

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ARCHITECTURE IN SHAPING BRAND PERCEPTION



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Sofija Bajić¹, Samrat Ray²

¹University of Belgrade, Faculty of Architecture, Belgrade, Serbia

²International Relations, IIMS, Pune, India

ORCID iDs: Sofija Bajić
Samrat Ray

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5389-4411>
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5919-3634>

Abstract. *Architecture has become an important catalyst of processes that influence establishing a relationship and trust between the user, that is, the consumer and the brand. Brand recognition directly affects consumers purchasing decisions. Consumers will prefer purchasing a brand they recognize rather than the one they do not. Once inside a branded space, the user becomes part of the brand and is familiarized with its ideology on a physical, emotional and intellectual level. The paper hypothesizes that architecture has the ability to create a branded atmosphere that is not dependent on graphic symbols. It aims to answer the question: what constitutes a space as branded, specifically investigating whether any area that includes a logo can be classified as such. The paper will show whether the consumer can recognize the branded space once all the inscriptions and symbols of the company are removed. The research was conducted on a sample of fifteen respondents. The results of the paper indicate the importance of architecture as a participant in establishing brand identity. Additionally, the research offers valuable insights into how users perceive branded spaces, providing architects with guidance on incorporating effective design practices.*

Key words: retail architecture, corporate architecture, space-branding

1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, brands have a significant influence on shaping our modern lifestyle. As the market becomes increasingly inundated with diverse products, consumers observe major global companies competing to develop superior, more prosperous, and more esteemed brands. Architecture plays a crucial role in this endeavor as it is utilized as an essential tool for enhancing the value of a particular brand. Through the strategic design

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Corresponding author: Sofija Bajić, PhD Student,
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Architecture, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia
e-mail: sofija@koncept.studio

of physical space, brands can effectively communicate their identity, values, and unique attributes to their target audience.

Our role as a consumer is crucial, as it sets the wheels of the economy in motion. Choosing and buying of a product, even if it is just toothpaste, activates a whole chain of related processes. This chain has a satisfied consumer at one end, and a liquid economy at the other one. For companies, the notion of a brand is significant since building a stronger brand ultimately leads to more equity.

Shopping has become much more than just purchasing and obtaining those products that are deemed as necessary for mere existence. Shopping has become a spectacular event that must deliver new feelings, emotions and experiences every time. These experiences become part of the brand's ideology, and connect the user with the story the brand tells. Architecture is an important catalyst of those processes that influence the creation of a connection and trust between the user and the brand. The paper hypothesizes that architecture has the ability to create a branded atmosphere that is not dependent on graphic symbols. This further implies that not any space into which a certain logo is placed in automatically becomes a branded space, but that the space is the result of a multi-layered design approach that allows the environment itself to convey the brand's message.

The consumers are accustomed to the spectacular innovations of their brands. In order to constantly encourage the market's desire for something spectacular, different trades and professions are joined together forming an unbreakable bond of interdisciplinary sciences and trades. The science and practice that deals with the issue of branding in its auspices increasingly binds the fields of architecture and marketing.

This paper aims to examine the defining characteristics of branded spaces. It addresses the question of what constitutes a space as branded, specifically investigating whether any area that includes a logo can be classified as such. Furthermore, it explores whether consumers can identify a brand solely through its spatial attributes after the logo has been removed. If this identification is indeed possible, the paper seeks to identify those characteristics and to provide guidance for architects on how to effectively incorporate them into the design process.

The research will show whether the consumer can recognize a brand based solely on the relationship between spatial forms and color schemes, without the name itself being visually exposed. A specific objective of the research deals with the reasons for which the brand is identified. This segment of the results of the paper would indicate positive practices of architectural design in the service of brands, which should be applied in order to obtain the most productive brand atmosphere.

The paper consists of two parts. The first part presents the theoretical base of the brand, with a particular focus on the architectural influence in the service of the brand. The second part of the paper attempts to answer the question: do the consumers recognize the brand by its flagship stores. The research procedure that responds to the given problem uses the survey method. The survey was designed so that the respondents were shown photos of flagship stores of certain brands with their logos and inscriptions removed. Two questions are asked in the annex: "Which brand is shown in the photo?" and "What spatial elements and features made you opt for such an answer". The results of this research would greatly highlight the influence of architectural elements in defining the brand space. Likewise, if the results should reveal mistakes or omissions in design process, this should allow for their further adjustment and correction.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In the contemporary context of intensive consumerism, the architectural profession is increasingly recognizing the significance of branded spaces in the practice of corporate architecture. There are a considerable number of scientific studies available on the spatial aspects and design in service of marketing by marketers, but a relatively small number from architects themselves. While existing articles contribute to the advancement of the science of branding, there is a noticeable gap in understanding space between architects and those who may not be of architectural profession.

