

DEVELOPMENT OF A RETAIL BRAND ENHANCEMENT TOOL THROUGH THE USE OF EMOTIONAL DESIGN THEORY

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Design is created to fulfil the needs of its users, and its functions are constantly assessed by such users. In a retail environment, design elements should also represent the brand vision that the company wants to communicate to its customers. Understanding how design elements influence customers' emotions in a retail environment is vital for brand managers and designers; however, such information is difficult to gather and analyse, since it requires decoding layers of emotional responses from customers with regard to the design elements within the overall retail environment.

This paper proposes an emotional mapping tool for brand managers and designers to use when analysing customers' emotional responses towards a retail environment. The foundation of this tool is derived from emotional design theory, in particular Norman's three levels of human processing - visceral, behavioural and reflective (Norman, 2004). The tool is then modified further after being tested in terms of an empirical case study of a large UK based supermarket brand and one of its stores. The findings suggest that the proposed tool is useful for customers when it comes to describing their emotions associated with a particular retail environment, and helps brand managers and designers to understand the emotional feelings customers experience in such a retail environment.

Keywords Brand experience; emotional design; retail branding

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INTRODUCTION

Design is closely related to emotion. According to marketing specialist Darrel Rhea (1992), the real challenges come when designers step back and reassess all the ways a design might influence and benefit customers emotionally. In product design, emotion has been a popular research topic, mainly in terms of achieving an understanding beyond the aesthetic and functional aspects of design roles for ordinary products.

How about retail design? Since marketing and economics are shifting from commodities to services, creating a memorable visitor experience in a retail environment has become increasingly important (Floor, 2006). By creating memorable customer experiences, differentiating oneself from one's competitors is becoming one of the crucial objectives for many retail stores (Vehoef et al., 2009). Companies can maintain strong customer relations by creating memorable experiences.

As a subject, emotions are not easily measured and quantified because of their complexity (Hirschamn, 1982). According to Norman (2004), there are several factors that influence customer emotions and behaviour such as personality, education, culture and the context of visiting the retail environment. However, it is essential for brand managers and designers to know what customers experience in a retail store in order to provide better design and enhance brand communication.

The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the emotional elements that a retail store provides to visitors by mapping customers' emotional reactions to each design element within the retail environment. The emotional mapping tool presented here aims to support brand managers in understanding their design outcomes in a retail store, as well as providing clues to evaluate the design elements that reflect their brand vision. In particular, this tool can be used when a retail brand has to remodel itself. Based on the evaluation of design elements in a retail environment, brand managers and designers can identify what should be improved emotionally in the retail store. By tracing visitors' emotional experiences, brand managers can assess design elements that influence visitors' feelings.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Prior to developing the emotional mapping tool, literature reviews on brand experience and emotional design were conducted to understand how emotions could influence on creating design and customers' purchasing behaviour. Existing tools measuring human emotions were also reviewed to determine whether they can be useful to evaluate design elements in a retail environment and adaptable when developing the tool.

Since brand experience has attracted a lot of attention in marketing, marketing practitioners have come to realise that understanding consumers' brand experience is crucial for developing marketing strategies for goods and services (Linstrom, 2005). Several research methods for analysing consumers' attitude towards a brand have been developed (Thomson, et al, 2005). However, there is little evidence of research in measuring brand experiences within a retail environment (Brakus, et al, 2009).

Regarding emotional design, various studies and theories have been suggested in order to explain the role of emotions in design aspects. Especially, in the field of product design, designers consider emotional design as a tool they use to deliver their messages and emotions, while some suggests that it is individual experience and response when users use objects (Ho and Siu, 2009). Even if the terms used to describe the emotions can be translated into different ways, emotions that cannot be clearly separated from cognition and functionality (Norman, 2004) are one of the main factors influencing customer's purchasing decision.

RESEARCH PROCESS AND METHODS

In order to design the tool practically, the Double Diamond Design Process model, which describes the general design process, was adopted for this research (see Fig 1). The process consists of four stages – ‘discover’, ‘define’, ‘develop’, and ‘deliver’.

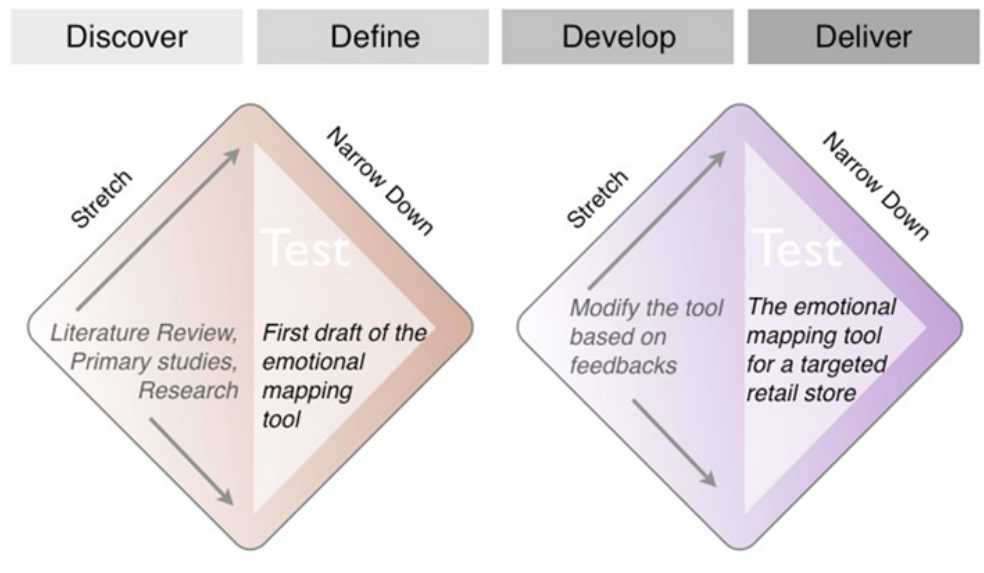


Figure 1. Double Diamond Design Process (source: Design Council, 2005).

