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Flagship Stores: The new all-inclusive Shoppingscape

Abstract:

Shoppingscapes are socio-cultural icons of a city, the signs of an era, the transformers of the urban landscape, and the experience providers to the users. It is around retail or the economic centers of the city, that the cultural and the social centers develop. If the historical precedent of retail, social, and cultural activities existing in a symbiotic relationship is to hold true in today's market, the definition of shoppingscape can be applied to a new consolidated setting in the form of flagship stores. Flagship stores are retail spectacles that serve the purpose of retailment, exclusive social interaction, creation of culture, all while providing an exclusive sales shrine for the customer. This paper explores the flagship stores as the new shoppingscape and identifies the spatial appropriations with flagship stores that are similar to the traditional shoppingscape where the intent is to convert retail into experience fully integrated into other cultural activities such as theatre and art. Furthermore, this paper explores the impact of an all-inclusive flagship store format that distinguishes it from historic precedents and judges its' impact on the shoppingscape.

Keywords: Flagship store, Trajan Market, all-inclusive shoppingscape

Introduction



The traditional function of shoppingscapes has been creating environments centered on retailing. Historically, the functionality of shoppingscapes has been to act as a magnet of other activities in the development of a cultural hub. Museums, theaters, restaurants and fine dining, cultural activities surround the retail hubs. Since the dawn of this century, the horizontal sprawl of retail businesses surrounded by cultural, hospitality, entertainment activities are being replaced by vertical sprawls in the shape of brand stores. These all-inclusive centers of entertainment and retail, flagship stores are architectural spectacles where the customer interacts with the space as they would with works of art or with other components of a shoppingscape. The flagship stores are the 21st century shoppingscapes – self sufficient in providing a holistic socio-cultural experience, exclusive in retail merchandize sold at that location, and massive in size. “Furthermore, many flagship stores try to become embassy buildings or representations in the city, places that occupy territory within people’s everyday realm” (Mikunda, 2006).

Shoppingscapes have been around for centuries, but now luxury retailers are remodeling their stores to identify the shoppingscape within the building itself so that the customer does not have to leave the building or for that matter the brand. This paper draws parallels between the historic precedent and the current flagship stores in order to identify elements in a flagship store that have existed since the first shopping mall and the ones that are unique to the new flagship stores. Flagship stores also have both positive and negative economic and socio-cultural implications on the city, the cityscape, or the shoppingscape as this paper explores. In this paper, first, a definition of shoppingscapes is developed. Next, the key elements of flagship store are described and compared with the historical precedents of shoppingscapes. Then, the elements unique and novel marketing and architectural ideas in the development of flagship stores are discussed to conclude in a discussion that opens up the future vision of flagship stores on shoppingscape. Through a parallel study of the traditional shoppingscape and its modern day equivalent of flagship store, this

comparative paper studies the impact of the all-inclusive flagship store on the shoppinglandscape and vice versa.

2. Shoppinglandscape

The literature on the definition of the word 'shoppinglandscape' is limited, but certainly one that can be derived from research in similar areas. For simplification, in this paper all shopping centers, malls, small shops, and any built environment with the main function of retail are termed as retail centers. First and foremost, in terms of the physical context of the space, shoppinglandscape is analogous to a cityscape, as described in Lynch's image of the city, but with the retail function. A configuration of built forms with interstitial spaces connected by paths with the key feature of retail can be defined as a shoppinglandscape. The prime locations or nodes that are usually reserved for major anchors and prominent brands. Usually, retail centers serve as landmarks or reference points, but they may also serve as a driver or catalyst in the development of landmarks surrounding them, thus promoting cultural activity, entertainment centers, or a sum of all these activities in the form of a shoppinglandscape.

But while the physical, built environment or the shoppinglandscape provides for the basis of the shared experience of the users, the quality of this shared experience deeply impacts the shoppinglandscape. Hence, the definition of the shoppinglandscape that only addresses the physical component is incomplete without the discussion on the experiential component. The first discussion on the impact of the atmospherics and the built environment on the costumers experience specific to retail environment were discussed by (Bitner, 1992) and termed as servicescape. A servicescape is defined as the built environment surrounding the provision of a service that has an emotional impact on its users and affects their interaction with the built environment (Bitner, 1992). Sherry (1998) in his take on servicescape defined the material and symbolic relationship with the built environment that consumers develop through marketplace products, images, and messages. Bitner's servicescape concept creates huge knowledge base for empirical testing, theory building, development of better tools and measures, but evidence on an applied basis in a retail setting is limited, a void that is better filled with the term brandscape. In Riewoldt's (2002) definition of a brandscape or 'brand landscape', the creation of a three-dimensional microcosm representing the brand that is increasingly becoming a characteristic part in the architecture of retail areas, shopping centers, and showrooms maybe a unique take on the semantics, but one that has a similar purpose of a servicescape. In Riewoldt

