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The Specification of Store Environments: the role of design-architecture in the development of retailer brand loyalty

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This paper proposes a conceptual framework for the inclusion of the aesthetic in the study of retail branding. It proposes modifications to the Mehrabian & Russell (1974) stimulus-organism-response model which characterises most approaches to the holistic study of store environments. Store prototype and retailer attachment are among the global and attribute level variables that could together with collative variables such as novelty and complexity help explain retail brand loyalty. The framework is exploratory and aims to add to existing knowledge on the dynamic, situated, perceptive processes at hand when consumers are exposed to the multitude of cues and messages typically contained in the retail branded environment.

Keywords: retail brand, store prototype, collative variables, stimulus-organism-response models, retailer brand attachment, consumer equity models, retailer brand loyalty

Introduction

The increasing aestheticisation of consumption presents a challenge for academics to develop the appropriate theory and methods for explaining aesthetic judgment and brand interpretation. The control and projection of consistent, appropriate messages to identified target markets is central to retail marketing and knowing how to integrate “the spectacle” with the expected or typical is important for the business of branding architecture.

Very little academic research has yet however determined the impact of the experience, the spectacle or the merging of the architecture and marketing disciplines to promote the retail brand. There is little appreciation of the contribution of architecture in the experience economy or whether retailers overwhelm consumers with overdesigned stores. It is unclear whether contemporary architecture is appreciated in its own right or if it is capable of making effective connections with brand communications. This paper will propose a conceptual framework for the study of store environments. More specifically, this framework will propose how retail brands can be better understood in light of the communications of the visual aesthetic elements presented to consumers.

Literature Review of the Main Approaches to the Study of the Store Environment

The bias in the literature on servicescapes has largely for operational convenience been towards singular atmospheric variable studies (Eroglu & Machleit (2008); Turley & Milliman (2000); and McGoldrick (2002). This bias typically observes how music and olfactory can be studied in isolation of the other cues and third-factor influences on perception. The need for comprehensive model investigations of the store environment has been highlighted by McGoldrick (2002), Eroglu & Machleit (2008) and among the comprehensive, multiple-cue

examinations of the store environment that have been forthcoming are by Baker, Berry & Parasuraman (1988), Baker, Levy & Grewal (1992), Baker, Grewal & Parasuraman (1994), Baker et al. (2002), Donovan & Rossiter (1982), Donovan et al. (1994), Tai & Fung (1997), Gilboa & Rafaeli (2003); Van Kenhove & Desrumaux (1997).

Although most of these contributions are arguably comprehensive in their conceptual breath, they are not process suggestive with explanations of how the objective features of the environment are subjectively interpreted. With the exception of the various Baker contributions there is very little evidence outside of the environmental psychology literature of design or visually denoted constructs being employed as environmental variables. The aim of this paper is to highlight some of the overlaps and contradictions present between the aesthetics, psychology and branding literatures. In so doing, it is intended to outline how a modified stimulus-organism-response model can integrate these different perspectives and proffer an additional contribution to the study of the retail brand.

Aesthetics Preference Literature

Extensive conceptual issues are encountered when one tries to appreciate just how the aesthetic concern is pursued in the centrality of expression in the design-architecture form. Approaches such as those of Berlyne's (1970, 1974) collative variable approach spawned what would become the first significant efforts to consider through an experimental psychology and aesthetics lens how objective, collative features of the environment gives rise to emotions. The arousal-inducing properties of the environment release pleasure and arousal emotions according to Mehrabian & Russell (1974) and this is where the study of environmental aesthetics has largely remained since the 1970s.