- Discover – Through literature review in the areas of brand experience, emotional design, brand management, retail design, and interviews with experts in branding and interior design as well as observation of six fashion and mobile phone retail stores, the first prototype of the emotional mapping tool was developed.
- Discover – Through the literature review of the areas of brand experience, emotional design, brand management, retail design, and interviews with experts in branding and interior design, as well as observation of six fashion and mobile phone retail stores, the first prototype of the emotional mapping tool was developed.
- Define – A sample group consisting of seventeen participants was identified as being suitable interviewees, and four types store within the retail sector – mobile-phone, grocery, fashion and coffee shops -

were chosen to test the tool. In this way, the similarities and differences in the importance of customer needs and wants, and their design expectations of a store in different retail sectors could be identified, and could provide useful information for modification of the emotional mapping tool. Individual interviews generally took 40 minutes each. The tool consists of 49 picture images distributed over the three emotional levels.

- Develop – Based on the data and comments collected from a sample group, the results were analysed and areas for improvement were identified. Appropriate methods for data analysis were also explored.
- Deliver – Lastly, based on the feedback obtained, the emotional mapping tool was modified to focus on a targeted retail store of a large UK based supermarket brand.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE EMOTIONAL MAPPING TOOL

For the sake of simplicity, the design of the retail brand enhancement tool is based on Norman's (2004) three levels of human processing – visceral, behavioural, and reflective. The visceral level is about how things look and feel. Visceral appeal is fast, sometimes instant, and most products have it to some degree. On the behavioural level, the emotional impact is guided mostly by function and usability. In this level, product appearance is not viewed as important as performance. The reflective level is about message and culture. It is also the stage in which brand image and marketing come into play. Products are sold not on their functionality, but on aspects such as reputation and uniqueness. The ways in which the three levels interact is complex. However, for the purpose of application, the three levels make it possible to understand how emotions can be mapped and distinguished, based on product characteristics. For this reason, these three levels can be adopted to evaluate the emotional impact of a retail store.

In the retail brand enhancement tool, these levels are explained with

pictures and words, because images make it easier for the interviewees to describe their experience, and for designers to understand what interviewees want to express. With this tool, the brand manager is able to trace the design elements that visitors unconsciously consider, as well as understand how in-store communication tools like merchandise, visual displays and employees influence customer emotions (see Fig 2).

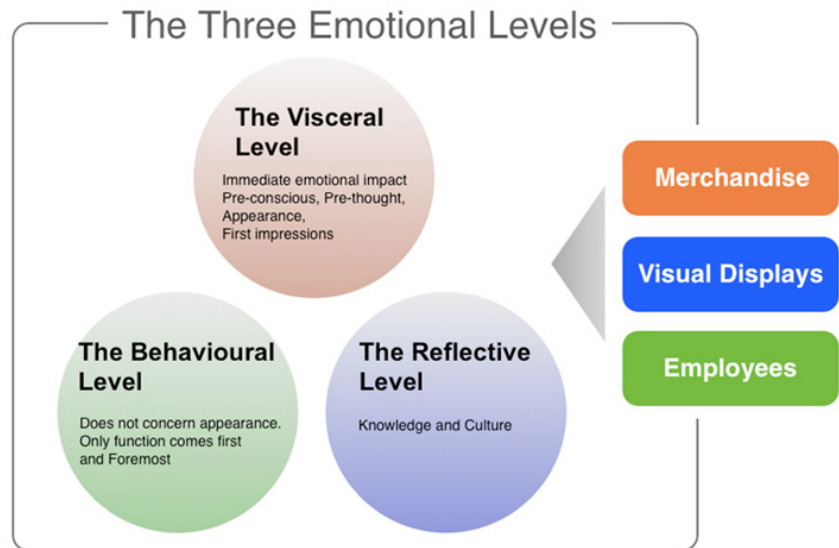


Figure 2. In-store communication tools with the three emotional levels.

FRAMEWORK OF THE TOOL

Based upon the three levels of emotional design theory, the tool is divided into three categories; the visceral level (appearance), the behavioural level (effectiveness of visiting, brand positioning), and the reflective level (personal satisfaction, self-image, memories).

THE VISCERAL LEVEL

On the visceral level, the body's reaction to sights, sounds, what can be touched or smelled, is dealt with. Using images (eye, ear, hand, nose), an interviewee is asked to describe the level of their visceral reaction to merchandise (products, packaging), visual displays (product density,

method of presentation, number of displays, information on in-store signage and graphics) and employees (role of employees, kind of contact with customers, expertise) (See Fig 3).

