

RECONSIDERING RETAIL DESIGN EDUCATION universiteit hasselt today's challenges and objectives

KNOWLEDGE IN ACTION

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Retail has always been a highly competitive sector. More and more retailers need to respond to the challenges caused by e-commerce, digitalisation, omni-channel in retail and the consumer's changing shopping behaviour. From the perspective of retail design, it is the retail designer's task to translate retailers' objectives and brand DNA into successful concepts. In doing so, designers should know the potential consumer and their needs and have an understanding of the developments in society and the market. The practice of retail design is challenged by current transitions in retail since today's retail designers need to think beyond the walls of the physical store and integrate other digital touchpoints of the customer journey. Designing a commercial space entails more than merely the design of functional and aesthetic spatial elements. Retail designers go through an interdisciplinary design process as they orchestrate retail design variables related to interior design, architecture, product design, graphic design and recently also digital design. Moreover, they combine designerly skills with knowledge from fields such as marketing, branding, communication and the social sciences. Therefore, the field requires highly skilled retail designers who are able to get a grip on this complex game of interactions.

The objective is to understand how future retail designers should be trained in order to cope in a holistic way with increasing interdisciplinarity, complexity and digitalisation. We want to identify a retail designer's current and future required skills and knowledge to manage the design process. Thereupon, we want to gain better insights in the retail design process in order to understand how this process can be translated into a retail design methodology for the retail design studio.

The retail design process model

RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the retail design process of today's retail designers?

OBJECTIVE

Understanding the retail design process from the perspective of today's retail designer was one of the objectives of the first research phase. This resulted in a graphical model which reflects a dynamic and ongoing retail design process with the integration of spatial, graphical and digital & online applications. The process is centered around the retailer's brand DNA and is divided into 6 phases which include the main design activities. Furthermore, the model illustrates the interactions between the external drivers and the retail design process.

The model will be used together with our interview findings about the current and future retail designer's required skills and knowledge, to develop a holistic retail design methodology for the retail design studio. Therefore, the model will be completed with design methods and substantiated by learning theories.

METHODOLOGY

- literature review:** professional and academic sources about the retail design process
- first retail design process model:** based on literature findings
- validation of retail design process model:** 17 semi-structured interviews with senior and junior retail designers of 9 retail design agencies in Belgium and the Netherlands.
- interview analysis:** focus on respondent's feedback on the model together with their description of their own design process and methods.
- finalising retail design process model:** the original model was compared, reviewed and adapted based on findings of the interview.

LEGEND

- EXTERNAL INFLUENCES**
have an influence on the consumer, the market and the retailer and eventually the retail design process
- THE MARKET**
reflects the competitors and the current market trends
- THE CONSUMER**
and the current consumer trends
- THE RETAILER**
with in the center the retailer's brand DNA or identity
- THE RETAIL DESIGN PROCESS**
reflects the 6 design phases and main design activities centered around the retailer and his brand DNA