Until the 1990s, the concept of branding was exclusively dealt with by marketing sciences, while architecture completely overlooked this segment of business typology. On the other hand, disciplines such as economics, anthropology, or marketing have relied on research on branding and the spaces where branding manifests since the 1950s. However, today, it is impossible to ignore the fact that the concept of branding is a comprehensive ideology that brings positive results in business. Nevertheless, this is only possible if that ideology is implemented in all segments of the corporation, of which architecture is a significant part.

One of the most significant architectural studies on brand spaces is "Brandscapes" by Anna Klingmann, published in the year 2007. This study explores the evolving relationship between branding and architecture, highlighting how the physical spaces of buildings and environments contribute to the brand identity and consumer experience [1].

In year 2010 authors Kent and Kirby published the article "Architecture as brand: Store design and brand identity", which attempted to understand how retail stores reflect the identity of the brand, making it the means of communication [2].

The other study which opened the door for brands in architectural discourse is "Corporate Branded Spaces: A Glance at Today's Diversity and Some Historic Origins" published in the year 2013. It provides a comprehensive overview of how corporate environments have evolved to integrate branding strategies into physical spaces. The book explores both contemporary practices and historical precedents that have shaped the design and functionality of corporate branded spaces [3].

3. BRAND: DEFINITION

The definition adopted by the American Marketing Association (AMA) as the leading one states that a brand is "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition" [4]. Although this definition is concise and clear, it covers only the visual and tangible part of the brand, and does not deal with what the brand actually is in practice: the sensation.

In the broader context, everything is a brand. Coca Cola, Porsche, McDonalds, London, Madonna, etc. That is, Philip Kotler believes that a brand is any label that carries meaning and associations [5]. However, there is a major difference between Coca Cola and a homemade apple juice, although both products fall into the same category. "A strong brand does more: it adds a special color and tone to a certain product or service." [5].

One of the first academics who dealt with defining a brand, John M. Murphy, in his book *Brand Strategy* (1990), elaborates on the concept of a brand as "the unique property of a specific owner that has been developed over time to encompass a set of values and

attributes - both tangible and intangible –that meaningfully and appropriately differentiate products that are otherwise very similar” [6].

One of the most radical definitions compared to the original Murphy’s is certainly that of Marty Neumeier. Neumeier believes that a brand is a person’s “gut feeling” toward a product, service, or company. He states that a brand is defined by the individual, not by companies, marketers, or society. Each person creates their own perception of the brand. Neumeier says that companies cannot influence what consumers will understand or feel as a brand story, but they can influence the communication of the qualities and attributes that differentiate one product from another. When a larger number of individuals arrive at the same or similar feeling, then the company can say it has a brand. In other words, a brand is not what the company says; a brand is what the consumer says it is [7]. This study is grounded in this definition, which serves as the starting point for the research. It leverages this framework to explore the research topic further.

3.1. Brand awareness

The paper tackles the segment of brand theory that concerns brand recognition, and belongs to the broader context of brand awareness. Brand recognition directly affects the purchasing decision of consumers.

Brand awareness is a key link in brand structuring. The intensity of awareness that consumers have about a certain brand determines its ranking in relation to competitive products from the same category. This is actually the primary determinant of the brand that directly affects its ranking on the endless assortment scale in the consumer environment.

Keller breaks down the concept of brand awareness into two factors: brand recognition and brand recall [8]:

- Brand recognition, defined by Keller as the consumer’s ability to confirm that they are familiar with a certain brand once exposed to it, that is, that they can remember having seen or used it before.
- Brand recall is, according to Keller, the ability of a consumer to recall a specific brand when a product from that brand’s category is mentioned. In other words, at the mention of toothpaste, the consumer can recall the brand *Colgate*.

From the standpoint of an architect, brand recognition is a much more important concept, as it takes place when the consumer is in a specific, actual commercial environment, i.e. in a store. When consumers consistently recognize a brand, it fosters trust. Familiarity with a brand’s logo, design, or architectural style creates a sense of reliability, making consumers more likely to choose that brand over competitors. This recognition often leads to long-term customer loyalty.

Brand recognition is made possible by a visual identity that is easily remembered and immediately recognized. A brand’s visual identity drives perceptions and activates brand associations [9]. The visual identity of a brand is a set of graphic elements consisting of: logo, typography and palette of colors and patterns. This set is then applied to all elements of the brand’s communication with the world: packaging, vehicles, uniforms, internet presentations, as well as commercial and business spaces that are in the focus of this research.

3.2. Brand space

A brand is not a picture. A brand is a feeling, a sensation. Having expanded beyond the scope of television commercials long ago, brands live independent lives and are a major part of modern civilization. The brand, as a notion, transcended from the two-dimensional world of print media into a three-dimensional media universe, such as architecture.

Once placed in the actual space, the brand becomes materialized - the ideology of the brand is manifested in a tangible and perceptible form. The broad ideology of the brand affects the relationship between the user and the product, and that space represents a training ground for the interaction of these two actors. The user in such an environment is completely, both physically and mentally, involved in the atmosphere of the creation of the brand, i.e., its meaning.