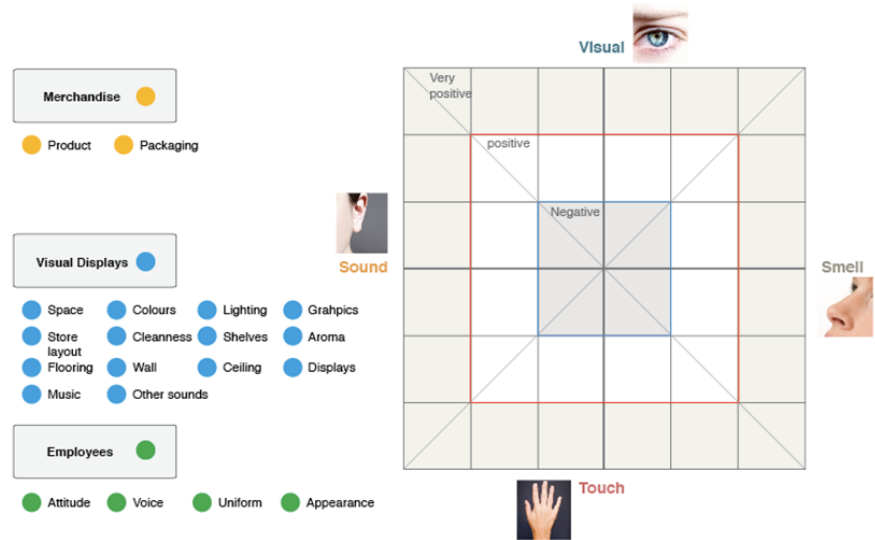


Figure 3. The visceral level of the emotional mapping tool.

From the data gathered in this level of the tool, we can:

- identify which emotional sensory inputs have the most influence;
- rank every design element related to sight, smell, touch, sound causing customers experience based on in-store tools; and
- access the experience at the visceral level.

THE BEHAVIOURAL LEVEL

On the behavioural level, only functional aspects are considered (Norman, 2004). By using six categories of images with words describing the retail brand's position during the store experience, consisting of entertainment, expertise, design, hedonism, lifestyle and bargain (Floor, 2006), an interviewee is asked to choose the pictures that reflect his or her experience. Brand messages are also assessed here (See Fig 4).

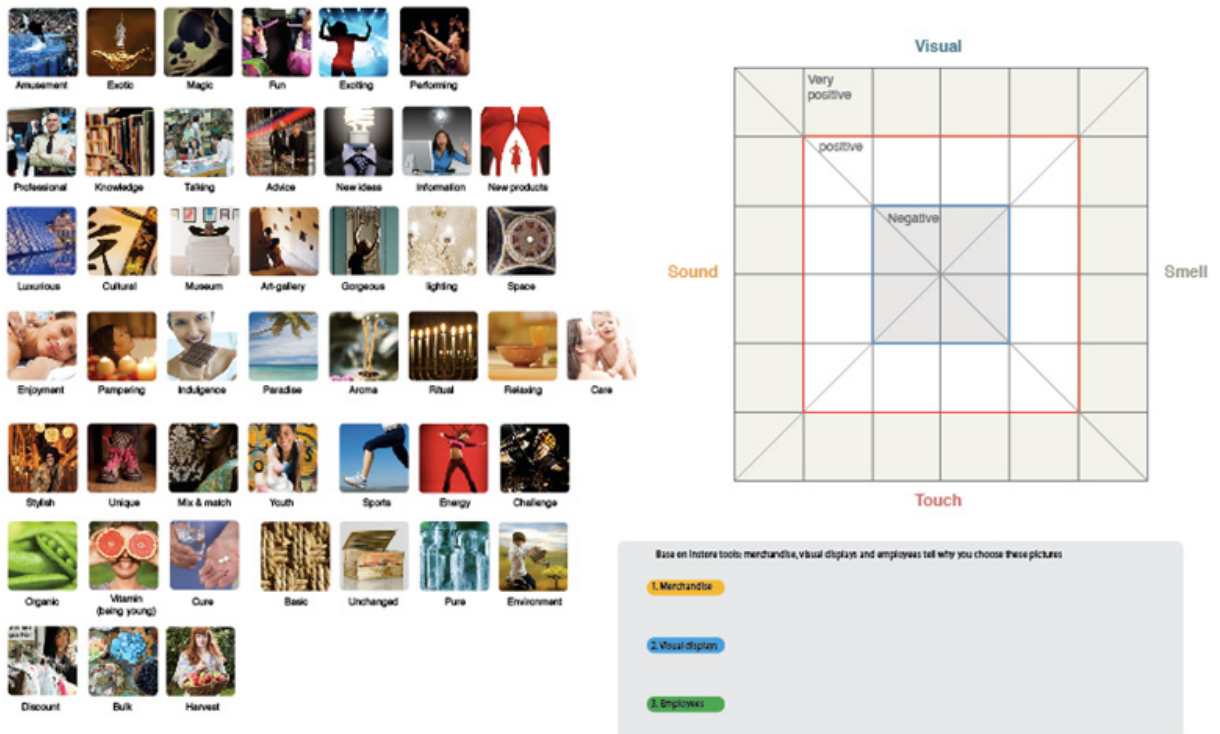


Figure 4. The behavioural level of the emotional mapping tool.

In this part, we can:

- identify the type of store experience the retail environment provides;
- rank in-store communication tools in each category; and
- rank retail performance.

