

İç Mimaride Yaratıcılık Teknikleri: Mağaza Tasarım Sürecinde PICLed Beyin Aktivitesinin Uygulanması

Creativity Techniques in Interior Architecture:

Application of the PICLed Brains Activity in the Store Design Process

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Abstract

Stores are the environments where the brand interacts with the customer and the brand identity is transferred to the customer. In addition to being consistent with the brand identity, the authenticity of store design is very crucial because it has an impact on customer's shopping attitude and perception of the brand. In this article, concepts of branding and store identity are defined and the importance of creativity in store design is acknowledged. With the participation of the junior level students of interior architecture department, the research study as a part of the design studio course and the effects of using the PICLed Brains activity in the store design process are examined. The aim is to encourage inexperienced students with limited inspirational resources to come up with creative ideas for store design despite the limitations brought by the brand identity during the store design process. Through the data obtained from the questionnaire applied to the students at the end of the process, this paper finds that the activity is useful in terms of creativity, researching in different subjects and attaining versatile thinking skills. When student works are examined, it can be said that the PICLed Brains activity allows to encourage creativity and to lead to different ideas rather than restricting and directing students.

Keywords: Design Education, Store Design, Creativity, Interior Architecture Education

Özet

Mağazalar, markanın müşteriyle etkileşime girdiği ve marka kimliğinin müşteriye aktarıldığı ortamlardır. Marka kimliğiyle tutarlı olmanın yanı sıra, mağaza tasarımının orijinalliği de oldukça önemlidir, çünkü müşterinin alışveriş tutumu ve markanın algısı üzerinde tasarımın etkisi vardır. Bu makalede, markalaşma ve mağaza kimliği kavramları tanımlanmış ve mağaza tasarımında yaratıcılığın önemi üzerinde durulmuştur. İç mimarlık bölümü öğrencilerinin katılımıyla, tasarım stüdyosu dersinin bir parçası olarak yapılan bu araştırma çalışmasında PICLed Brains etkinliğinin mağaza tasarım sürecinde kullanılmasının etkileri incelenmiştir. Amaç, sınırlı ilham kaynağı olan deneyimsiz öğrencileri mağaza tasarımı sürecinde marka kimliğinin getirdiği sınırlamalara rağmen mağaza tasarımı için yaratıcı fikirler bulmaya teşvik etmektir. Süreç sonunda öğrencilere uygulanan anketten elde edilen veriler sayesinde etkinliğin yaratıcılık, farklı konularda araştırma yapma ve çok yönlü düşünme becerisi kazanma açısından yararlı olduğu bulunmuştur. Öğrenci çalışmalarını incelendiğinde, PICLed Brains etkinliğinin yaratıcılığı teşvik etmesine ve öğrencileri kısıtlamaktan ve yönlendirmekten ziyade farklı fikirlerin ortaya çıkmasına yol açtığı söylenebilir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Tasarım Eğitim, Mağaza Tasarımı, Yaratıcılık, İç Mimarlık Eğitimi.

Introduction

Stores are the environments in which sales action takes place and the corporate identity is communicated to the consumer. Appropriately, creativity becomes crucial factor in store interiors. Store design projects provides experience to the designer on generating creative solutions considering the constraints revealed by the corporate identity. Therefore, store design projects occupy an important place in interior architecture education.

The aim of this study is to implement an activity to the store design project within the interior architecture design studio course in order to promote creativity. As a result of a research study, with the analyses of survey and student works, it is aimed to have an experience about the chosen activity and lead the way for the further studies. This study gives information about the branding, corporate identity, store identity concepts and the importance of creativity in store design projects. In the sequel the information about the research study and research method takes part. As a result of the study, findings, analyses, discussion and conclusions are presented.