A space becomes branded when it is given meaning [10]. The meaning is formed in the mind of the consumer, implying that the branded space comes into existence in the consumer's mind. What defines a space as a branded one is not so much its material attributes, but rather the atmosphere itself. When observing a space, the first thing the consumer experiences is the atmosphere. This perception, which has no foundation in the materialistic plane, happens unconsciously and the user does not analyze or dissect it - the atmosphere is simply there, omnipresent.

3.3. Branded atmosphere

The initial experience of a space has nothing to do with shapes, colors, sounds or anything materialistic, but only with the atmosphere that the space "carries" [11].

Philip Kotler believes that the atmosphere in many cases is much more important than the actual product that is being sold. He advocates the idea of atmosphere as a very powerful marketing tool that has a pronounced ability to unknowingly induce the consumer to purchase or use certain services [12]. The atmosphere makes the consumer feel a wide range of emotions, the triggers of which are carefully structured and incorporated into the design of the space.

The atmosphere is created. In fact, the atmosphere is also the fundamental core of a brand as a concept, and it is formed in all layers of a corporation: manufacture, design, marketing, architecture, public relations, etc. Therefore, the unique meaning of a brand is wrought into all segments of a company and as such it enters the market as a finished product. This procedure is defined by the term *total design*, which actually represents the design of a complete set consisting of thoroughly studied and analyzed parts of the ideology present in all physical, verbal or sociological segments of the company. In this context, the branded space also becomes the bearer of a certain atmosphere and ideology.

4. EXPERIENCE AND PERCEPTION

The brand does not promote product features or sell the product. The brand sells ritual, atmosphere and story [10]. The most intensive materialization of the brand occurs exactly in the space itself. A branded space is the confluence of all the brand ideologies. It is a "temple" in which the constructed world of the brand is physically and spatially manifested. Within that space, the consumer has the opportunity to consume that world, that is, the created atmosphere. Simply by being there, the consumer becomes an active

participant in the creation of the ideology, thus increasing the intensity of belonging to the brand.

To design the experience, companies intentionally use services as a stage, and their products as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event [13]. The consumer emotions and experiences are always more intense compared to their visual perceptions in the form of a picture, poster or a display, therefore remaining longer in their memory and is easier to recall. At each subsequent encounter with the brand, the user evokes a positive association that relies on the feeling of this experience.

The products offered by the company may be foreign to the consumer. However, what the user can experience, the feelings and perceptions offered by the space and interactive content of the brand, they all become very personal, because in this process the consumer is involved emotionally, mentally, physically, and even spiritually [13]. This feeling of a lived event is entirely individual and personal and thus happens only once in the mind of a single user. No two users can experience it in the same way. Therefore, the branded experience becomes completely personal and individual, unlike the mass production of products offered by the company.

5. FLAGSHIP STORES

Corporations managed to implement their ideology in various spaces, stores and premises, and in numerous ways, in different sizes and forms: brand museums, corporate branded leisure parks/brand parks, corporate branded sports and event venues, country brands, mobile/temporary branded spaces, branded hospitality spaces, flagship/concept stores, etc [14].

The ultimate goal of any brand is to make the customer a permanent user of its ideology. This goal is achieved in several stages and over a long period of time. Smaller goals, which are stepping stones to the ultimate one, certainly refer to basic product sales. After all, it is necessary to sell the product in order for the whole mechanism that drives the brand of the colossus to be worthwhile.

The product is sold in stores. Stores are the places where the user is most directly and often exposed to the brand atmosphere. Flagship stores are spaces where specific products of a certain brand are sold, and which are fully owned and controlled by the brand. These spaces are also the most common and most visited brand spaces, because as such, they offer contents of a fun, interactive, but also sales character, which justifies the existence of the brand itself both to the consumer and to the manufacturer. This is also the most sensitive space in which the ideology of the company is manifested, because it is the first to actually reach the consumer and represents the core and essence of the consumer-brand relationship in the most intimate relationship that a commercial space can provide.

6. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The second part of the paper focuses on the results of the conducted survey. The survey aimed to answer the question if a brand can be recognized based solely on its commercial space.

6.1. The questionnaire

The questionnaire, conducted on January 2020, was based on visual stimuli – i.e., photos and two verbally asked questions. The questionnaire was programmed on a tablet. After the introduction, participants were exposed to a slide show containing the photographs. The questionnaire contained 30 photos of various branded spaces. The parts of the space that are most often used by consumers were photographed, specifically those where the consumer stays to either consume the product or select one: seating areas, display walls with products, display shelves, areas around cash registers, etc. Likewise, the vast majority of photos show a space that can be seen from the outside, without entering. The symbols, i.e., the logo of the brand itself and the names, were previously removed from the photographs, in order to highlight solely the ambience and space. Each photograph was shown to each of the respondents for 3 seconds. After that, they were given ten seconds for an answer until the next photo. The questionnaire was made in three different versions, by changing the layout of the photos. This method yielded more credible results.