THE REFLECTIVE LEVEL

On the reflective level, elements of culture and meaning are addressed (Norman, 2004). This part asks what elements a retail store provides for visitors in terms of evoking feelings or memories. The reflective level is all about message, culture, and the meaning of brand or place. There is nothing practical, nothing biological, about the answers. Interviewees are encouraged to talk about design elements including service that evokes their personal satisfaction, self-image or memories, such as personal nostalgia or seasons. (See Fig 5)



Figure 5. The reflective level of the emotional mapping tool

From the data gathered in this level of the tool, we can understand the design elements which evoke visitors' feelings and memories.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TOOL: MORRISONS SUPERMARKET

Through previous primary research, it was found that the images and words used in the tool helped interviewees to narrate their emotional experiences in retail stores. However the data collected from the sample group was somewhat general which made it difficult to analyse the meaning in more detail. This indicated that the questionnaire in the emotional mapping tool needs to be designed with a specific retail store in mind for practical purposes. The details of its in-store communication tools should also be incorporated .

A TARGET RETAIL STORE: MORRISONS SUPERMARKET

Based on the analysis of the previous questionnaire and participants' feedback, a tailored emotional mapping tool has been developed to

focus on a British supermarket brand -

Morrisons Plc. The questionnaire has been modified to explore each design element in a Morrisons supermarket. A sample group consisting of ten participants conducted computer-based interviews. They not only answered the questions, but also talked about their personal opinions regarding retail design elements that evoke their personal memories while being interviewed. Prior to the interview, the research procedures were explained to them and Morrisons' indoor images were shown on a computer screen.

THE VISCERAL LEVEL

Each design element that can influence visitors' emotional feelings was listed. The emotional response areas were divided into three categories: very positive, positive and negative. The sample group was asked to rate each design element in terms of the emotional response areas.

THE BEHAVIOURAL LEVEL

Based on six categories of retail brand position (Floor, 2006), the images that can represent Morrisons' brand vision were selected by the sample group. Interviewees were asked to rate the images in terms of three different emotional response areas, and to narrate the reasons why they chose images based on in-store communication tools: merchandise, visual displays and employees.

THE REFLECTIVE LEVEL

The images that were used in the previous emotional mapping tool seemed to have interrupted both the narration of personal experiences and finding design elements that can be linked to their previous memory of retail stores. On the reflective level, answers were closely related to personal knowledge and culture (Norman, 2004). Hence, it was decided not to use any images on this level. However, in a supermarket, the space tends to be bigger and the range of product is more diverse than in any other type of retail store. There is a possibility that the interviewer does not know where the interviewees' emotions originated. For this reason, interviewees were asked to indicate the

sectors which prompted these emotions.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

WANT AND NEEDS

In terms of products associated with ‘Wants’ and ‘Needs’ in Morrisons, eight answered ‘Wants’ are equal to, or higher, than ‘Needs.’ They responded that in terms of in-store communication tools, merchandise and visual displays determined their priorities. Two interviewees whose answers were ‘Needs’ are higher than ‘Wants’ mentioned that employees were the most influential elements in terms of in-store communication tools (See Fig 6).

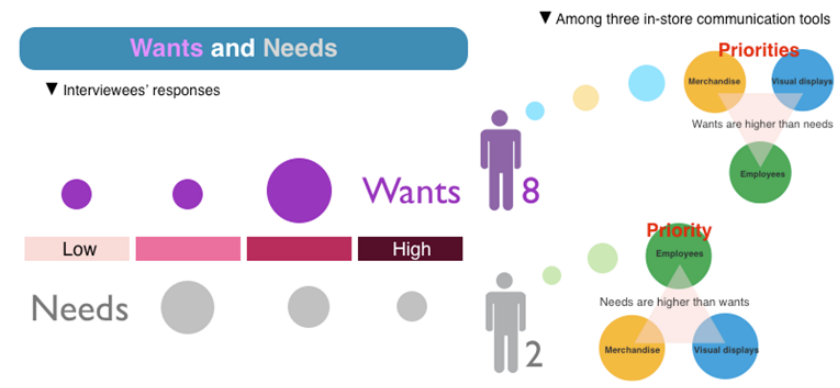


Figure 6. The responses of the sample group's ‘Wants’ and ‘Needs’.

THE VISCERAL LEVEL – MERCHANDISE

Providing various products is the strongest immediate emotional impact that interviewees experienced in Morrisons. The sample group mentioned that even if they spent more time looking around Morrisons than other supermarkets, they enjoyed their time at the store. As regards packaging, Morrisons' co-operative packages were the main point of focus. As a personal test, three of the interviewees revealed that the colours shown on the Morrison's packages, i.e yellow and green,

prompted a negative response (See Fig 7).