This conceptual ambiguity extends to our understanding of what is considered aesthetic and capable of hedonic interpretation. Both aesthetic and hedonic decisions may not necessarily be identical decisions. The synonymous use of the expression by Holbrook (1980), Hirshman & Holbrook (1982), Venkatraman & MacInnis (1985) and others is challenged for instance by Charters (2006) who describes an aesthetic response as an appreciation of beauty. Hedonic consumption decisions, in contrast, involve pleasure and one type of aesthetic response that activate multi-sensory, fantasy and emotive aspects of experience (Venkatesh & Meamber 2008). The confusion surrounding how the aesthetic encounter can best be examined to predict consumer responses to the stimulus is underlined by the differences of opinion of what an emotion actually consists of within the psychology perspective. The dimensions of cognition, emotion, and sensation outline an aesthetic experience that is considered cognitive (Gestaltists such as Arnheim (1974, 1977)), or emotional and sensation/arousal (Berlyne 1970, 1971, 1974). Recently, phenomenological contributions in the study of retail environments (Joy and Sherry, 2003; Arnold, Kozinets & Handelman, 2001; Kozinets 2008; Borghini et al. 2009) disavow the cognitive emphasis in favour of the concept of embodiment -- the total apprehension of experience using the body, without divorcing sensory, cognitive or emotional functions from each other (Charters 2006).

Retail Image Literature

The functional-emotive engagement with the retail image (Martineau 1958) in certain respects parallels the aesthetics literature, but it is seldom that discussions on emotional

interpretations overlap. The clear distinction, for instance, between functional and psychological-emotive dimensions of image is challenged by Burt, Johansson, Thelander (2007), where owing to their interpretive nature such Martineau (1958), Lindquist (1974) distinctions between functional and emotive properties were deemed both artificial and misleading.

No significant attempts have been made to include what Berlyne (1970, 1971, 1974) termed ecological meaning and the subjective interpretation of environmental stimuli in store environments models. This ecological meaning of the presented aesthetic presents direct conceptual parallels in the retail image and branding literature. Brands act foremost as repositories of meanings for customers to use. This challenges marketers and artistic creators to understand more deeply the multiple sources and dynamic nature of that meaning and what it offers consumers (McCracken 1986, 2005; Fournier 1997). A co-created meaning is observed between brand manager and consumer derived from the experiences of complex interactions between cultures, consumers and corporations as active meaning makers (van Osselaer & Alba 2000). A full understanding of the meaning of brands similarly demands an examination of the range of symbolic and emotional episodes encountered during the process of meaning creation from the presented aesthetic stimulus. The influential effect of symbolically charged consumer experiences where consumers are re-conceptualised as active meaning makers rather than passive recipients of information evidences also the challenge facing marketers in developing effective communications strategies (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Consumers typically oversimplify and abstract salient meanings through personalisation, aesthetic symbols, archetypes and myths (Martineau 1958).

The discussion on the determination of meaning in a retail image context is, however, coloured by a dated, largely attribute-centric – as opposed to global construct centric – literature (Turley & Milliman 2000; Lindquist 1974; Keaveney & Hunt 1992). Many of the contributions on retail image date from the 1970s where retail image is frequently studied at the attribute level on the basis of forced-choice comparisons of store choice decisions (Doyle & Fenwick, 1974; Schiffman, Dash & Dillon, 1977; Hansen & Deutscher, 1977); and store loyalty (Babin & Attaway, 2000; Bloemer & de Ruyter, 1998). Image-related studies furthermore present measurement, operationalisation and conceptualisation problems (Burt, Johansson & Thelander 2007; Keaveney & Hunt 1992; Doyle & Fenwick 1974) and relatively few theoretical frameworks or empirical examinations have been forthcoming that add to the base knowledge of how the dynamic in image formation arises. The notable exceptions to this shortcoming in the literature include the image formation study of Mazursky & Jacoby (1986) and work on beneficial priming effects by Jacoby & Mazursky (1984).