and Klingmann’s (2007) form of brandscaping, the idea is not about making a brand into a place but making a place into a brand, one that orchestrate events that prompt memories for its users. Pine and Gilmore (1999) suggest that if companies are the ‘experience stagers’, spaces where companies sell their products become more than venues for doing business–these spaces become the ‘stage. It is within these flagship stores that users go to attend an art opening, or to view a recital, or have lunch with their friends, and when they are tired take a break at the terrace – the new public space – far from the maddening crowd. As Riewoldt (2002) points out, “the three-dimensional design of brand settings is all about forging backdrops for experiences with a high entertainment value”. From the above analysis, while the analogy of cityscape applied to shopping deals with a physical setting or an urban sprawl generated around the retail center, the experiential factors surrounding the consumer and the brand are dealt with the idea of servicescape and brandscape.

Shoppingscape = Retail Centered Masterpieces + Experience generators
and Urban sprawls (that create memories & value for users)

Table 1: Definition of shoppingscape (literature review)

Term	Definition	Author
Servicescape	The built environment surrounding the provision of a service that has an emotional impact on its users and affects their interaction with the built environment	Bitner, 1992
Brandscape	A three-dimensional microcosm representing the brand	Riewoldt, 2002
Brandscape	The idea is not about making a brand into a place but making a place into a brand, one that orchestrate events that prompt memories for its users	Klingmann, 2007
Shoppingscape	Retail-centered architectural masterpieces and urban sprawls creating experiences that prompt memories and generate values for the consumer	Sharma, 2013 (derived from above definitions)

Shoppingscape is a hybrid of a cityscape and a brandscape, one that consists of retail center and addresses adjacent neighborhood while creating experiences that the

consumers cherish. A shoppingscape thus consists of retail-centered architectural masterpieces and urban sprawls creating experiences that prompt memories and generate values for the consumer.

3. Flagship Store

Flagship store venue is extremely popular and has an evolved definition. In Mikunda (2006) definition, the flagship stores are defined as the principal store of a retail chain, that carry a single brand of product, are owned by the manufacturer of the brand, and operated with the intention of building or reinforcing the image of the product rather than operating to sell a product (Kozinets *et al*, 2002). The defining characteristics of the flagship store include but are not limited to prime location, exclusivity of merchandise, star architecture, a museum-like feel more so than the retail feel, the unique connection of the brand with the local market, value-generation for the users, and flagship stores as a magnet etc. In the last decade flagship stores have become the gold standard for high-end luxury stores, but as flagship stores become ubiquitous and become the key standard or a prototype for a retail store for the brand, it is important to understand the drivers behind the flagship store and the impact that flagship stores has on the shoppingscape.

Table 2: Definition of flagship store (literature review)

Characteristic	Definition	Author
Merchandise, Ownership, Intent of the store	Carrying a single brand of product, Manufacturer owned, operated with the intention of building or reinforcing the image of the product	Kozinets, Sherry et al. 2002
Scale and representation	Embassy buildings or representations in the city, places that occupy territory within people's everyday realm	Mikunda, 2006
Intent of the store	Statement pieces which stimulate interest, attract attention and ensure that the brand appears and remains on their target customers shipping list	Moore & Doherty, 2001
Intent of the store (cultural aspect)	The core concern is not shopping alone but also lifestyle and culture	Hanisch, 2006

4. The Historic Shoppingscape Vs. Today's Flagship Store

Shoppingscapes have existed since the first markets were created. The evolution of shopping discussion entails a buyer and a seller. Even though bartering good for services and vice versa created infrastructure for trade such as roads, bridges, it was a crumbling system as the exchange would only go as far as the goods or services available for exchange at one's disposal. The situation of barter and exchange of goods was altered with the advent of coins and currency. And furthermore money was organized with the advent of the shopping register in 1878. Other inventions such as the shopping cart and the bar code allowed for organization of products and the ease of shopping of these products. Parallel cultural development such as the Crystal Palace exhibition was instrumental in rise of shopping as a hobby where browsing, strolling, and viewing the works on display was seen as a social activity. The Bon Marche in Paris, the Galleria Vittoria in Italy, the Selfridges in England, the Lady's Mile in Manhattan and the simultaneous flurry of activity on both sides of the Atlantic are the crux of confusion about the development of department store (Klaffke, 2003); but this simultaneous development of the department store across continents is also indicative of 'wants' taking over 'needs', 'browsing' taking over 'bargaining', and 'social' aspect of shopping taking over the 'economic' functionality. This shift in shopping ideology was a pivotal moment that redefined the shopping experience, but certainly not a new one.