The respondents were verbally asked two questions. The first question related to the ability to recognize the brand whose space was represented by the photo: What do you see in the photo. The second question prompts the explanation of the answer provided: How did you recognize that it was exactly that specific brand. This question provides additional insight into the factors that led respondents to associate the brand with the space.

6.2. The respondents

The research was conducted on a sample of fifteen respondents. The respondents were selected as potential users of the chosen brands. The criteria were that they have a medium or higher income level, live in Belgrade, and to be younger, making them the target group for the selected brands. In this way, there is a potential that the consumers have previously been users of the spaces that are the subject of this research.

The Table 1 shows the demographics of the respondents. The respondents are members of the urban population, living in Belgrade. They are determined by their purchasing power, thus resulting in the selection of people aged from 20 to 50 (the age where the respondent can earn money and/or control their purchasing decisions). These criteria for the selection of respondents were created in such a way as to filter only the potential users of the spaces that are the subject of the research.

Table 1 Demographics of respondents

| | |
|----------------------|----|
| Gender | |
| Male | 6 |
| Female | 9 |
| Age | |
| 20 – 30 years | 8 |
| 30 – 40 years | 5 |
| 40 – 50 years | 2 |
| Place of residence | |
| Belgrade | 15 |
| Other | 0 |
| Employment status | |
| Employed | 6 |
| Student (unemployed) | 8 |
| Unemployed | 1 |

6.3. Brand selection

The criteria for selecting brands were as follows: they must be present in the same market as the respondents (in this case – in Belgrade); their target consumer group is the middle class and younger people; they need to be from various services and trade categories which respondents potentially use on everyday basis (so that the chance that they seen and used the space were higher). Based on these criteria, brands were selected and divided into pairs: fast food - McDonalds, Hleb i Kifle; communications and television services - MTS, VIP; grocery stores: MAXI, Idea; sports apparel stores - NIKE, Converse; catering: KAFETERIJA, Coffee Dream. From every category two brands were chosen, so that they can be compared.

7. RESULTS

The thesis put forward by the paper is that the consumer can recognize the branded space once all the inscriptions and symbols of the company are removed from it. This would mean that architecture has the ability to create a branded atmosphere that is not dependent on graphic symbols. This further implies that not every space becomes a branded space once a logo is inserted therein, but a branded space represents the result of a multi-layered design approach that allows the environment itself to convey the message of a certain brand. The conducted research gave an insight into the behavior of consumers and their perception of these spaces.

30 different photos were shown 450 times. Responses as true or false were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet with each row representing a participant and each column representing a different brand. Each column was divided in three sub columns, for three different photographs of every space. The final step was to calculate the percentage of participants answering "True" to questions using the COUNTIF function.

The respondents recognized the brand in 241 photos, which is 53.56% of the total number of photos shown. This result shows that the space itself can be a representative of its brand without graphic symbols. On the other hand, rather high percentage of negative answers indicates that not all architecture done for brands is actually successful in representing the brand's image.

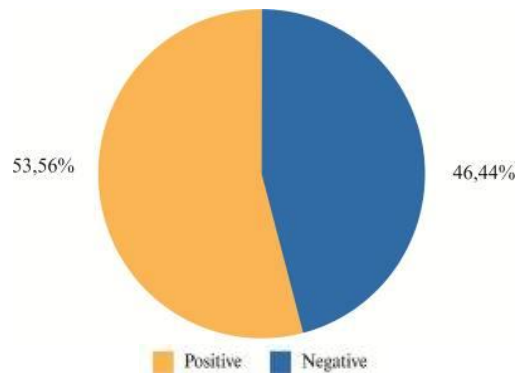


Fig. 1 Final results chart

7.1. McDonald's

Out of 45 displays of a photo of a McDonald's store, respondents recognized as many as 41, which makes about 91.11%. That is, 4 different subjects failed to recognize one photo each. This result indicates the strength of the brand image in the mind of the consumer, that is, the user of the branded space.

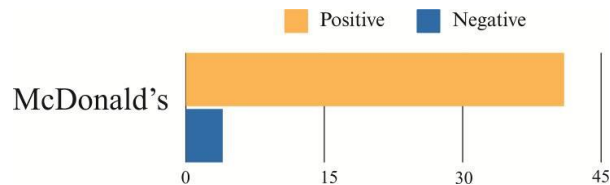


Fig. 2 McDonald's results chart

The most commonly recognized spatial elements are partition surfaces made of wooden slats. Then, the respondents mentioned green color, tables and chairs and patterns on the walls.

Since its foundation, McDonald's has continually applied standardization across all aspects of the company. On the other hand, their marketing campaigns have been very present for decades. Finally, the target group are the consumers with medium purchasing power, which makes it accessible to a wide market. All this makes McDonald's constantly present in the everyday life of consumers. Consciously or unknowingly, the consumers receive advertising messages, use their services and, over time, build a clear and precise image of this brand.