Branding, Corporate Identity and Store Identity Concepts

Branding which is defined as a unique blend of benefits not only simplify the decision-making process of the customers by habits and perceptions but also support both rational and emotional needs of customers (Fifield, 2002: 34-37). Businesses that care for customers provide them with sensory experiences that are memorable and associated with the company's location, products and services (Schmitt and Simonsen 1997). Identity is the whole set of properties that define any entity. The sum of all the signs and qualities that enable the differentiation of the subject constitutes identity (Sabuncuoğlu and Tokol, 2011:35-37). Brand identity creates a strong theme for designers, because identity management is concerned with visual and other sensory experiences (Schmitt and Simonsen, 1997: 80-85).

Corporate identity is how the institution defines itself. In other words, it is the way how the institution presents itself (Sabuncuoğlu and Tokol, 2011:35-37). Corporate design is the visible identity of businesses. Corporate design is defined as the application of the basic features of the institution's identity to visual design with the help of design fields such as graphic design and interior architecture (Melewar and Saunders, 1999: 583). Today, the concept of brand goes beyond being a two-dimensional and becomes three-dimensional with the store's interior design (Kent, 2003: 131-142). One of the definitions of the brand is any name, color, term, sign, symbol and design that the institution uses to differentiate itself. Brand is the combination of all these elements and the name is the only element that should not change. Other elements are open to change (Clifton and Simmons, 2004:35-42).

Brand choice comes from expectations and experiences; attracts a specific group of customers and it is necessary to protect the brand's interaction with this defined group for an in-depth and steady success (Fifield, 2002: 34-37). The identity of the store gains importance at the level of protecting the interaction with the customer. Store identity is the holistic perception of the store perceived by the customers. Addressing the customers' feelings and thoughts; it affects customers' shopping attitudes and loyalty (Keaveney and Hunt, 1992: 167; Martineau,1958: 47-55). When store identity is not clearly defined or it is entangled, it becomes difficult to manage store strategies to have a positive impact on store identity (Visser vd.,2006: 49). The construction of a store identity; incorporates abstract and concrete elements. This identity is described as a multidimensional concept emerging through the combination of the functional qualities of the store and the psychological qualities that the customer associates with the store (Kent, 2003: 131-142).

Lindquist defines 9 criteria for store identity. These are product, service, customer community, physical qualities, accessibility, promotion, store atmosphere, institutional factors and satisfaction after sales (Lindquist, 1974/1975: 29-38). All these nine elements can directly and indirectly have an

impact on store design. Physical qualities and the store atmosphere are the factors which are directly concerned with interior design of the store.

The Importance of Creativity in Store Design

As environments where the sales action takes place, the stores constitute the setting for the brand to actively meet with the consumer. Brand identity is communicated to customers via stores. While all kinds of visual design components such the packaging of a brand, employees' clothing and logos affect the brand image, the building and interior design of the brand are also inevitable elements of its visual identity (Din,2000:58).

In merchandising, design refers to the space in which customers shop and this space is like a package of brand in terms of providing pre-information to consumers. This space conveys a message to the customer and good design shows a comprehensive and coordinated approach to everything that the customer sees (Kent, 2003: 131-142; Odabaşı and Oyman, 2002: 25; Michell, 1986: 38). The material, structure, color and aesthetic values used in architectural and interior design process of the store design; must overlap with the brand identity and the brand identity must be accurately conveyed to the consumer. Thus, store design should create a consistent visual image in consumers' minds by creating a visual identity integrated with brand identity (Odabaşı and Oyman, 2002: 25).

Store design, an area where visual impact is as crucial as functionality, is essential –in terms of business competition– for retailers to increase sales and satisfy their customer's demands rather than their needs (Kent, 2003:131-142). The significance of store design for brands cannot be denied. The only way to distinguish one store from the other is to present the customer an original store image (Visser vd., 2006: 52). As a result, creativity is very important in store design.

In design process, creativity is expressed by the occurrence of an important event called "creative leap" (Dorst and Cross, 2001:425; Demirkan, 2010: 59-59). However, there is no guarantee that a creative leap will occur in the design process. Due to the complex nature of creativity it is difficult to perfectly define creativity and to qualify the emerging solution idea as creative (Dorst and Cross, 2001:425). Creative design emerges when both the definition of the problem and the solution ideas are developed and examined together. It is defined as the process of continuous analysis, synthesis and evaluation between two theoretical domains; problem field and solution field (Dorst and Cross: 2001: 434). Cross (1997: 435) notes that creativity in design is construct a bridge between the problem area and the solution area via identifying the key concept, rather than a creative leap between the problem and the solution.