Retail Branding Literature

Retail brands differ from manufacturer brands because retailing is a service business (Berry 2000), and because retail brands typically have a multiple physical store presence, it is necessary that the overall brand image reflect associations with the store image (Burt 2000; Burt & Sparks 2002; Ailawadi & Keller 2004). Although the major bias in the branding literature has been in non-retail contexts (Yoo & Donthu 2001; Christodoulides et al. 2006;

Lassar, Mittal & Sharma 1995; Vázquez, del Rio & Iglesias 2002), empirical studies of how brand equity was used to measure retailer equity have also been identified (Arnett, Laverie & Meiers, 2003; Kim & Kim 2004; Pappu and Quester, 2006; Jinfeng and Zhilong, 2009; Beristain & Zorrilla 2011; Jara & Cliquet, 2012). These retail brand equity studies have largely concentrated on establishing whether the brand equity model is applicable in retail contexts and little thus far by way of new retail specific constructs have been forthcoming.

The consumer-based brand equity model is suited to retail branding research for its differentiation prospects. It perhaps more than most branding frameworks defines brand equity as the differential effect of brand knowledge (consisting of awareness and image) on consumer response to the marketing of the brand (Keller 1993). It uses brand awareness and brand image as central memory representations to suggest: the likelihood that a brand name will come in mind and the ease with which it should do so. It therefore aims to explain the perceptive processes that reflect the extent and depth of brand associations in the creation of brand image as they are actively stored and retrieved from consumer memory. On this basis, both prospects for recognition (where well-known brands come to mind more readily) and brand recall (which situates brands in categories in memory) constitute the brand meaning for individual consumers and how different the brand is relative to competitors. The versatility of the consumer based brand equity framework is underscored by Pappu & Quester (2006) who found that retailer awareness, retailer associations and retailer perceived quality, varied according to customer satisfaction level with the retailer.

However, there are different interpretations and investigations of the theory which make its findings sometimes difficult to compare. There are differences in the measurement of the constructs with variables collapsed onto fewer dimensions (Yoo & Donthu 2001). The Keller (1993) understanding of brand associations is also wider than that of Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) considers loyalty a consequence of a strong brand, whereas Aaker (1991) considers loyalty to be a determinant of brand equity. The multi-dimensionality of brand equity does allow for these kinds of discriminations irrespective of the comparability of some of the findings from this stream of research.

The Proposed Retail Branded Environments Conceptual Framework

It is proposed that any conceptual framework that investigates the holistic representation of the store environment must be capable of discerning consumer interpretations of the multiplicity of cues and messages contained in the store environment (Eroglu & Machleit 2008; Turley & Milliman 2000; McGoldrick 2002).

Elements of a Holistic Retail Brand Model

Multi-Disciplinary & Global-local componential meaning: In bridging the three literatures of psychology, marketing and design-architecture, the search for retail as opposed to general brand meaning faces a number of demands. The aesthetic psychology literature stresses a need for improved ecological meaning (Berlyne 1970) and communication of aesthetic, symbolic, functional, attention drawing, and categorisation (Creusen & Schoormans 2005).

They stress the need to develop approaches to reflect what Janlert (1987) calls the character of things or what Rafaeli & Vilnai-Yavetz (2004) describes as the instrumentality, aesthetic and symbolism of physical artefacts as triggers of emotion. The overly restrictive concentration on objective beauty (Berlyne 1970, 1971, 1974) points to a need, in this respect, to improve our determinations of how appearance and behaviour merge different functions, situations and value systems to support anticipation, interpretation and interaction (Rafaeli & Vilnai-Yavetz 2004).

The branding literature has in this respect failed to reflect how global and attribute level information are reconciled to explain retail image and the basis of brand loyalty (Keaveney & Hunt 1992). There is a notable absence of any reference to the visual domain in the existing SOR model to how ecological meaning is specified or described. Consequently, it is argued that there is little credible basis to understand how the overly objective character of existing SOR models that over-rely on constructs such as novelty, complexity can reliably explain response variables such as approach-avoidance or brand loyalty.