Fig. 3 McDonald's - retouched photographs from the questionnaire with a red mark where the logo used to be (Source: Author)

7.2. Hleb i kifle

In the research process, the bakery named "Hleb i kifle" also provided a very positive result: out of 45 displays of photos, respondents recognized 28 of them, which is 62.22% of positive responses. Out of 17 displays of photos that resulted in non-recognition, 11 were of the same photo. This would imply that the given part of the space does not send a clear enough image of the brand.

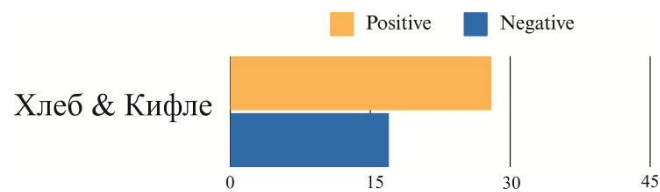


Fig. 4 Hleb i kifle results chart

The respondents who recognized the ambiance were most often associated with the black showcases in which the bakery's product selection is displayed. Furthermore, they mentioned the rustic atmosphere, as well as the old school-type font on the wall.

The photo, the content of which was not recognized, displays the space of another part of one of the larger stores of this company, which has been envisaged as a seating area for consuming products. However, in this particular space, every hint of the most potent element - the black display case - is lost. Tables and chairs are rustic and wooden and have basically no connection to the mentioned element. If the features of this display case could be included in the design of the remaining furniture, there is the possibility that the recognition effect would be incomparably stronger.



Fig. 5 Hleb & kifle - retouched photographs from the questionnaire with a red mark where the logo used to be (Source: Author)

7.3. MTS

MTS branches were recognized in 27 out of 45 displays, which make 60%. The remaining 18 negative responses were given by 6 respondents. That is, the respondent who recognized one photo recognized all three. The respondents, who did not recognize even one, did not recognize any of the other photos. This means that the space of this brand is extremely recognizable and very easy to remember. The respondents who failed to recognize the space had actually never used or seen the space before.

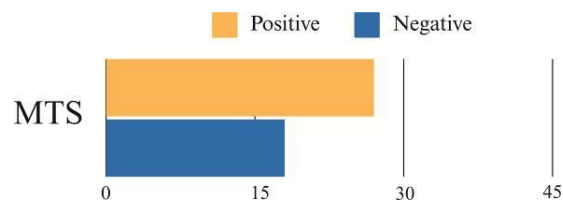


Fig. 6 MTS's results chart

The first element of recognition is the red and white diagonal stripes. This is certainly the most dominant interior intervention. Furthermore, the respondents mentioned the shelves, installation hoses, as well as the arrangement of functions in space, that is, the way the stores were used.



Fig. 7 MTS - retouched photographs from the questionnaire with a red mark where the logo used to be (Source: Author)

7.4. VIP

Unlike its competitor, VIP branches provided different results in the research. Namely, out of 45 displays, respondents recognized only 13, which is a total of 28.88% of positive answers. The rest of the 32 negative answers show that the ambience of this brand is not ranked high in the consumer's mental map.

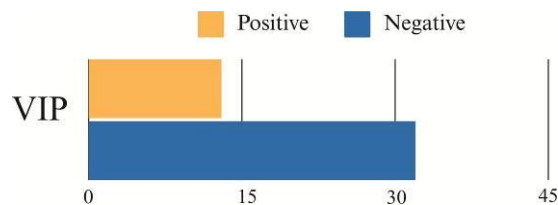


Fig. 8 VIP's results chart

When asked on the basis of which they recognized the space from the photo, the respondents most often referred to the color red, which does appear only slightly. Some respondents also mentioned wooden boxes. However, even the positive answers were not as certain as those given for previous brands. The respondent would always question himself/herself and correct his/her own answer.

The respondents who gave negative answers did confuse the space of the VIP store with Apple's flagship store, or Telenor's, or even the ones of MTS. The association with the sales area of technology and smart devices was extremely strong with every respondent; however, the sheer cleanliness of the space did not reveal any specificity that could be linked exclusively to VIP.

It is important to state that the VIP brand rebranded shortly after the survey was conducted, in the year 2021.



Fig. 9 VIP - retouched photographs from the questionnaire with a red mark where the logo used to be (*Source: Author*)

7.5. MAXI

The Supermarket “Maxi” was recognized in 17 displays, which makes about 37.77% of answers. Generally, 28 displays, out of a possible 45, failed to trigger the correct consumer association. As with VIP, the unfavorable result for the brand image can be observed here as well.