Over the centuries, there have been many such pivotal moments for different generations and hence it is important to start at the beginning and to compare the flagship stores with the first shoppingscape. Whether it was the barter, or the department store, or the shopping mart, all retail centers could find their genesis in the medieval market, or the first built mall, the Trajan market, or the any other historic market, a comparison that is drawn below with the flagship stores in terms of the characteristics of the shoppingscape.

4.1 Location

Mohenjo Daro, prehistoric exchange of goods, the medieval markets, were all located alongside rivers or a roadside along the widest street to allow for stalls and vendors' booths and hosted a cross to attract customers to the market. This idea is also true for flagship stores and the Trajan markets that the location must be prominent (Moore and Doherty (2001); Jackson (2004); Varley (2007). Also, in his commentary, Webb (2001) maintains that with shops in the right locations, there was no further need for marketing, the shops would do that for themselves. The flagship stores and

the pioneer Trajan markets validate Webb's comment. The first built shopping mall believed to be the Trajan market were located next to the Trajan Forum, a large rectangular plaza surrounded by important government buildings and home to the most important economic and judicial business – a key driving force in the development of the Roman shoppingscape. The Trajan markets consisted primarily of a vaulted rectangular room and the shops called *tabernae* were disposed along curved and straight streets in the Rome in the first century AD (Riefstahl, 1932). Historians believe that the Trajan market hosted shops on the lower level and Emperor Trajan's offices on the upper level.

Much like the strategic location of the Trajan market, the flagship stores are also located at the prime location, typically the most important in the city – both famous and infamous. Flagship stores maybe located at a) an existing city center/ prime location as can be seen in London's Bond street or in New York City's 5th Avenue; b) a historical neighborhood such as the Champs Elysees in Paris; or c) a brownfield site that has been revitalized due to the impact of the Louis Vuitton flagship store such as the Nagoya Sakae neighborhood in Tokyo. Discussing the isolated location, that has changed since the opening of the store in 1999, Magrou (2011) writes that the architect Jun Aoki received little help from the heterogeneous context of the site flanked by an open-air parking lot, and there were no elements offering tangible support of what was to become the emblem of fashion house.

But both the Trajan market and the flagship stores are either part of an existing shoppingscape or are the driving force behind the creation of a new shoppingscape. Other flagship stores surround flagship stores, but they also include within the flagship building, amenities that maybe part of a shoppingscape in a no-flagship store setting.

4.2 Façade

The Trajan markets had large monumental facade consisting of a half exedra bordered by a row of columns, built by Apollodorus. At both ends were smaller exedras that were covered by a half dome. The flagship stores are in competition with the other brands to create a bigger and better façade than the other. E.g. the façade of the Louis Vuitton flagship in Omotesando, Tokyo is designed as a stack to signify trunks waiting on a dock to be loaded on the ship while that of the Chanel flagship in Ginza, Tokyo is a giant video wall resembling the classic Chanel tweed.

4.3 Size

The markets at Trajan occupied 3000 sq.m. spread over 6 floors. The same is to be said of the flagship stores. The areas of flagship stores for luxury brands are between 350-700 sq.m. spread over 6-10 floors as can be seen from the example of three flagship stores studied in Tokyo in the table below.

Table 3: Area and dimensions of flagship stores

Flagship	Flagship Footprint Area	Flagship Total Floor Area	Flagship Footprint Dimensions	Floors	Floors dedicated to Retail
Louis Vuitton	530 sq.m.	3750 sq.m.	25.2m X 20.8m	8+1	4
Prada	370 sq.m.	3270 sq.m.	20m X 22m	6	3
Chanel	680 sq.m.	6098 sq.m.	39m X 28m	10	3

4.4 Star Architect

Hamel and Prahalad (1994) define strategic architecture as the imagined future that is built. Describing the importance of architecture as marketing tool they suggest that in order to build strategic architecture top management must have a point of view through which new benefits, or 'functionalities' will be offered'. The top management and the star architects commissioned for the job help in creating a strategic star architecture.

