

**RETAIL INTERIOR BRANDING; REUSE OF HISTORIC
BUILDINGS AS RETAIL DIFFERENTIATION
STRATEGY**

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Degree of Master of Science in Interior Design

Department of Architecture

University of Moratuwa

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Abstract

Retail spaces are at the forefront of contemporary interior design because they are updated regularly to stay competitive and appealing. Some of the most innovative and interactive interiors can be seen in the retail sector. Retail design seems to boost the discipline of interior design by creating innovative design solutions. Nevertheless until recent time, when it comes to adaptive reuse design, retail seems to fall short to sectors like public buildings or offices. However after the war this situation has drastically changed in Sri Lankan context. This recent phenomenon on retail reuse was implemented as a part of an urban revitalization project to build up city image through preserving of architectural historic buildings.

Today in Sri Lanka it has become a trend that historic colonial buildings without an immediate 'use' are adopted for retail function such as shops, restaurants or bars. These retail-shopping complexes have become successful recreational zones and shopping destinations within a short period of time. Most of the time the retail shops located in these colonial buildings are branded shops with strong brand identities and values.

This dissertation aims research on the tension between heritage and retail branding in historic colonial buildings in Sri Lanka. The first section of this dissertation contextualizes the tension between retail and adaptive reuse design and elaborate on the concept of authenticity as mediator. The Research question is how can retail design respect the historic value of the monument while maintain the retail brand Identity? The focus of this dissertation is reuse of historic buildings that from the scale of the building (the interior) and not from the largest scale (urban dimension).

The dissertation exists of a general approach towards retail-reuse of various historic building types, based on literature review a classification scheme indicating the different buildings strategies that can be suitable for retail-reuse is set up. Specific characteristics of the successful full branded retail are identified and 2 case studies are analyzed in a structured manner and is evaluated on 3 different levels: (1) the typological characteristics and the specific Historic value of the building, (2) the specific qualities of retail branding design and (3) the after-life of the project.

To conclude, recommendations for the Sri Lankan context are set up, based on comparison of literature and case studies. On the one hand, these recommendations could help retail designers in dealing with the complexity of the retail design of a store within a historic building, on the other hand the recommendations could be applied in evaluating retail-reuse projects as currently retail branding exercise, rather retail led strategy towards retail activities in historical buildings. By providing a framework for evaluation, a more open attitude towards retail as new use for historic buildings could be possible.

Keywords; Retail Interior Design, Retail Branding, Adaptive Reuse

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration, copyright statement and the statement of the supervisor.....	i
Acknowledgement.....	ii
Abstract	iii
TABLE OF CONTENT	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Research Question and Objectives.....	3
Structure and Methodology.....	4
Scope and limitations of the study.....	5
CHAPTER 1	
1 RETAIL DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIES.....	6
1.1 Retail Differentiation.....	6
1.1.1 What is retail.....	6
1.1.2 Retail design	6
1.1.3 Retail design discipline.....	7
1.1.4 Retail differentiation.....	8
1.2 Retail Branding As Retail Differentiation.....	9
1.2.1 What is a brand?	10
1.2.2 Brand identity	10
1.2.3 Brand identity and retail interior spaces	11
1.2.4 Defining a brand through retail interior elements.....	13
1.2.5 The key elements of a well-branded interior	14
1.2.6 Designing the physical retail space for branding.....	15
1.3 Retail Differentiation Strategies - Added Values	17
1.3.1 Sustainability	17
1.3.2 Experience Economy	18
1.3.3 Authenticity	20
1.4 Historic Adaptive Reuse As A Retail Differentiation Strategy	22
1.4.1 Historic buildings	22
1.4.2 Adaptive reuse	22

1.5	Adaptive Reuse Of Historic Buidings ; Design Approaches	23
1.5.1	Typological approach	23
1.5.2	Technical approach.....	24
1.5.3	Programmatic approach	24
1.5.4	Strategic approach	24
1.6	Adaptive Reuse Of Historic Building – Retail Interiors Design Strategies.....	25
1.7	Application Of The Design Strategies In Retail Reuse Adaptations	26
1.7.1	Intervention.....	26
1.7.2	Insertion	27
1.7.3	Installation	27
2	RETAIL BRANDING IN HISTORICAL REUSE BUILDINGS	29
2.1	Stakeholders In A Retail Reuse Historic Adaptations	29
2.2	Tension Between Stakeholders In Retail Reuse Historic Adaptations	30
2.2.1	Owners.....	30
2.2.2	Conservators	31
2.2.3	Municipalities of historic towns or urban Development Authorities.....	33
2.2.4	Retailers	33
2.2.5	Designers	34
2.2.6	Users	35
2.3	Authenticity And Branding In Historically Adapted Buildings For Successful Retail Adaptation	36
2.4	Product Authenticity.....	37
2.5	Historically Authentic Interiors And Buildings.....	37
2.6	Historically Authentic Setting Or Area ; Branding The City	39
2.7	Colombo City Regeneration Plan	39
3	CASE STUDIES	42
3.1	Methodology.....	42
3.2	Process Of The Research Design.....	42
3.3	Selection Of Case Studies.....	43
3.4	Method Of Evaluation	45
3.5	Case Study 01 Colombo Racecourse	49
3.5.1	History of Colombo Racecourse.....	49
3.5.2	Conversion of Colombo Racecourse	49
3.5.3	Adaptation of Colombo Racecourse Mini stand Building for commercial	