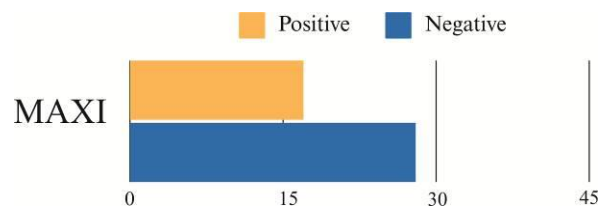


Fig. 10 MAXI's results chart

In the cases where Maxi was recognized, the respondents identified the bee (which is part of the promotional campaign), the racks, as well as the way of marking parts of the store - the font and details of the inscriptions. The bee and the red color are the elements that show in their television commercials and on their billboards, etc. That said, there is important link between brand appearance in the outside world that enhance brand awareness overall. The respondents who gave incorrect answers either confused Maxi with Idea, or did not identify anything recognizable at all, regardless of the fact that they use these spaces on a daily basis.



Fig. 11 MAXI - photographs from the questionnaire (*Source: Author*)

7.6. IDEA

The same as Maxi, the supermarket “Idea” failed to provide a positive result during the test. Namely, as many as 23 displays were not recognizable to respondents, accounting for 51.11% of responses.

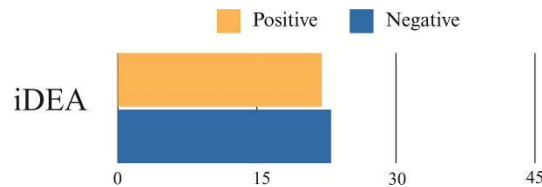


Fig. 12 IDEA's results chart

The respondents who recognized Idea in some photos cited the black color, the shape of the display racks, the red-green color and the font as elements of recognition. What has been observed is that the old interiors of this brand are recognized much more and are more reliably than the new ones. The old interiors had a specific font to which the respondents reacted very clearly and precisely. The new ambiances of Idea emit a hazy image to the consumer, as they lack even single mental trigger, that is, a characteristic element that can be linked solely to them. Also, it was noticed that the newly opened branches almost do not look alike, nor do they resemble the old premises.



Fig. 13 IDEA - retouched photographs from the questionnaire with a red mark where the logo used to be (Source: Author)

7.7. NIKE

The flagship stores of Nike sports apparel have yielded exceptionally positive results in the survey. Out of 45 displays, the brand was recognized in 33 of them, resulting in 73.33% of correct answers. Only three respondents failed to recognize one display each. The rest of the 9 negative responses were in groups of three, meaning that three respondents were not users of this brand at all, and were thus not familiar with the space.

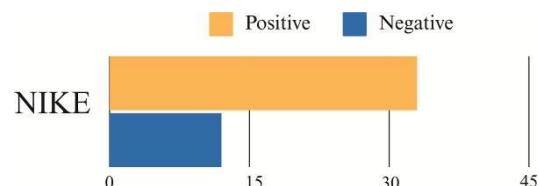


Fig. 14 NIKE's results chart

The respondents recognized the font, slogan, wooden panels and products. Nike stores in their interior design combine elements of architecture and graphic design, which serve to showcase products. The respondents actually recognized the ambience created by the combination of these three elements. The ones who provided incorrect answers to all three displays of the space stated that they are not consumers of sports goods and apparel, and therefore do not even enter such stores.



Fig. 15 NIKE - retouched photographs from the questionnaire with a red mark where the logo used to be (Source: Author)

7.8. Converse

Out of 45 displays, only 16 were recognized, which makes about 35.55% of positive answers. The majority of respondents who gave a negative answer had no association with the displayed photos. That is, they did not associate the photos with anything familiar to them.

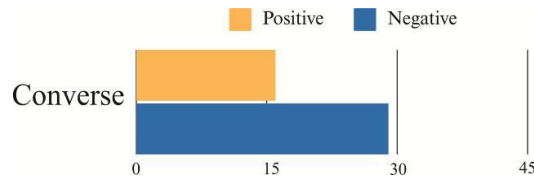


Fig. 16 Converse's results chart

What was observed for this set of questions was that one photo in particular was recognized by almost all respondents. It is a part of the space showing a wall filled with their main product –All-Star sneakers. Just like with Nike, the interior is shaped around the product. This is the standard approach when designing this type of space. However, in Converse, apart from that very effective display wall, the rest of the space did not convey the brand's message consistently enough.



Fig. 17 Converse - retouched photographs from the questionnaire with a red mark where the logo used to be (Source: Author)

7.9. Kafeterija

Like MTS, Kafeterija also had some clear results: the respondents who recognized one photo managed to recognize all three. On the other hand, if they were not familiar with even one, they did not recognize any of the other two either. This is a very positive result for the brand, because it shows that it is recognizable, easy to remember and effective, that is, it clearly conveys the brand's message. Kafeterija was recognized in 30 displays out of 45 in total, which results to 66.66%. The other 15 displays resulted in negative answers, as the given respondents were not at all familiar with this company.

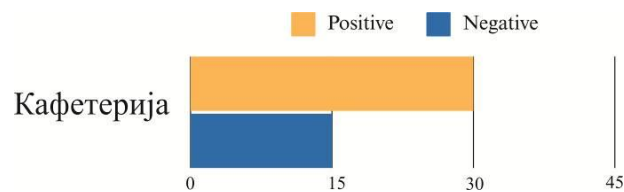


Fig. 18 Kafeterija's results chart

When asked how this space was recognized, the respondents answered almost uniformly: by the furniture, shelves, tiles, patterns on the wall. The most specific answer was: by everything. This is certainly one of the best indicators that all elements are combined to such an extent that together they form a unique atmosphere that speaks exclusively and only about the Kafeterija brand.