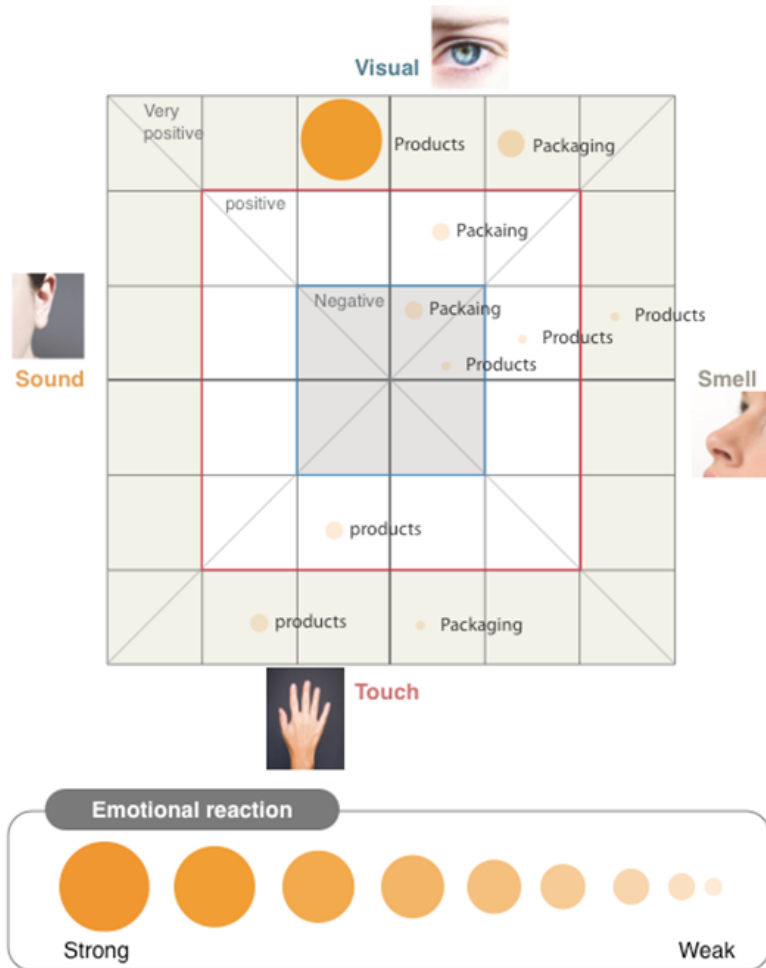


Figure 7. The sample groups' responses on the visceral level regarding merchandise.

THE VISCERAL LEVEL – VISUAL DISPLAYS

In terms of interior design, there are many design elements consisting of visual displays. The elements are divided into two parts: non-aesthetic and aesthetic. As a non-aesthetic visual display, cleanliness is one of the positive aspects that customers experienced at Morrisons. The sample group generally considered Morrisons to be a big

supermarket, but when it came to design, cleanliness ranked higher than other elements. Regarding negative comments, walls, ceiling and flooring were selected because of their plain design (See Fig 8).

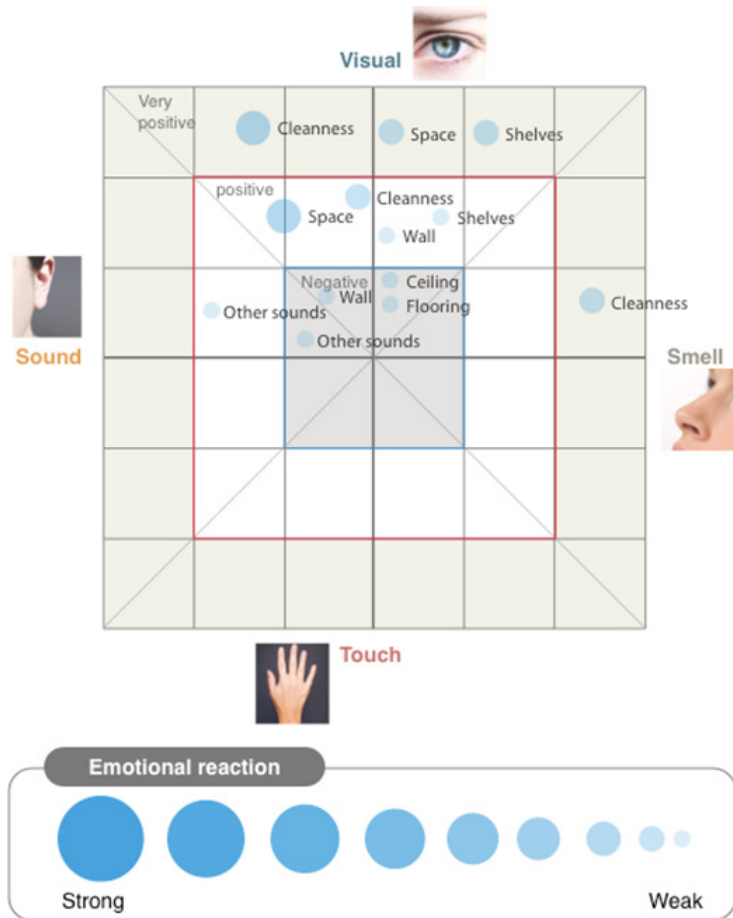


Figure 8. The sample groups' responses on the visceral level regarding non-aesthetic visual display.

In terms of aesthetic visual displays, store layout for convenient shopping was one of the positive elements that Morrisons provided. Overall, Morrisons provided a satisfactory interior design, even though two interviewees did not like the Morrisons colour scheme. The smell of fresh bread and cooked meals provided interviewees with positive feelings, and helped differentiate it from other supermarkets. Seven of the interviewees mentioned they wanted to hear soft music whilst shopping (See Fig 9).