purpose	50
3.6 The Typology Of The Building	51
3.7 Changers Demanded By The Retail Functions.....	51
3.7.1 Changers in form and design	51
3.8 Material And Substances	56
3.9 Special Conditions Applied To Retail Interior Design.....	58
3.9.1 US Polo Assn.....	60
3.9.2 US Polo Assn Brand Identity.....	60
3.10 Selecting The Race Course Mini Pavilion	63
3.10.1 Design of the Retail Space	63
3.10.2 Challenges	64
3.10.3 Exposure to public.....	64
3.10.4 Limited Space.....	65
3.10.5 The fittings and fixtures.....	65
3.11 Light Dictate Mood And Attention	66
3.12 Evaluation Of The Retail Interior.....	66
3.13 Case Study 02 -The Arcade Independence Square (Auditor General’s Building) 73	
3.13.1 History of Jawatta Asylum.....	73
3.13.2 Conversion of Jawatta Asylum (Auditor General's Building).....	74
3.13.3 Adaptation of the Auditor Generals Building for commercial purpose	75
3.14 The Typology Of The Building.....	79
3.15 Changers Demanded By The Retail Functions	79
3.16 Changers In Form And Design And Material And Substance	79
3.17 Special Conditions Applied To Retail Interior Design.....	81
3.18 Galleria.....	82
3.18.1 Galleria brand identity	82
3.19 Selecting The Archade Independence Square	83
3.20 Design Of The Retail Space	84
3.20.1 Challenges	84
3.20.2 Exposure to public.....	84
3.20.3 Limited Space.....	84
3.20.4 The fittings and fixtures.....	85
3.20.5 Light Dictate Mood and Attention	85
3.21 Evaluation Of The Project Against Specific Qualities Of The Racecourse Mini Stand As An Historic Monument	85

3.21.1	Evaluation of the value of the Interior.....	85
3.22	Evaluation Of The Retail Interior.....	85
4	DISCUSSION.....	93
5	CONCLUSION.....	96
6	REFERANCES.....	101
7	APPENDIX.....	108

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1;	Brand Identity Source; Pinterest.....	11
Figure 2	Apple retail Store interior Source; Ultralinx	12
Figure 3;	Abercrombie and Fltch Figure 4 ;Swarvoski interior.....	12
Figure 5	; Addidas Interior Figure 6; Vans	13
Figure 7	How branding works in a physical store environment and effect on customer behavior (adaptation after the Servicescape model by (Bitner, 1992)).....	14
Figure 8	Retail design from an interior designers view source; Katelijn Q. (2011 ..	16
Figure 9;	Interactive experience model.....	18
Figure 10;	Bookstore Selexyz Dominicanen in Maastricht	21
Figure 11;	flagship store of H&M in Barcelona(additional space),.....	26
Figure 12	Bookstore Selexyz Dominicanen.....	28
Figure 13 ;	The Passage in The Hague Figure 14 Amante Racecourse.....	32
Figure 15;	Apple Store Longdon.....	38
Figure 16;	Apple Store Opera in Paris Figure 17 Apple Store in Amsterdam.....	38
Figure 18;	Dutch hospital Building.....	40
Figure 19;	former marketing department building and fertilizer corporation building	40
Figure 20;	Trace expert city	40
Figure 21	Colombo Zoning Plan 2020.....	41
Figure 22 ;	Process of research design.....	43
Figure 23	the extent of transformation.....	46
Figure 24:	Colombo Racecourse.....	49

Figure 25 The Racecourse Grandstand Building before 2012 renovations	50
Figure 26 Master Plan	50
Figure 27; Original Plan.....	53
Figure 28 After renovation Plan.....	53
Figure 29 Original Elevation.....	54
Figure 30 Elevation after renovation	54
Figure 31 Original Section Figure 32 Section after renovation	54
Figure 33 Section after Renovation.....	55
Figure 34 New Racecourse building.....	57
Figure 35 ;US Polo Brand Identity reflection	62
Figure 36 Cinnamon gardens	73
Figure 37 View from the Independence Square.....	75
Figure 38 Before and after renovation	76
Figure 39 Measure Drawings	76
Figure 40 ; Ground Floor Plan after Renovation	77
Figure 41 First Floor Plan after renovation with Galleria Colored.....	77
Figure 42 The typology of the building	78
Figure 43 Clearing of plastering to identify new additions.....	80
Figure 44 Before and After Renovations	81
Figure 45 Before and after renovations.....	81
Figure 46 Brand Identity reflection.....	83