On the other hand, the respondents who did not recognize the space on any of the photos answered that they were not users of that space, and do not associate it with anything familiar. Also, upon learning the results at the end of the survey, the respondents answered that they were not familiar with the name.



Fig. 19 Kafeterija - photographs from the questionnaire (*Source: Author*)

7.10. Coffee Dream

Out of 45 displays, 22 were recognized or 48.88%. What differs from its predecessor is that the respondents gave different answers to the same spaces. That is, the respondent who would recognize one photo did not recognize the other two. This implies that the store image in the user's mental map is neither clear enough nor strong enough.

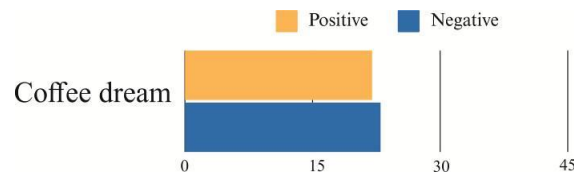


Fig. 20 Coffee Dream's results chart

The respondents who gave positive answers usually associated the space with the brand by recognizing the sofas therein or the pictures on the walls. Certainly, these are indeed the strongest spatial elements of Coffee Dream. Sofas are really an element of furniture that is specific only to their company, as well as the decorations on the walls. However, the design of these elements was not effective enough to be a trigger in every display. The negative answers were related mainly to confusing them with other coffee shops such as Love Coffee or Costa Coffee.



Fig. 21 Coffee Dream - retouched photographs from the questionnaire with a red mark where the logo used to be (Source: Author)

8. DISCUSSION

The focus of this research is to define what constitute space as branded. The paper's hypothesis that it is possible to recognize a brand by its commercial space aims to prove that branded spaces are much more than logos on the walls. Results indicated that branded spaces can be indeed recognized even once the brand name and symbols are removed from them. However, in order for this claim to be made with certainty, the given space must correctly respond to the design task: to clearly and unambiguously convey the brand message to the consumers, that is, the users of the space. If this is not achieved through architecture and design, brand recognition is minimized, or even completely impossible. This revelation offers new points of view when designing multi-layered spaces such as flagship stores. The research indicates the importance of architecture as a participant in establishing brand identity. On the other hand, it creates an insight for the architectural discourse into the perception of users of branded spaces.

Branded spaces need to be a logical continuation of the brand's visual identity. In addition, it is necessary that they consistently support and convey the story that the brand builds in the consumer's mind. In other words, the flagship store of a company is a materialized brand that the company forms about itself.

The results of survey show that 5 out of 10 brands are recognized without brand's symbols being included in the space. These brands are: McDonald's, Hleb & Kifle, MTS, NIKE and Kafeterija. A common characteristic of these spaces is that the design elements within the stores are visually striking and maintain a consistent presence throughout the interior, ensuring they are easily recognizable and memorable for users. In McDonald's, these elements include partition surfaces made of wooden slats, vibrant and playful color schemes, and custom-designed seating areas. Hleb & Kifle bakery is characterized by its prominent black wooden display racks. MTS incorporates red and white wall patterns, exposed ceiling hoses, and white shelving units as key design features. In Nike's store, unique wooden panels dominate the interior, accompanied by slogans displayed in a distinctive font. For Kafeterija, the defining elements are the use of specific furniture, tiles, and patterns that are consistently applied throughout the coffee shop.

The remaining five brands—VIP, MAXI, IDEA, Converse, and Coffee Dream—did not achieve strong results in brand recognition within their spaces. A shared characteristic among these environments is the absence of distinctive design elements that could serve as reference points for users. Survey responses for these stores were generally vague, as they lacked clear visual elements that could be associated with the brand. Even in cases like VIP, where wooden boxes or the use of red were present, these features were not implemented with sufficient consistency to make a lasting impression. Coffee Dream also featured leather sofas, which were identified as a relevant design element. However, the overall design did not capitalize on this feature effectively enough to create a positive or lasting impact on brand recognition.

The examples of the Maxi and IDEA supermarket retail chains illustrate that it is insufficient for a space to be merely attractive and modern; it must also incorporate specific elements that enable consumers to comprehend the environment in which they find themselves. These supermarkets are frequented multiple times throughout the day by numerous customers; however, they are significantly less recognized than establishments that are visited less frequently, such as the Nike store, which may be patronized once or twice a month. The survey results indicate that simply investing resources in creating a pleasant and appealing environment is inadequate; the space must distinctly communicate the brand's identity for which it is designed. Otherwise, these environments fail to realize their potential and do not contribute effectively to brand development.