Objective v subjective appraisals: the role of the collative variables and the prototype: The whole and its attributes in the study of artefacts, Rafaeli & Vilnai-Yavetz (2004) argues, are not advanced by proposals of yet more new classification systems such as the Bitner (1992), Baker, Berry & Parasuraman (1988) and Nasar (1994) proposals. Implicit in these categorisation schemes is the assertion that categories are mutually exclusive where meaning of the artefact resides in one discreet category or another. Few of the artefact analyses reveal multi-dimensionality and a coherent theory of how artefacts operate (Rafaeli & Vilnai-Yavetz, 2004). Few explanations of how emotions arise in response to artefact exposure are therefore proposed. A more flexible approach with consideration of brand and aesthetic meaning is required.

The emergence of new theories on aesthetic preference by Hekkert 2006; Reber, Schwarz & Winkielman, 2004; Winkielman et al. 2006; Jacobsen 2006; Whitfield 2000, 2009; Hekkert & Leder 2008; Leder et al. 2004, Belke et al. 2010; Martindale 1984, Martindale & Moore 1988, Martindale; Moore, & Borkum (1990), the development of branding theory (Keller 1993, 2003; Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre 2009) and prototypes theory (Rosch & Mervis 1975; Joiner 2007) proffer a credible basis to reflect these contributions in evolutions and improvements to the SOR model. The proposed conceptual framework in this paper marks the first attempt to deploy store level prototypicality in the SOR model. This mirrors changes in the aesthetics literature and make help to overcome the traditional approaches to the use of the prototype in marketing studies (Loken & Ward (1987, 1990), Loken, Joiner & Peck (2002), Nedungadi and Hutchinson (1985), Ward and Loken, (1988) is also making way for more dynamic interpretations (Joiner 20007; Park, MacInnis & Priester 2008; Barsalou 1983; Whitfield 2009; Tversky 1977).

Store level and retailer level cognitive and emotional responses: More specifically, the various cues and messages contained in an environment elicit levels of emotional pleasure to presented store concepts and emotional attachment at the overall retailer level. The proposed conceptual framework will add to our existing knowledge of how consumers' process retail branded environments and its design-architecture statements. This addition to the knowledge of the composition and communicative effects of the objective, physical domain will ultimately it is intended also improve our understanding of the basis of retail brand equity and its constituent elements. It will also as Park et al. (2010) emphasise explain how time duration consideration can parse the influence of either momentary or long-term emotional response – with a brand emotional attachment construct – when the environment is perceived.

These contributions taken together proffer the basis for outlining holistic frameworks that utilise different theoretical tracks to consider consumers interpretations of multiple cues and messages from the environment. The breadth of investigation of design-architecture within the theoretical frame of holistic aesthetic brand impressions demands consideration of how these different theoretical approaches prove beneficial to construct and relationship examination. Each of the approaches has its own understanding of what constitutes the cognitive and emotional involvement arising from interaction with the stimulus. Frameworks that evidence conceptual breadth, but that also evidence dynamic construct interaction that reveal pattern ultimately reflect characterisation of brand strength. This promotes the basis for the extraction of inter-disciplinary benefits that enable informed perspectives of aesthetic efficacy, it is proposed.

Figure 1.1., the conceptual framework proposed for this thesis, illustrates some of the dynamic interactions that take place in the experiencing of the store concept and overall retailer stimulus. It also reflects the processing dynamic, the attribute-componential meaning, cognitive-emotional, appraisal-based processes that underpin the aesthetically charged retail brand encounter.