The architect of the Trajan Markets, Apollodorus, a master engineer, a bridge builder and sculptor, as well as the author of technical treatises, was a prominent figure of his time. But the star architects of the flagship stores add their cultural weight to a project and brand while creating a visual image of sophistication and quality, terms synonymous with luxury. Rem Koolhaas collaboration with Prada, Jun Aoki with Louis Vuitton, Peter Marino for Chanel are few of the many prominent examples where the architects have added their cultural weight to the project. In strategic architecture and the development of shoppingscape, this strategic move for the brands, is evidence of a collaboration that goes beyond creation of the building.

4.5 The Third Space

Building on the research by Belk (1998) on the development of the individual's identity through the association and collection of objects, events and experiences, and by Pine and Gilmore (1999) that businesses must orchestrate events that prompt memories

for its users, Healy, Beverland et al. (2007) confirm that consumers are effectively immersed in a branded world and experience the brand on a cognitive, emotional and visceral level. To this end, a prominent area of the flagship stores is the third space, an area dedicated to the organization of events and entertainment elements and has little of the retail functionality associated with it. Examples of the third space are theater, offices, music hall, restaurants, cafes, all housed within the flagship building. Examples include but are not limited to the concert hall at Louis Vuitton, Omotesdando and the restaurant at Chanel, Ginza. Prada at Soho also boasts of a social space dedicated to evening events, fashion shows, and art exhibits. But the third space function of the flagship stores is not new. The Trajan market's main function was to serve as offices for Emperor Trajan.

The similarities between the first mall and the flagship stores are immense. From the definition of the flagship store that we saw above, the elements of prime location, grandiose size and scale, the recipe of prominent façade, star architect, and the third space are not unique to flagship stores of the 21st century. Historic precedent and the study of the Trajan Market shows that these elements that are published as governing factors of flagship store have been around for centuries and were the defining principles in the design of the first mall. Even though the new flagship stores are located in an existing shoppingscapes at prime location or are instrumental in the creation of a new shoppingscape by attracting other flagship stores and cultural institutions, the flagship stores have similar qualities to its precedents. But there are elements that have helped the flagship stores achieve the iconic status that they have and these are the elements that distinguish them from their precedents. These elements are discussed below.

5. The distinction of the flagship store as an all-inclusive Shoppingscape

A typical flagship store houses a retail area, private retail area, VIP clubs, café and restaurant, and a theater or a concert hall. While the first few flagship stores consisted of retail and private retail, as brands started to collaborate with Avant Garde artists and architects, flagship stores became more and more extravagant in their purpose that shifted retail to a more secondary functionality detailed below.

5.1 Museum Or Retail

Andy Warhol had predicted that all department stores will become museums and all museums will become department stores. Historically, the shoppingscape developed

around shopping. In the flagship store, the brand pulls the customers in by showcasing the latest Avant Garde artist collaboration at the flagship store. As Paul Thompson, rector of London's Royal College of Art points out, "Commissioning avant-garde designers to work with them allows these brands to stress their heritage and contemporaneity in one breath," (Thompson, 2011). Louis Vuitton's most recent collaboration with Yayoi Kusuma – Japan's most prominent avant-garde artist – not only commissioned the artist for art, but also inspired the collection (Carcelle, 2012). But the diminishing quantity of product and the vast amount of open space filled with art from artists commissioned by the brand give it a museum-like appearance more than retail. Patrons of the store may wander through the stores and absorb in the art and the various cultural themes even though they may or may not make a purchase.

The coming together of various flagship stores in a shoppingscape that collaborate with various artists over a time period allows for an equal number of museums within a shoppingscape as the number of stores.

5.2 Anchor for other flagship stores

While in a typical shoppingscape, similar trade attracts other vendors of the trade to start competing businesses in the area, on the re-development or revitalization projects, a flagship store acts as a solid, iconic standalone anchor. McDonald's is the biggest brand in the world, but if a McDonald's were to open in a brownfield development, the chances of another McDonald's opening in that area are limited when compared to an Armani anchor flagship store being the driver for an Armani home flagship store.

5.3 Magnet

Flagship stores act as a visual magnet in the ever-changing shoppingscape. The shoppingscape can become ubiquitous and over stimulating. Every flagship store has a visual appeal that stands out to add a renewed spectacular quality to the shoppingscape. As Okinkwo (2007) states, flagship stores are the complete sensory package comprising all the senses is required in luxury retailing (visual, aural, tactile, olfactory, and taste; and an additional sixth sense, 'emotion').