Successful concepts are the fundamentals of creative and noteworthy designs for which the company or individuals will strive to preserve. For this reason, with the hope of reaching creative ideas, the emphasis on experimentation of different methods and techniques to reveal new ideas enhances day by day. However, the lack of a theoretical basis and empirical findings that would allow insight on the effects of the use of methods, lead to the formation of major criticisms against these methods (Goldschmidt and Sever, 2011:139).

Considerable amount of information about the problem area needs to be obtained and synthesized in order to construct the initial design concept. It is considered that to create a successful concept it is beneficial to have clear constraints and targets determined at the initial phase or readable clues that allows the identification of the problem (Darke, 1979: 36-44; Goldschmidt and Sever, 2011: 139). These inputs, which are expected to be useful in the initial phase, are described as "stimulants" in this study.

Stimulants are essential for several reasons. First, if the problem is so new and unusual, the designer may not even have the resources to use for the problem in memory, even if he/she is experienced. Second, there may not be enough time to search for information in memory or in different sources when the problem needs to be resolved very quickly. In the third case, the designer is inexperienced

and the inspirational resources available are limited. In all these situations it is regarded that the designer can benefit from exposure to stimulants, which can be a starting point, can trigger the task and make research for ideas more effective and faster (Goldschmidt and Sever, 2011: 149).

Creativity is a matter of concern for every profession, for students of architecture it is particularly relevant. In university and in business life architectural students need creativity. First, they should learn and experience creativity in projects developed in university. In undergraduate architectural programs, techniques and strategies be taught to develop creativity skills (Özgel Felek and Gül, 2019:101-102)

In the research study to be made within the scope of this research, the purpose is to implement an activity in design studio course in order to promote creativity using stimulants. As a result, it is expected to obtain information about implementing this activity in order to encourage the ability to create innovative design proposals in design studio and to be a guide for further design studies. The research study carried out with the participation of the junior level students in Interior Architecture department. For students who work on a different subject each semester, store design is a new subject and they do not have enough background knowledge in this regard. In addition, their inspirational resources are limited because they are inexperienced. For these reasons, it is anticipated that stimulants may be beneficial for the students to put forth more powerful and creative design ideas.

Research Study

This study was carried out at Doğuş University, Faculty of Arts and Design, Department of Interior Architecture during the spring semester of 2017-2018 in ICM 302 Design Studio IV course. Within the course, each student is expected to design a store interior and a shop window for a brand he/she has chosen.

Goldschmidt and Sever (2011) state that design studio courses cannot teach students how to develop strong ideas. They anticipate that raising awareness about design preliminary research, by exposing students to some stimulants, will improve their ability to produce persuasive concepts. VanGundy (2005) states that today's traditional problem-solving techniques may be insufficient and ineffective, and in order to keep up with change, creativity techniques that can be adapted to the situation must be sought.

Within the scope of this study, run with thirteen students, the "PICLeD Brains" activity was chosen among the activities listed in the book entitled 101 Activities for Teaching Creativity and Problem Solving written by VanGundy (2005). This activity is based on the free association ability of brain when come up against something new. A stream of mental association occurs when the designer first presented with a new world. These associations which are not related to the design problem has the potential to spark unique ideas (VanGundy: 2005: 92-97). The reason of selection of this activity by the instructor is that the activity allows for individual work and it is a suitable activity to be applied in the store interior design project with its headings and subheadings. At the beginning of the design process, during the process of defining the design problem, students were asked to select brands and plans that they would work with pleasure. After the selected brands and plans were presented and clarified in front of the whole class, the students were informed about the creativity activity called "PICLeD Brains". The activity was integrated into the process during the concept development phase. With the help of this activity, it was aimed to encourage students to come up with creative store concepts by exposing them to various stimulants.