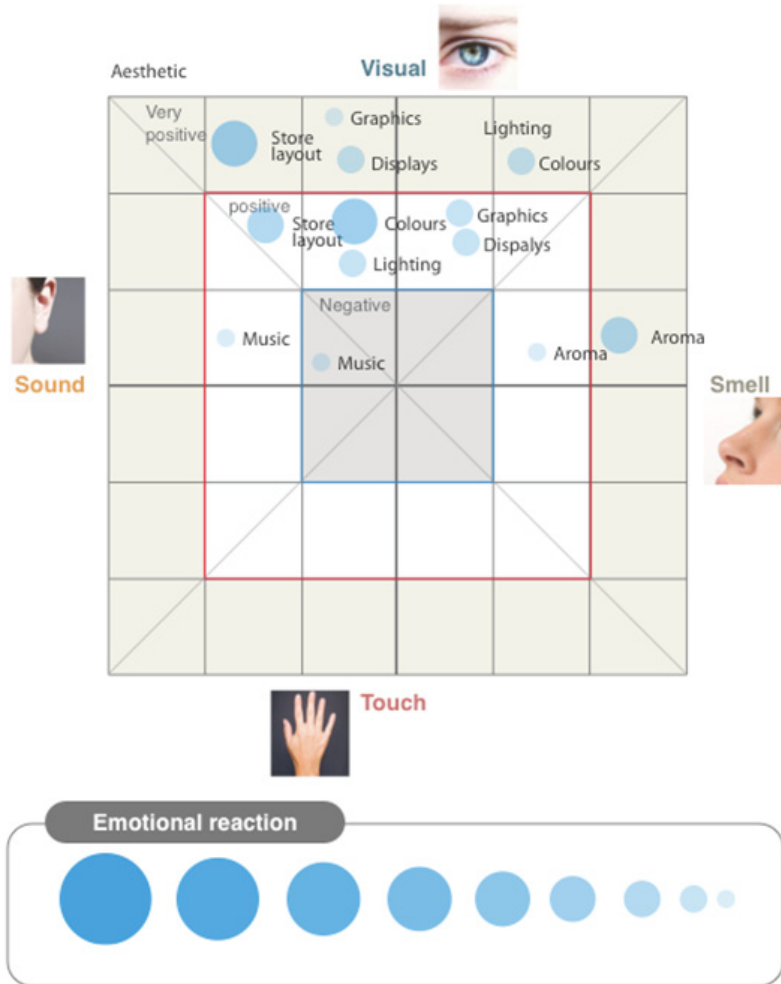


Figure 9. The sample groups' responses on the visceral level regarding aesthetic visual display.

THE VISCERAL LEVEL – EMPLOYEES

A sample group responded that employees' appearances and voices gave them a positive impression. When it came to uniform, it did not generate a strong positive feeling among the sample group, but all of them answered that they could distinguish successfully between staff and customers due to their uniform. Six interviewees had experienced being treated in an unfriendly manner by employees at Morrisons. On the other hand, they said that it was hard to comment negatively about all employees, because other employees provided a nice, welcoming and good service (See Fig 10).

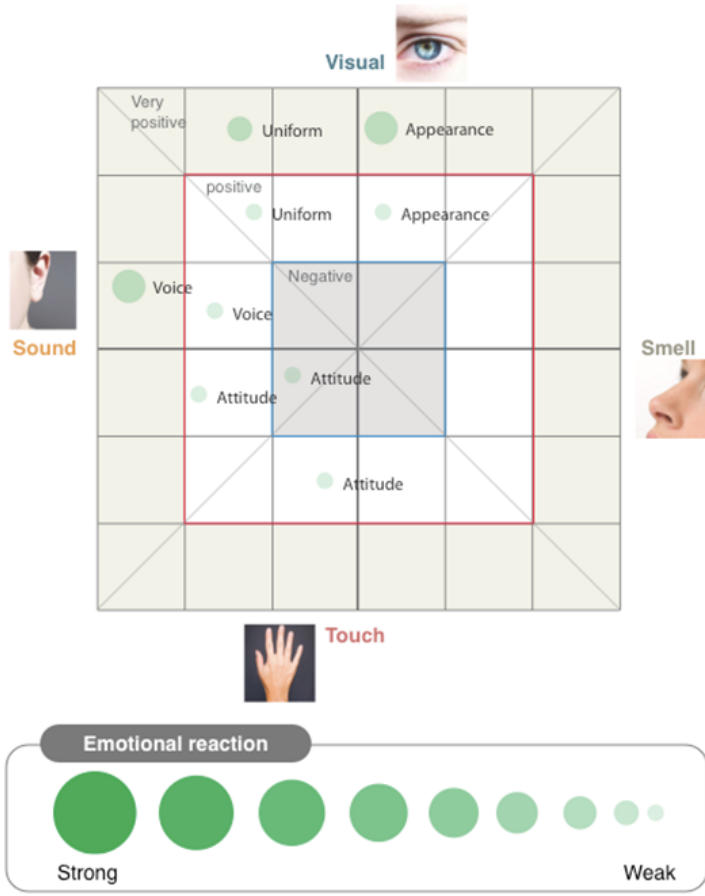


Figure 10. The sample groups' responses on the visceral level regarding employees.

THE BEHAVIOURAL LEVEL

On the behavioural level, through the selected images of the sample group, we were able to determine what kind of brand messages visitors actually experience in the store. The sample group selected organic, professional images as very positive brand positions. New products, harvest, space and environment images were chosen as the positive brand positions. As a negative brand position, a talking image was selected (See Fig 11).

