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## Designing Retail & Services Futures

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## Editorial: Designing Retail & Services Futures

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**Abstract:** Design has been used since the creation of commercial enterprises and it is recognized for its importance of value creation, especially in forming associations with customers. Also in research, design and the value of it has been a subject of study for many years and from many different disciplines (ranging from product design to marketing, business economics, service design, management, environmental psychology, (interior)architecture, etc), but in a rather fragmented way, and with each their own research methods. However, recent developments, that have been accelerated by the pandemic, show that in practice services are becoming a part of retail and vice versa. It is only natural that the research world follows this trend. This conference track is an effort to bring knowledge and insights on the matter together.

**Keywords:** value; customer experience; design

### 1. Setting the scene

in practice services are becoming a part of retail and vice versa. It is only natural that the research world follows this trend. It all starts from the need of the consumer and to be able to better serve him/her. Whether it be online or offline, for a product or a service or an experience, or all together. Both disciplines look for the added value of design as a differentiation strategy, as a means to make an emotional connection with the consumer, and as a means to radiate the message of the company (their DNA). So, there is a need to bring these disciplines and related knowledge and insights together to calibrate terms and meanings, to understand each other and to work together. All to be able to create more holistic and more encompassing stories (for the customer). The more so because the entire retail sector is under pressure due to the pandemic which highlighted even more the value and need of design. Anyhow this was already the case before the pandemic because consumers are demanding more and more and are coming into contact with an ever-growing arsenal of touch points, all of which need to be designed with the necessary attention. Indeed, the sector needs professionalization and we want to contribute to that. In the years to come, retailers will probably have to deal with a reduced number of customers feeling enticed to visit their



physical stores. Consumers will be looking for more quality shopping contacts when it comes to funshopping. When it comes to shopping for commodities, the need for more 'frictionless' buying customer journeys will heighten, and online shopping will probably grow further. Regarding 'frictionless buying', service design, store lay-out and routing will be key issues to work with: today, existing store lay-outs and routing often create bumps in the in-store journey because the regulation of crowds has never been a key rationale behind the positioning of categories and products. And, the inclusion of services has happened quite hasty under the pressure of the pandemic. Designers are thus facing a new challenge to (re)design all aspects of the retail world, ranging from products to services, and from designing retail stores in all their aspects to assisting retailers and other relevant stakeholders in reflections on the positioning of products and brands. It is clear that interesting times are ahead of us.

## 2. What we can learn

We have gathered four papers that contribute to expanding the knowledge to retail and service design. A first contribution comes from Bharati Das and Sylvia Xihui Liu. In their paper they explore the effect of customer attitude and behaviour forming the Customer Loyalty Matrix to analyze and compare customer loyalty in local, community, and international cafes in Hong Kong. The paper considers the effectiveness of using a non-binary calculation to measure customer loyalty. It identifies two gaps to illustrate the interconnection of consumer attitude to patronage: the need for a non-binary method of calculating consumer loyalty and a new customer perspective in company strategies. On an academic level, this study contributes to the literature and progress of theory development of customer loyalty, **relationship marketing, and value creation.**

A second paper, by Yu-Hui Lu and Hsien-Hui Tang, aims to propose a more practical planning model using **service design thinking** on business process perspectives in the Taiwanese custom **furniture industry**. Indeed, with high-touch service features, this industry has been depending on manual operations, and the inconsistent internal business processes have resulted in the slow progress of digital transformation plans. The study gives insight into how inconsistencies can produce perception gaps between stakeholders. The study advocates that integrating **user-experience strategies and brand value propositions** through service design optimizes business processes.

A third paper is written by hun-An Chang and Chun-Juei Chou. Its main contribution is the construction of a ERRC decision model for service designers to prioritize efforts and resources in redesign of services. **The model is original and innovative as it puts touchpoints in relation to each other and evaluates their impact on the customer.** The paper provides a demonstration of its application through an example. Service designers can assess the touchpoints in the customer journey and redesign to eliminate, reduce, raise, or create individual touchpoints based on the distribution results shown in the model. The ERRC decision model can deconstruct the touchpoints layer by layer to identify the factors that cause customer complaints and incorporate a mechanism for comparison with competitors, making

the overall design of the service more competitive. Moreover, it is applicable to multiple contexts like museum services and retail.

A final paper, by Derrick Yang, Tseng-Ping Chiu and Min-Yuan Ma, discusses a new conceptual framework for ritual experience. It starts with a literature review to then show and explain the framework, applied to the case of Disney. The strength of the paper is the attempt to integrate ritual experiences into service design. The study found that ritual experience is a medium, forming from consumer and service provider interaction.

It is clear that in all four papers the consumer is at the heart, with the common thread the creation of value in service design, retail or otherwise. Every touchpoint is of worth and deserves equal attention in building a relationship with the customer. Add to that the fact that they are looking for a valuable experience and the whole picture of where retail & service design should be heading to in the future becomes clear. The interconnectedness of the two - retail and services - is essential. We are only at the beginning of gathering knowledge and, more specifically, bringing together knowledge that is relevant to both disciplines. As stated in the introduction, the practice is evolving towards a fusion. I hope that with this session we have taken the first steps towards this further development.

About the Author:

**Katlijn Quartier** is an assistant Professor in retail design at the Faculty of Architecture and Arts of Hasselt University, where she is also the academic director of the Retail Design Lab knowledge center. She and the Lab are researching what the store of tomorrow should look like, including the topics experience and sustainability.