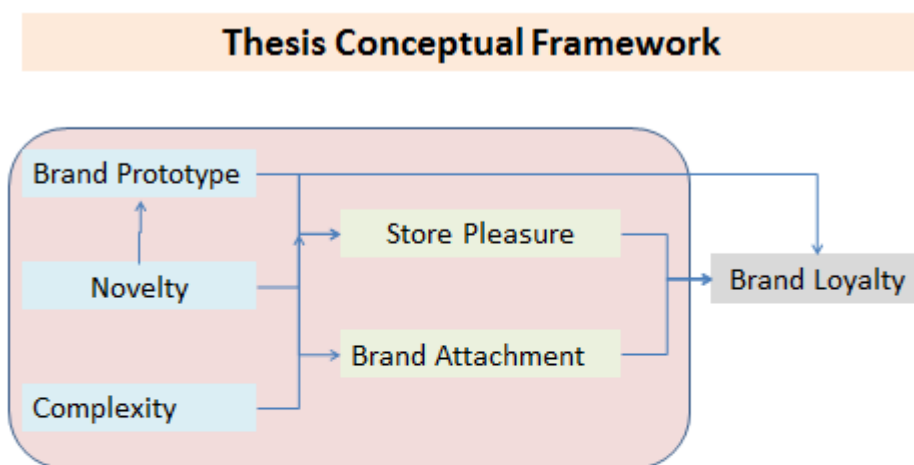


Figure 1.1. A Revised Stimulus-Organism-Response Model for the Retail Branded Environment

The conceptual framework reflects the dynamic exchanges that take place within the proposed model. Designs seeking pleasantness should encourage order with moderate novelty, complexity and elements of popular style; designs seeking excitement should encourage high novelty, complexity, atypicality and low order; designs seeking calm should encourage high order and naturalness (Nasar 1994). These exchanges reflect the Nasar (1994) demands for architecture to emphasise the exchanges between the formal objective domain, the schema and the symbolic. The proposed model therefore goes further than Berlyne's collative-motivational model in characterising the dynamic nature of the

relationship between perceiver and stimulus and the determination of meaning and salience. The brand prototype reflects both design order-complexity and brand typicality-atypicality, and considerations of how the observer subjectively, dynamically interacts with the formal environment at a given moment will determine how well or poorly the retail brand communicates.

An Examination of the Relationships in the Model

Novelty & Complexity Relationship with the Retail Brand Prototype

Significantly more research originating primarily from the brand extension and general marketing domains is forthcoming for the novelty – prototypicality relationship; less research is evident in the numbers of studies of complexity and pleasure with prototypicality. High awareness and positive attitude toward the stimulus reflect brands with strong, unique and favourable associations (Keller 1993). Prototypicality of brand perception was significantly related to preference and different memory based measures were also important to familiarity, awareness and usage outcomes (Nedungadi & Hutchinson 1985). Prototypicality characterises these associations in summative form and the typicality, frequency of instantiation, attitude examinations by Ward, Bitner & Barnes (1992) confirm identification with the exteriors of retail stores. The increasing inclusion of multi-attribute attitude theory by Loken & Ward (1987, 1990), Loken, Joiner & Peck (2002), Nedungadi and Hutchinson (1985), Ward and Loken, (1988) further details the salience and emotionally valenced identification consumers have with brands. More typical brands tend to be better liked because they frequently have: more valued attributes; and because they are more familiar they are therefore better liked (Loken & Ward 1990). The preference-for-prototypes model may in many ways revisit the Zajonc (1968) mere-exposure hypothesis and should prove to be a simple, effective means of identifying consumer responses toward the proposed store environment concept.

Conceivably brand strength could be symptomatic of high novelty, high complexity and high prototypicality. Few, if any attempts have been made to operationalize this process of perception and the process of how separate and integral attribute combinations when understood promote prospects for high fluency and high aesthetic appreciation. Thus few methods for determining which of the architectural elements or integral componential configurations achieve awareness and typicality outcomes are currently available.