Students were faced with this activity for the first time. When applying the activity, the four main titles were written on the board and the keywords below the main titles were determined with the participation of the instructor and the students. At this stage, it was observed that the students enjoyed to participating in the process and brainstorming. Thus, it was aimed for students see themselves as part of the process and to own the activity. The keywords are given in Figure 1.

TRY TO	MAKE IT	THINK OF	TAKE AWAY /ADD
Move	Circular	Staircase	Cafe
Copy	Soft	Showcase	Children Space
Rotate	Faulted	Mirror	Workshop Space
Scale	Geometric	Lighting	Garden
Mirror	Transparent	Floor	Recreation Space
	Dark	Ceiling	Library
	Bright	Column	
	Colorful	Cabin	
	Asymmetrical	Circulation	
	Symmetrical	Cash Point	
		Equipments	

Figure 1: Keywords Set When the PICLed Brains Activity Was Applied / **Source:** Gül 2018

It is expected that each student will select a keyword from at least two titles and give direction to the store design by taking these keywords into consideration. Figure 2 shows the keywords selected by students.

Student	TRY TO	MAKE IT	THINK OF	TAKE AWAY /ADD
1		Colorful	Staircase	Garden
2		Soft	Staircase	
3	Move	Asymmetrical	Staircase	
4			Lighting	Cafe
5		Colorful		Garden
6		Colorful		Children Space
7		Transparent	Lighting	
8		Dark	Circulation	
9		Faulted		Recreation Space
10	Mirror			Cafe
11			Cabin	Cafe
12		Circular		Recreation Space
13		Geometric	Ceiling	Children Space

Figure 2: Keywords Selected by Students as the PICLed Brains Activity Was Applied / **Source:** Gül, 2018

When Figure 2 is examined, it is observed that only three of the thirteen students selected three keywords. The remaining ten students found two keywords enough. There were no students that chose four keywords. In the light of this data, it can be said that students tend to choose a minimum number of stimulants, and it can be predicted that these stimulants are restrictive.

The students went through a different experience when the concept of “PICLed Brains” was integrated into the concept development phase of the process while designing the store within Design Studio IV course. When this activity was carried out, the selected keywords were regarded to act as “stimulants”. With the help of these stimulants, a contribution was expected for the students to come up with more creative and strong ideas in the phase of concept development in design studio course.

For the application of the PICLed Brains activity in the store design project to be evaluated by the students who have experienced this activity, three research questions have been identified:

1) Was the use of this activity beneficial to the students?

2) What are the benefits and challenges of this activity for students?

3) Do students want to use the activity they have learned in this study in their subsequent studies? How do they apply?

In order to find answers to these research questions, survey research and evaluation research are implemented. At the end of the fourteen-week store design period, the answers to the research questions were investigated by the questionnaire applied to the students. This questionnaire includes one 5-point Likert scale question to determine usefulness of the “PICLed Brains” activity for students. It also includes three open-ended question to determine student’s opinion. In addition to the questionnaire study, student projects were examined individually and the effects of the PICLed Brains activity were observed and interpreted.

Findings

The questions directed to the students, the data obtained as the result of the answers given by the students and three sample student works are as follows.

Question 1

The following question prepared with 5-point Likert scale was asked to students in order to test the usefulness of the “PICLed Brains” activity during the concept development stage while designing the store and find answer to the first research question.

- Please evaluate this activity.

Not useful at all		Neutral		Very useful
1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

When the answers given were examined, it was revealed that the activity was perceived as neither useful nor useless by two students who marked the neutral option. While eight students selected the activity as useful, three students indicated that the activity was very useful. The average value obtained is 4,077.

Question 2 and Question 3

Within the scope of the survey, second and third questions are asked to determine the benefits and challenges of the PICLed Brains activity for the students and to find answer to the second research question. The answers given by the students are as follows.

- What is the most beneficial part of this activity?