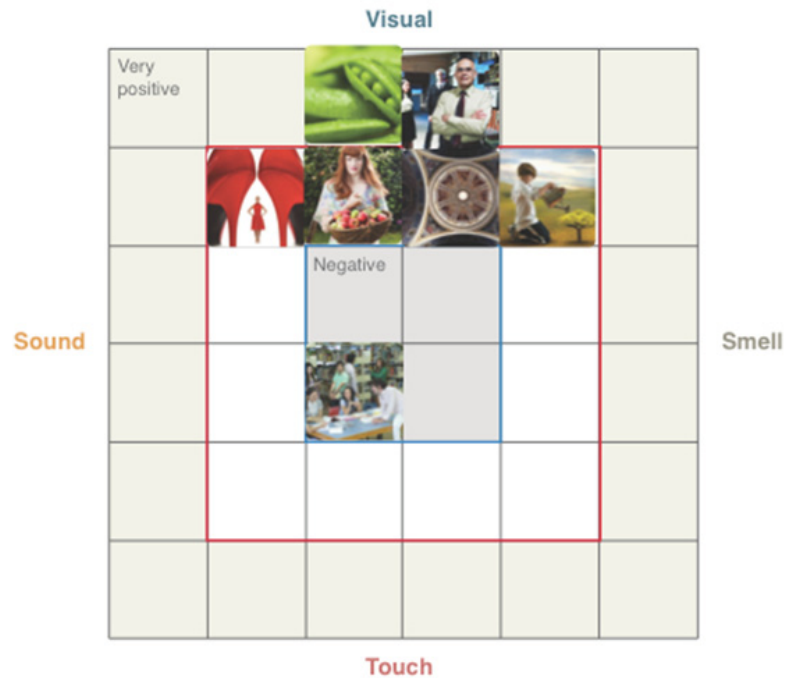


Figure 11. The sample groups' responses on the visceral level regarding employees.

In order to deliver its brand vision to be the 'Food Specialist for Everyone', Morrisons offers six categories of message within their stores : freshness, value, service, various, environment and seasonal images. By comparing the sample group's responses, it can be evaluated whether the functional elements which deliver the brand vision of Morrisons, are well reflected or not.

The brand vision of Morrisons has been compared to the responses of the sample group. The results indicated that its brand vision is delivered clearly, because eight interviewees from the sample group chose the image of professional, which represented an expertise brand position. The chosen images such as organic, new products and harvest by the sample group also represent the messages that deliver the Morrisons' vision, which are positively acknowledged.

However, in the case of environment, based on the sample group's explanation of reasons why they chose the image, it was revealed that Morrisons' message on environmental issues has been delivered in different ways in the store. For instance, Morrisons made an effort to recycle and reduce the amount of packaging, but only one respondent made reference to this activity. The rest of them made a choice based

on the brand colours.

There were no images that were matched with service and the seasonal brand position of Morrisons (See Fig 12). This means that service and seasonal brand position have not been recognised by customers and need to be strengthened.

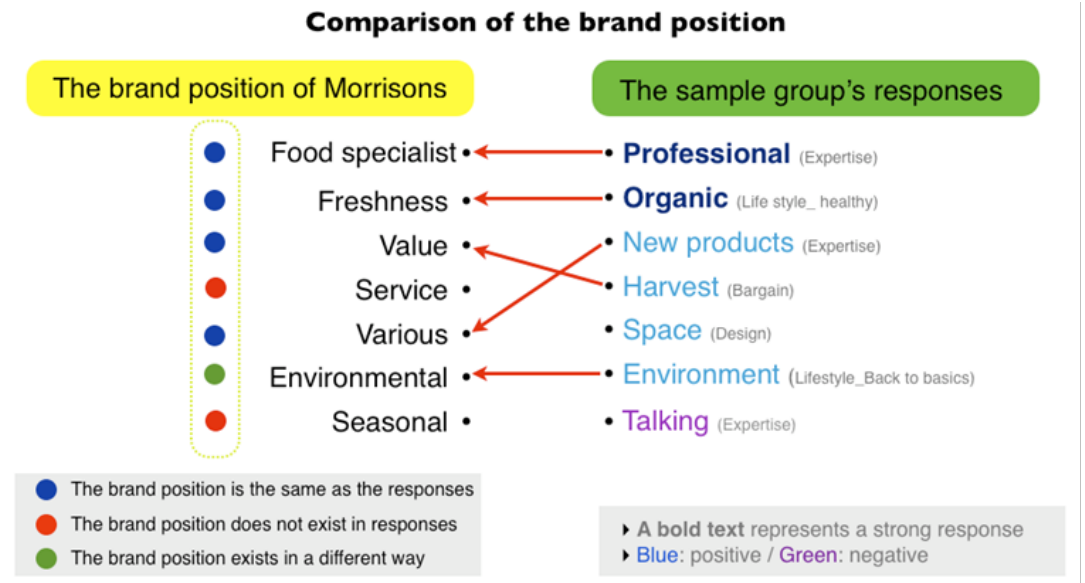


Figure 12. The comparison of the brand position of Morrisons.

THE REFLECTIVE LEVEL

Interviewees answered that it was hard to identify the design elements that evoked their previous memories or perceptions. Four of them, notably all from foreign countries, mentioned products, and their package design. In addition, smells evoked memories of their native countries. While conducting interviews, it was discovered that they viewed themselves as smart customers through finding a new range of products or discounted products.

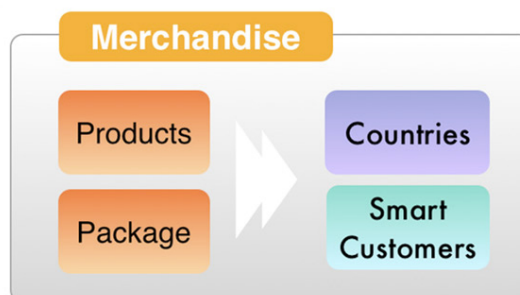


Figure 13. The sample groups responses' on the reflective level.