The study of prototypes has been approached from structural (Rosch & Mervis 1975; Barsalou 1983, 1985), design (Hekkert & van Wieringen 1990; Hekkert, Snelders & van Wieringen 2003), consumer (Nedungadi & Hutchinson 1985; Loken & Ward 1987, Loken & Ward 1990; Loken, Joiner & Peck 2002; Sujan & Dekleva 1987; Ward & Loken 1985) and retail perspectives (Babin & Babin 2001; Ward, Bitner & Barnes 1992). Generally, irrespective of the origins of the studies the prototype construct has an established relationship with both novelty and complexity. The holistic store prototype construct has fewer measurement and interpretive problems across groups. It assumes dynamic properties when other constructs relate motivation and contextual issues into what could be considered a goal-derived categorisation (Barsalou 1983). On this basis the problems of stimulus

specification which have presented a serious problem for the study of store environments may be somewhat addressed.

The interesting approaches to the deployment of the prototype construct tend to surface not in its general predictability but more in how the design and branding perspectives view the dynamic surrounding of what Hekkert, Snelders & van Wieringen (2003) describes as the dual process model of aesthetic preference. Tension increasing and moderating pressures arise in automatic or immediate ways when either novelty seeking or typicality seeking is observed to dominate the aesthetic appreciation of the stimulus. This characterises a serious conceptual difference between designers and branding literatures: designers typically perceive negative correlations between novelty and typicality (Snelders & Hekkert 1999), but the marketing perspective can instead determine that novelty under certain circumstances could reinforce perceptions of a strong prototype (Ward & Loken 1988). This conflicting finding between design aesthetics and marketing on the nature of the prototype-novelty relationship marks out an interesting line of inquiry for this research. With the possible exception of the Sherman, Mathur & Smith (1987) study of image, there has been no study of a multi-dimensional construct reflective of formal, objective design attribute information and subjective, interpretable brand information.

In this respect, moderate incongruity to the existing prototype is preferred (Carbon & Leder 2005; Meyers-Levy & Tybout 1989). Product novelty deemed moderately incongruent with their associated category schemas could, for instance stimulate processing that leads to more favourable evaluations relative to products that were either congruent or extremely incongruent (Meyers-Levy & Tybout 1989). Individuals in this respect could be observed to engage in cognitive elaboration directed at resolving incongruity, a conclusion similarly reflected by perceptual fluency theorists such as Reber, Schwarz & Winkielman (2004). Resolving incongruity proves satisfying in itself, thus lending the basis for pleasure.

Novelty & Complexity Relationship With Store Pleasure

If the stimulus is mis-specified or described in the first place there is a considerable risk that the relationships between pleasure, and approach-avoidance are prone to error. The collative-motivational approach of Berlyne (1970, 1971, 1974) essentially marks the first of three modern phases of evolution in the literature on the aesthetic encounter (the preference-for-prototypes literature of Martindale (1984), Martindale & Moore (1988) and categorical-motivational literature (Whitfield 2000, 2009) are the second and third literature evolutions).

A problem for the Berlyne info-theoretical approach, however, is that with the exception of contributions such as Greenland & McGoldrick (1994, 2004) most examinations of the Berlyne framework (Tai & Fung 1997; VanKenhove & Desrumaux 1997) are narrow in their adoption of the collative variables and no attempts to subjectively relate the ecological meaning of the stimulus are entertained. The Berlyne framework is stable and durable (Van Kenhove & Desrumaux 1997; Tai & Fung 1997; Donovan & Rossiter 1982; Donovan et al. 1994), but ideally needs access to new and contextualised collative variables to more effectively explore consumer perceptions of the store environment.

In examining the relationship between the collative variables with aesthetic preference and store prototypicality with aesthetic preference, it is expected that how the collative variables are perceived will reflect the expressiveness of the environment. Novelty and complexity

separately to prototypicality reflects the prospect for identification with the prototype. Given the dimensional and componential meaning contained in the environment reflected in the objective basis of the complexity construct and simultaneously perceived at the global prototype level a “pattern of prediction” could become obvious across different design concepts when they are compared from category to category.