These stores also act as a themed environment whether through fabrication workshops in the stores or through interactive sessions about the brand. "Whereas the production sites of other industries are rarely magnets for visitors (except where retrofitted as historic or tourist sites), the actual fabrication of the entertainment

product and the themed stores and restaurants that give the visitor a vicarious feeling of participation in the creative process become major attractions in themselves” (Roost, 2006).

5.4 Limited Product

Unlike the traditional retail centers in a shoppingscape that carry all current product lines and stock, flagship stores only carry limited product, some exclusive to just that store. In a traditional shoppingscape, if you are looking for a specific product by a brand, there maybe different vendors that sell that product. However in a flagship store the intent is reversed to portray only a specific product, a specific brand, and a specific flagship store to purchase that product.

5.5 Glamor

With flagship stores, comes an urban gentrification. While different levels in a shoppingscape cater to various economic sectors of the society, the flagship stores cater to the creme of the economic sector. The glam power of the neighborhood is increased and the customers that fall in a certain income group or a certain awareness level about the brand will visit the store.

5.5 All inclusive qualities of a shoppingscape

And if you never wish to leave the flagship store, an idea that the brands are trying to employ, the flagship store is the all-inclusive flagship store. With art spaces and eating places, and educational demonstrations about the manufacturing of the product, all your cognitive and visceral needs are met within one store that used to be met by a whole shoppingscape. The intent of the flagship store to convert retail into experience fully integrated into other cultural activities such as theatre and art creates an all-inclusive shoppingscape within the store (Cairns, 2010).

6. Conclusion

The definition of shoppingscape as defined in this paper was derived from similar existing terminology in the field such as ‘cityscape’, ‘servicescape’ and ‘brandscape’ that is applicable to the flagship store format. It was thus defined that a shoppingscape is a hybrid of the physical organization of the area surrounding the retail centers and the experiential effect of shopping that prompts user memories

and creates value through a positive experience that the user may have. This definition was then explored within the flagship store format, which appears to be an evolved shoppingscape, one that entails the marketing and architectural branding strategies that have been employed by brands, vendors, sellers for centuries together. With the comparison of the first shopping mall, the Trajan markets, it was found that the elements inherent to the definition of the flagship store such as prime location, aesthetics on facades, massive size of the shopping center, star architects commissioned for the job, and the presence of the third space or a function equally prominent as retail were elements that were prominent since the first market of Trajan.

Over the centuries, brands have worked toward creating strong marketing, one that constantly attracts customers to the ephemeral world of retail. To this end, by the end of the last century, flagship stores or the architectural space as the marketing trend have emerged. Flagship stores differ from their previous counterparts with regards to retail space as a museum-like quality, the quality of one flagship store to act as an anchor for other flagship stores of other brands and evolving a shoppingscape in the process, flagship store acting as a magnet for other cultural activities, limited and exclusive product line that is housed in the store, gentrification of the neighborhood, and the glamour that flagship stores add to the shoppingscape... while being an all-inclusive shoppingscape all along.

However, even though a flagship stores maybe an extension of a shoppingscape or a stand-alone shoppingscape, it creates the movement needed to guide that shoppingscape. Brands and their architectural spectacles come together to improve communities. Most flagship stores are created on the same blueprint, but their in-store activities are catered to the local market. As is evident from an internal Apple video (2012), from the exterior, it maybe hard to tell an Apple store in Japan from that in New York city, but Apple is trying to find the feelings that locals are feeling and are bringing the emotions into that store, all while creating an ownership experience for the users.

From the above example, it is evident that flagship stores are similar in their design, and that begs the question, 'Are flagship stores the future of all retail store models?' Are flagship stores just serving as a prototype for all retail stores? Are flagship stores just a trend?

And if any of the above questions is true, does that make the flagship stores just another milestone trend in the evolution of shopping till the next trend comes around? Or are flagship stores here to stay to constantly revive our shoppingscape?

Also, the rapid growth of flagship stores continues to take place, is it not too long before flagship stores become ubiquitous in our shoppingscape and are no more unique?

Also, this is one take on shoppingscape. Since shoppingscape is an evolving and fairly new term and so is the flagship store format, only time will tell if either will stand the test of time and this opens avenues for future research and empirical data collection. But, in the current scenario the flagship stores do provide an architectural spectacle set as an experience stage for the brands' users, as was inherent in the definition of the shoppingscape used in this paper. And hence, for now, it is safe to say – flagship stores are the all-inclusive shoppingscape.

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