There are three main sectors that provide strong emotional feelings (see Fig 14).

- The fruit & vegetables sector
- Fresh to go and the deli sector
- Oven baked goods sector

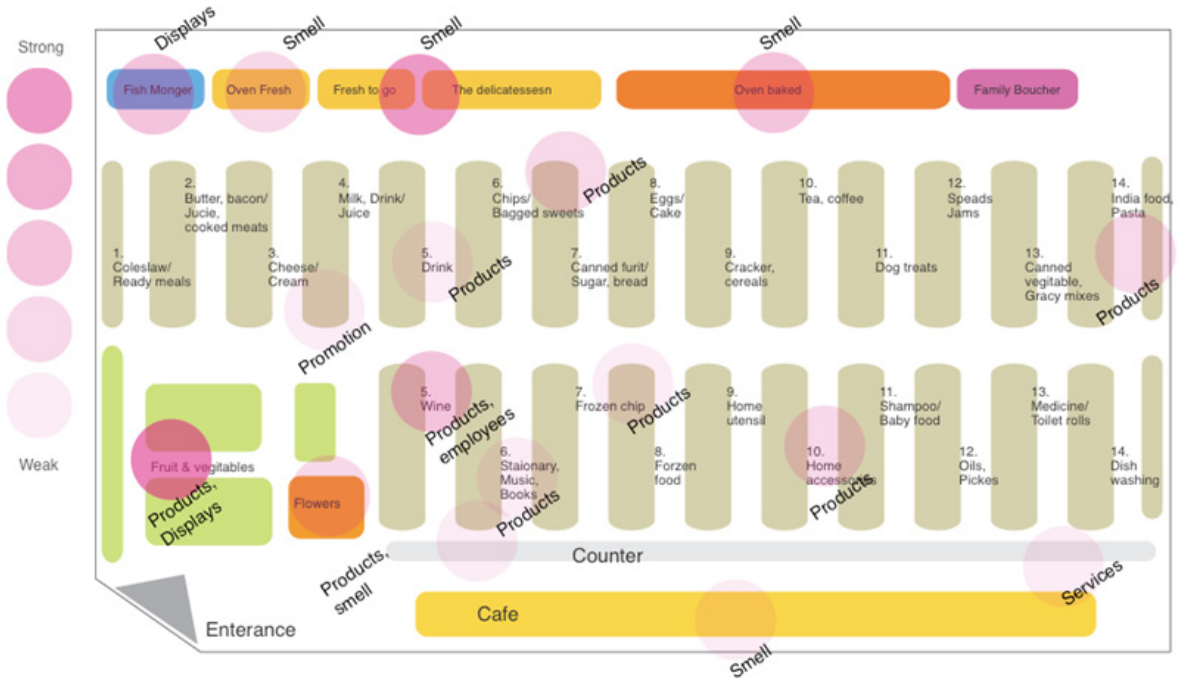


Figure 14. The sectors where the sample groups received emotional feelings in Morrisons.

The chosen sectors that the sample group cited as having the strongest emotional impact provided more emotional elements than other sectors. This was not only in providing a sensory experience, for instance the smell of oven baked products, but also the way of displaying products or products. These all play a vital role in creating emotional sectors in Morrisons.

DISCUSSION

Emotions involved in the customer experience have become a vital

object of study in design. However, the majority of studies are focused on how a product's appearance influences the users' experience, not on the brand or the retail environment. Although all of the studies regarding emotions mention that emotions play an important role in customer behaviour, there are no clear explanations on how we can evaluate emotions.

Through the emotional mapping tool, we can gain an insight into what positive and negative emotional design elements are in a retail store. It also explains how customers understand the brand vision that triggers functional emotional responses. Lastly, the design elements that are linked to customer experience in a retail store have been understood.

In order to create an emotionally powerful retail environment, there should be more understanding of customer emotions regarding brands. However customers never say what they want or what they feel.

By making customers describe their emotions, brand managers and designers can get more significant feedback in terms of their design outcomes. Both the narrated data collected and the analysis method play an essential role in remodelling a better retail environment for customers.

CONCLUSION

The emotional mapping tool has been developed to provide brand managers with the clue that design elements can be evaluated from the customers' point of view, through three emotional levels. Design, brand and emotions are intangible and so complex that it is believed that measuring these values is impossible. However if customers are asked to narrate each design element in a retail store based on emotional design theory, they can not only respond with their immediate impressions of design elements, but they can also seek out those design elements which have stuck in their minds.

By ordering senses, customers can form a memory of each retail store

differently. Even if sight is the most immediately powerful sense that influences customers' emotions, other senses such as smell and sound can also play an important role in providing brand experience to the customer in a retail store.

One of the most important findings was the evaluation of the sample group's feelings. On the visceral level, by comparing all the design elements in a retail store, the positive and negative elements that evoke emotions in general can be discovered. On the behavioural level, by comparing interviewees' chosen images, whether or not the brand vision has been clearly demonstrated to customers can be evaluated. If not, we can ascertain which messages which aim to reflect the brand vision have not been delivered. On the reflective level, there are no sure answers, but it has been found that people try to link their previous memories with products.

The three levels need to be analysed in different ways, but finally it provides us with the big picture of current retail stores that explains how customers experience the retail environment on an emotional level.

The emotional mapping tool presented in this paper is an example of the practical use of the three levels of emotions. Based on emotional design theory, the tool can help brand managers and designers to trace customers' experience and assess the overall retail environment.

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