When the collative variables are separately investigated by group it may further imply how varying the collative variables are preferred by different target markets. This could prove more diagnostic and reflective of consumer behaviour in contrast to the aggregate level Berlyne or Keller models which assume that moderate novelty and complexity is preferred in every situation. It is obvious from comparisons of highly experiential environments that complexity and prototypicality will be preferred in different ways compared to more functional, task driven environments where the situational, context-specific demands warrant different appreciations of these variables. Novelty and complexity should not be seen in isolation from other variables. They assume active, relativised meaning and should not be viewed uniformly across all contexts (Herzog, Kaplan & Kaplan 1976).

The issues of complexity correlating with identifiability, meaning, typicality and general legibility of the environment further perhaps explain how complexity is unlikely on its own to indicate aesthetic preference. However, complexity and the prototype evaluated together, it is proposed in this thesis, could predict aesthetic preference. Herzog, Kaplan & Kaplan (1982) concludes that striking architecture is substantially more appreciated when it is identifiable. High complexity must also be combined with urban environments that are also highly coherent to retain a satisfactory visual quality (Herzog, Kaplan & Kaplan 1982; 1989; Nasar 2002). The observation by Norberg-Schultz (1965) and Whitfield (2009) that categories are relational in nature, suggest that complex meaningful stimuli evidence survival of architecture’s formal dimension even as the category becomes relativised. Thus, complexity and the prototype together will evidence both objective and subjective interpretations of the environment and not just the objective interpretation reflected in the traditional Berlyne model.

Retail Brand Prototype Relationship with the Store Pleasure & Retailer Brand Attachment

Notable from a number of studies on complexity and aesthetic preference is how design principles such as proportion, unity, focal point and similar influence perceptions of prototypicality and aesthetic preference (Jansson, Bointon & Marlow (2003); Veryzer (1993); Barr & Neta (2006); Frith & Nias (1974); Hekkert & van Wieringen (1990). There is generally a preference for design that does not violate the Gestalt laws of proportion and unity and where the effect of unity is found to be “superadditive” (Veryzer 1993). The perceptive gains that stem from a design unity and brand prototypicality are analogous to unity and typicality as two sides of the same coin. Both the aesthetic and branding domains assume joint, synergistic roles. The componential meaning of attribute level communications simultaneously reflects added gains for the prototype perception when unity is observed.

In much the same way, the brand attachment construct recently proposed by Thomson, MacInnis & Park (2005), Park et al. (2010) reflect how brand self-connection (Park et al. 2010; Park, MacInnis & Priester 2006, 2008), and brand prominence (Park et al. 2010, Park, MacInnis & Priester 2006, 2008; Thomson, MacInnis & Park 2005) reveal a host of aesthetic, sensory and hedonic gratification and schema referenced, thoughts and feelings about a

brand. In so doing, the brand attachment theory marks a natural evolution and progression from the info-theoretic origins in both the aesthetic and brand equity literatures. An additional benefit in this framework is the gain from separation of perceptions toward a store prototype and retailer attachment. Both constructs are similar in examining schematic representation, but are sufficiently different to allow for distinction at the level of store and brand which has not materialised in much retail research.

Although Martindale (1984) appears to identify with aesthetics in terms of “disinterested pleasure” which is at odds with the categorisation-motivational perspective of Whitfield & Slatter (1979) Whitfield (1983, 2000, 2009) which is largely cognitive and appraisal-centric, the preference-for-prototypes theory does propose how a stimulus construct has an established relationship with aesthetic preference. Although not explicitly acknowledged by Whitfield (2009), categorical-motivational investigations can be person-specific and contingent on the situational or background characteristics of the individual. Although not acknowledged as either categorical-motivational or appraisal-based studies, academics such as McGoldrick & Pieros (1998), Greenland & McGoldrick (1994, 2004), Dawson, Bloch & Ridgway (1990), Sherman, Mathur & Smith (1997), Kalcheva & Weitz (2006) have examined how pre-existing motives and emotional states lead to outcomes. Motivational, situational, expectations and similar were examined by Kalcheva & Weitz (2006), Mattila, Wirtz & Tan (2000), Foxall & Greenley (1999), Foxall & Greenley (2000), Yani-de-Soriano & Foxall (2006) with general confirmation of the influence of these given respondent characteristics on behaviour and preference.