Brands that are recognized on each of the three possible picture displays, or are not recognized on any of the three displays, do have spaces that correctly answered the design task. The reason for not recognizing these spaces lies in not knowing the brand itself, which is not a topic that would concern architecture.

In the examples where one and two picture displays were recognized, and one and two were not, one can see the poor and unclear message that such spaces convey. If the respondent was able to recognize one part of the space, the question arises as to why he did not recognize the other part. The second part of the survey gave insight into each brand individually, which answers this question. In fact, it is important that the spaces have an effective, specifically designed interior element that is attributable only to that brand. The branches of VIP, Maxi and Idea, but to some extent also of Coffee Dream, had similar environments as some of their competitors. No matter how successful those competing companies are, this is by no means the right way to create branded spaces. Namely, it has been observed that users confuse brands and have wrong associations. This speaks to the unclear image that the company is building in the market.

Future research should explore the methods for creating specific, recognizable elements within branded spaces and investigate how these elements can be effectively utilized in the design process to maximize their impact on brand recognition. By addressing these questions, subsequent studies can provide deeper insights into the relationship between architecture, design, and branding, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of branded environments.

9. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research into the branded spaces reveals that successful design can transcend mere logos and signage. By seamlessly integrating brand identity, crafting compelling narratives through spatial design, and incorporating unique and memorable elements, businesses can create environments that resonate deeply with consumers, even subconsciously. This subconscious recognition is key, as it paves the way for a stronger brand-consumer relationship, ultimately increasing the likelihood of purchase. This underscores the importance of a holistic approach to branding, where architecture and design play a crucial role in shaping perception, influencing behavior, and ultimately, driving sales.

This research has established a framework for understanding the factors that constitute a space as branded. The hypothesis that branded spaces can be identifiable without explicit brand identifiers was substantiated through the analysis of various commercial environments. The findings indicate that successful brand recognition hinges on the effective communication of the brand message through architectural and design choices. Spaces must be thoughtfully designed to clearly convey the brand identity; otherwise, the potential for brand recognition diminishes significantly.

A pivotal aspect of branded space is its visual identity, which includes the strategic use of logos, color schemes, typography, and design motifs that embody the brand's essence. These elements create a recognizable aesthetic that helps consumers instantly associate the space with the brand. The design of a branded space is intended to evoke specific emotions that align with the brand's narrative. By fostering a strong emotional connection, these spaces can influence consumer behavior and loyalty. The psychological impact of such environments can be profound, as they create memorable experiences that consumers associate with the brand.

A cohesive architectural style is critical for a branded space, as it ensures that all elements—ranging from furniture to layout—work harmoniously to reflect the brand's values. This consistency is vital for reinforcing brand recognition and establishing a distinct presence in the marketplace. The layout and design of a branded space should encourage active consumer participation. This can include areas designed for social interaction, product engagement, or experiential marketing, as it can be seen in MTS spaces.

The analysis revealed that recognition is achieved through visually striking design elements that were consistently applied throughout their interiors. In contrast, spaces that lacked distinctive design features, resulted in vague survey responses and minimal brand recognition. This highlights the necessity for branded spaces to serve as coherent extensions of the brand's visual identity, effectively narrating the brand story to consumers. The study also shows the importance of incorporating unique, recognizable elements within branded environments to avoid confusion and misassociation among consumers.

These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of branded spaces, highlighting how they are not merely physical locations but rather complex environments designed to shape consumer perceptions and experiences. Understanding these elements can provide valuable insights for architects and designers in creating effective branded environments.

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ZNAČAJ ARHITEKTURE U KREIRANJU BREND SLIKE

Arhitektura je postala važan katalizator procesa koji utiču na uspostavljanje odnosa i poverenja između korisnika, odnosno potrošača i brenda. Prepoznavanje brenda direktno utiče na odluke potrošača o kupovini. Potrošači će više voleti da kupuju brend koji prepoznaju nego onaj koji ne poznaju. Jednom u brendiranom prostoru, korisnik postaje deo brenda i upoznaje se sa njegovom ideologijom na fizičkom, emocionalnom i intelektualnom nivou. U radu se postavlja hipoteza da arhitektura ima sposobnost da kreira brendiranu atmosferu koja ne zavisi od grafičkih simbola. Ima za cilj da odgovori na pitanje: šta čini prostor brendiranim, posebno istražujući da li se bilo koja oblast koja uključuje logo može klasifikovati kao takva. Rad će pokazati da li potrošač može da prepozna brendirani prostor kada se uklone svi natpisi i simboli kompanije. Istraživanje je sprovedeno na uzorku od petnaestak ispitanika. Rezultati rada ukazuju na značaj arhitekture kao učesnika u uspostavljanju identiteta brenda. Pored toga, istraživanje nudi dragocene uvide u to kako korisnici doživljavaju brendirane prostore, pružajući arhitektama smernice za efikasne prakse u procesu projektovanja.

Ključne reči: arhitektura prodajnih prostora, arhitektura poslovnih prostora, prostorno brendiranje