand and want to live it.
Appendix 3

Apple versus Valentino
Apple versus Valentino

Both stores have an entrance hall that is extra big and high. This is the most public part of the store. For Valentino it is the space where customers make a decision: either explore the store a bit more, or go out again. Since this space in the Apple store already contains all their products (upstairs are services), customers make a different decision: try the products or go out. The public part of the Apple store is perfectly symmetrical. The columns, doors, trees, tables and chairs are put in a symmetrical grid. This makes the store layout really clear to the customers. The Valentino store is not symmetrical in itself, but also the different rooms on their own tend to be asymmetrical. The columns and tables are slightly shifted, to create a more exciting whole. This shifting causes the customers to wander around. So, both shops have a big entrance hall, but for the Apple store it is the whole store and for Valentino only a part of the store. The symmetry or asymmetry makes the customers either to have a clear overview or to wander around and explore the store for themselves.
Apple versus Valentino

When entering the Valentino store, a guard opens the door for you. This immediately gives customers the idea that this store is something special. Once inside you have to make a small turn to check out the atrium. To really enter the store customers have to go up on a few steps. These are all boundaries for people to enter the store, which make the space feel almost private. The Apple store on the other hand, has huge, transparent doors. During the opening hours, they are open, so everybody can walk in. Since a lot of people are just walking in to check it out, other people will do the same. There are minimum boundaries to get into this store, which makes it feel really like a public space. The trees with the seatings enhance this even more.
Sight-lines are a really important aspect of retail architecture. They can influence the path people follow and thus the products that they see. When entering the Valentino store, you can only see a small part of the entire store; almost only the atrium is visible. When customers turn their heads (lower opacity in image), they can catch a glimpse of some adjacent rooms. The lack of overview makes some customers curious, while it holds other customers back.

The sight-lines in the Apple store go all the way to the back. After entering, customers see the entire store at a glance. This overview makes the store feel like a public space. People know what to expect when they get in and will not stand for any big surprises. In comparison to the Valentino store, the Apple store attracts other people. While the Valentino store appeals to people that want to live an exclusive lifestyle, the Apple store attracts all kinds of customers. It is like a reflection of society, gathering at a public space. This is why Apple itself calls this store concept the 'town square'.
Apple versus Valentino

The placing of the furniture in the Valentino store is, again, between symmetrical and asymmetrical. This connects to the concept of being just a bit different. In the Apple store, the well-known Apple tables stand perfectly in line. This standard lay-out gives the shop a clear overview.
Apple versus Valentino

In the Valentino store, the mannequins have more than just one reason. They are there to show the clothing, but also to guide the customers through the palazzo. They stand just around the corner of the rooms, so people see that there is another space. They guide the customers to the staircases and walk down the stairs. It is almost as if they are alive, taking different positions. The customers see who they can be when wearing Valentino clothing.

In the Apple store, the customers actually are the mannequins. They see other people using the product, which makes them want to try these product as well. Because they see actual people touching the products, they know that it is okay to touch them for themselves.
Conclusion

The different lifestyles of the brands have caused the shops to be very different from each other. They are different in amongst others layout and private and publicness, creating different atmospheres.

Elements like symmetry, division of space and the use of walls or columns are very important for creating an overview. This overview creates a certain level of social control, because people can keep an eye on each other. Adding a mezzanine reinforces this effect even more. This is what Foster + Partners have done for the Apple store in London. People see each other using the products, which makes them want to use these for themselves.

The Valentino store uses a different approach, which is almost opposite from the previous one. Chipperfield uses asymmetry to cause excitement. By chaining different spaces, the customers follow certain routes with in each room a different atmosphere. The customers wander around the store, and feel that this brand is about exclusivity. The lack of overview causes a level of individualism. Making their products lofty, the attention of the customer is drawn.