This purpose driven evaluation of the environment reflects how the prototype construct forms in the minds of consumers as meaning is determined and brand salience is construed. This framework could help establish if flexible, fluid interpretations of the environment are possible within a revised Berlyne model. Is it possible to identify groups who evidence common approaches to processing environments based on motivation, situation, expectation and other contextual factors? Could it be possible to discern the aesthetic contribution to brand image and awareness?

Retail Brand Loyalty Relationship with the Store Prototype, Store Pleasure & Retail Brand Attachment

It has generally proven easier to confirm organism-response relationships where pleasure and/or arousal help predict approach and/or avoidance behaviours in the retail environment rather than proving stimulus-organism relationships (Mehrabian & Russell 1974; Donovan & Rossiter 1982; Donovan et al. 1994; Gilboa & Rafaeli 2003; Tai & Fung 1997; Van Kenhove & Desrumaux 1997). It is notable in the studies that explore emotions-response relationships that there are mixed findings over the proposed conditional interaction between pleasure and arousal (Tai & Fung 1997; Van Kenhove & Desrumaux 1997). While Tai & Fung (1997) owing to low numbers of unpleasant responses found it difficult to establish a pleasure-approach/avoidance relationship and pleasure-arousal relationship, Van Kenhove & Desrumaux (1997) goes further and proposes that this relationship is not bi-directional as proposed by Berlyne. Although the Berlyne hypothesis is supported by the findings of Van Kenhove & Desrumaux (1997), they find it difficult to support the Berlyne arousal hypothesis and the interactions between pleasure and arousal in prediction of approach or avoidance

behaviours. This underscores a problem with the model in verifying the intensity of emotions toward the environment (Whitfield 2009).

Proving a store pleasure or retailer attachment to retailer brand loyalty has yet, to this author's knowledge, taken place. The approach-avoidance construct has traditionally included behavioural measures in its definition. Visiting and willingness to return to the store, engagement with staff and other consumers are among the approach behaviours that could similarly be identified in an exploratory analysis of the emotional antecedents of retail brand loyalty. In the few applications of the brand equity model in the retail context, behavioural and attitudinal items are employed in the definition of brand loyalty (Beristain & Zorrilla 2011) or determination of outcome variables (Jara & Cliquet 2012). Most of the early innovations in retail brand equity research have tended to understandably test the suitability of the theory for retail research specifically. Examinations of the relationships between awareness, associations, perceived quality and loyalty have tended to emphasise direct stimulus-response perception with confirmation of the contribution of retail brand awareness to equity and performance (Jara & Cliquet; Kim & Kim 2004). Given the bias toward information-processing in the consumer equity perspective on branding (Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre 2009), relatively few contributions to explore experiential, attitudinal and personality (Jara & Cliquet 2012), and customer satisfaction (Pappu & Quester 2006) are yet forthcoming in explaining emotional mediation. These recent contributions of retail brand equity theory have explored how store and retailer image are understood in light of the development of retail brand equity, but further research is necessary.

Further, similar contributions could resolve ultimately the conceptual differences between Keller (1993) and Aaker (1991) and whether loyalty or the other elements of retail brand equity are either consequences of, or determinants of retail brand equity. The recent contributions of Park et al. 2010, Park, MacInnis & Priester (2006, 2008), Thomson, MacInnis & Park (2005) to brand attachment similarly proffer a useful basis to refine the traditional Mehrabian & Russell (1974) environmental psychology frameworks and Keller (1993), Aaker (1991) consumer equity theory. Future research along these lines could deepen our knowledge of how the store prototype communicates and how consumers appreciate the contribution of the visual domain to the development of retail brands.

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