When the answers given by the students to this open-ended question were examined, it was observed that the six students found this activity useful in terms of creativity, development of different ideas besides usual ideas, versatile thinking and research on different subjects. The two students stated that they found the activity useful in terms of coping with difficult stimulants and constraints. While the two students found the activity useful in terms of thinking and projecting on the project, three students stated that they found the activity useful in terms of group work.

- What is the most challenging part of this activity?

Eight students had indicated that the stimulants chosen were restrictive and that they found it difficult to apply these stimulants to store design projects. While three students emphasized that the activity did not have a challenging part and it was actually pro-developing, one student stated that it was difficult to move away from the initial idea that the student had come up with at the beginning of the design process. A student stated that he was unable to form an idea at the beginning, but he was able to develop ideas as he examined examples related to the stimulants.

Question 4

This open-ended research question asked to determine if the students prefers to implement this activity in their subsequent projects and to find answer to the third research question.

- Would you consider implementing this activity on your next projects? How do you implement it?

When the answers given by the students to this open-ended question were examined, it was revealed that eight students thought about implementing the activity in their subsequent projects in the same way. One of these students stated that with the implementation of this activity, a project more appropriate to real-life had been done and that this is what it should be.

Two students stated that they did not consider implementing the activity in their subsequent projects. While two students stated that they would choose more stimulants, a student stated that he would consider applying it by making experiments on different plans.

Student Works

Within the scope of the project, it is anticipated that the student's selected keywords and emerging designs will give an idea about the results of applying the PICLeD Brains activity during the concept development phase.

Visualization methods used in designing interior spaces are grouped as sketch, drawing, perspective, modeling, model and photomontage/collage, animation/simulation techniques and finally virtual reality applications (Özgel Felek, 2019:15). Within the scope of this project, the students made their presentations by digitizing their sketches, drawings and perspective drawings.

Student 1's store design completed with the use of stimulants Make it colorful, Think of staircase and Add garden can be viewed in Figure 3.



Figure 3: Store Design Completed by Student 1 within Design Studio IV Course
Source: Gül, 2018

Student 1 designed a store for a company selling personal care products such as soap, cream... etc. When the company's existing stores were examined, it was observed that pastel color tones were used, which would generally not be overwhelming for the customer. There are shops in light gray, white and cream tones, and it can be said that the corporate identity does not restrict the designer much in terms of color. Student 1 used a light gray color throughout the store design and applied the Make it colorful stimulant by choosing a color to accompany the gray. The selected rose gold tone was used in the shop window, in the hand washing unit located in the product trial area and in the staircase. Considering the Think of staircase stimulant, it is observed that the student emphasized the staircase with the use of the color. The student used the Add garden stimulant by designing a workshop area in the garden. Thus, it can be said that the store has an innovative approach by offering an area where customers can experience soap making.

Student 2's store design completed with the use of stimulants Make it soft and Think of staircase can be viewed in Figure 4.

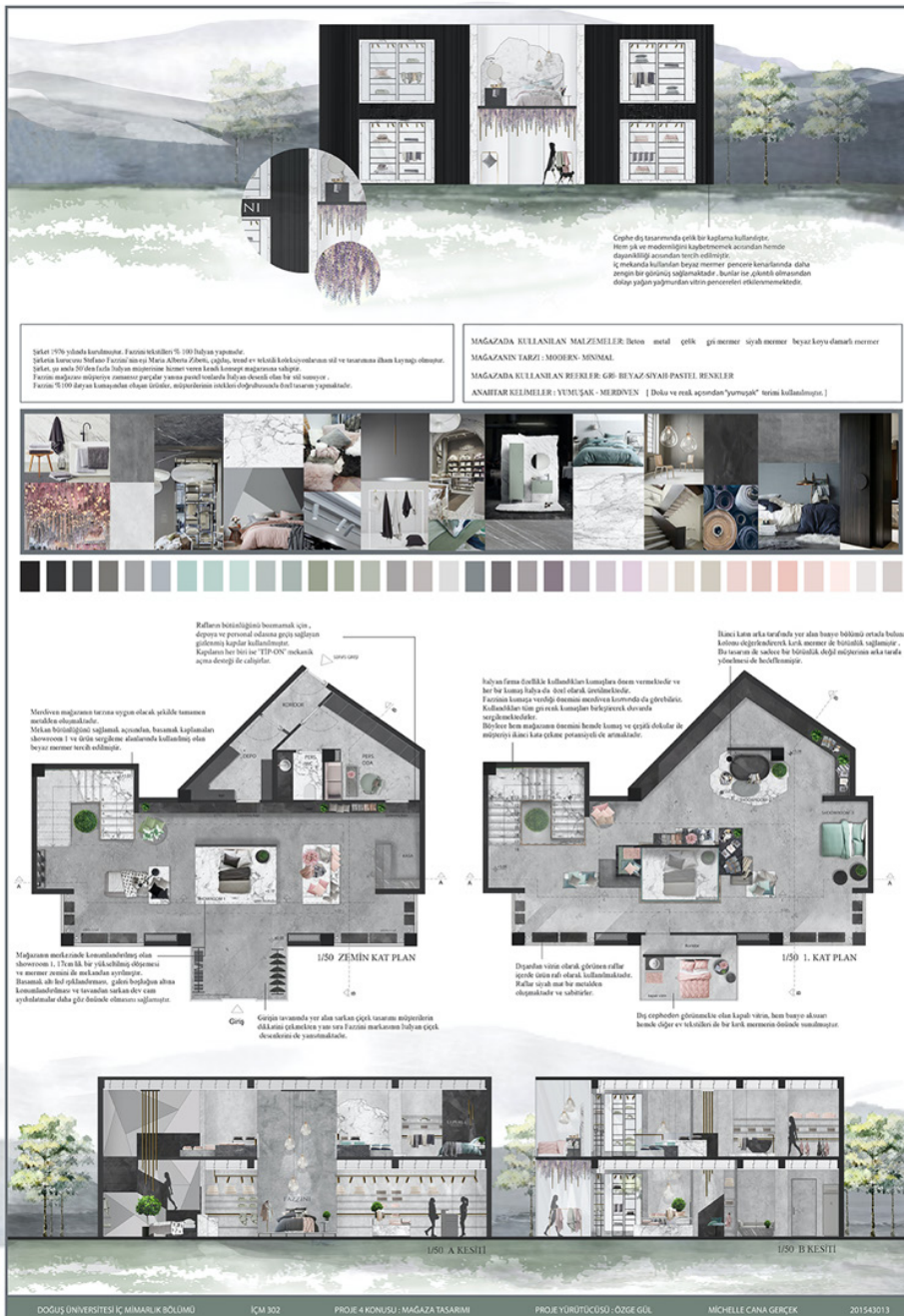


Figure 4: Store Design Completed by Student 2 within Design Studio IV Course

Source: Gül, 2018

In the store design for an Italian textile company, Student 2 had implemented the significance given to fabric by the brand to the staircase. Departing from the Make it soft stimulant, the student had designed a soft panel on the staircase wall with fabrics in gray tones. In addition to creating a soft texture with this panel, she also used the Think of staircase stimulant in the design by emphasizing the staircase.

Student 3's store design completed with the use of stimulants Try to move, Make it asymmetrical and Think of staircase can be viewed in Figure 5.



Figure 5: Store Design Completed by Student 3 within Design Studio IV Course
Source: Gül, 2018

Student 3 had designed a store where the products of a designer whose designs vary within a wide range including objects and furniture, restaurants and hotels, lighting and scent designs. When the current stores of the brand were examined, it was observed that the interior of the store, where many different furniture and lighting were presented in various colors, textures and form, was designed quite simply. Departing from this data, Student 3 had used a neutral color tone and texture on the walls and floors in the store interior and had brought the products to the foreground.

The use of metals as materials and amorphous forms in the brand's furniture and lighting designs attract the attention. When Student 3 was designing the store, he interpreted the staircase rails with an amorphous asymmetrical form and carried it to the top floor ceiling. As this amorphous railing made from copper plate emphasizes staircase, it is also in harmony with the products of the brand. Departing from the stimulants Try to move, Make it asymmetrical and Think of staircase, it is observed that the idea of the railing is the focal point of the store design and it contributes to the creation of a creative store concept.

Analyze

The findings of student's answers to the questions gave great insight into the PICLeD Brains activity and lead to the answers of the research questions. The analyses of the findings are as follows.

The first question prepared with 5-point Likert scale and the average value obtained from this

question is 4,077. Considering that the value “5” states that the PICLed Brains activity is very useful during the concept development stage, it can be said that students who participated in this study found the PICLed Brains activity useful.

Stores are places where the brand meets its customers, and for that reason store designs need to be consistent with the brand’s corporate identity. In this context, there are various limitations that corporate identity brings along in store design projects. It is quite challenging to design a creative store that does not ignore these constraints and is suitable for both the brand identity and different than brand’s standard stores. At this point, it is very important for the students who do not have adequate background in store design to find this activity useful in developing different ideas by going beyond the usual thinking. When student’s answers to the second question are examined, it can be said that most of the students found PICLed Brains activity useful in terms of creativity, development of unique ideas, versatile thinking and inspiration about new subjects. Additionally, some students found PICLed Brains activity useful in terms of group work and coping with constraints.

In addition to the constraints brought by the corporate identity in the store design project, it was observed that the implementation of the selected stimulants in the PICLed Brains activity also made completion difficult for the students. The third question is about the challenging aspects of the PICLed Brains activity. When student’s answers to the third question are examined it can be determined that most of the students had a hard time with the restriction of the stimulants. However, as pointed out by Darke 1979 and Goldschmidt and Sever 2011, clear constraints and targets are helping in creating successful concepts. Although the students at the initial stage of the process had a difficult time, they thought that at the end of the process the activity contributed positively to their projects and indicated that they would implement this activity in their subsequent projects.

When student works are examined, it is seen that the Think of staircase stimulant is common. Student 1 interpreted the Think of staircase stimulant with the Make it colorful stimulant and emphasized the staircase with color. Student 2 made a soft panel on the wall of the staircase, departing from the Make it soft stimulant. Therefore, she had used the Think of staircase stimulant in her design. Student 3 used Think of staircase stimulant to design a railing to emphasize the staircase. In the design of the railing, the student was inspired by Try to move and Make it asymmetrical stimulants. It is observed that the Think of staircase stimulant, which was common in the three works, was interpreted very differently by each student.

Discussion and Conclusions

The aim of this study is to gain experience on using a creativity technique to support creativity in store design process in Design Studio IV course. The activity called “PICLed Brains” in VanGundy’s (2005) book entitled 101 Activities for Teaching Creativity and Problem Solving had been integrated into the concept development phase of the store design project. Through the implementation of the activity, various stimulants were included in the process, aiming to help Design Studio IV students –who are inexperienced, unfamiliar with the problem, and lacking adequate background– to develop stronger and more creative store design ideas.

When the data obtained from the questionnaire applied to the students at the end of the process are examined, most of the students reach the conclusion that the activity is useful in terms of creativity, researching in different subjects and attaining versatile thinking skills. The point that students find most challenging about the activity is the restriction of stimulants. Most of the students stated that they plan to implement this activity in their subsequent works.

When student works are examined, it is clearly observed that stimulants give students an idea about store design and concept development. In all the three examples of student works, the Think of staircase stimulant is common but each student interprets this stimulant in his/her own way. From these examples, it can be said that the PICLed Brains activity allows to promote creativity and to lead

to different ideas rather than restricting and directing students. When designing the store, there are limitations that the corporate identity brings with it. Despite these limitations, in order to create different and creative store design ideas, it can be said that the use of PICLed Brains activity can provide the students with different perspectives.

It should be remembered that the PICLed Brains activity was evaluated by the student group designing the stores during the Design Studio IV course and student works were interpreted by the author. This activity is applicable to a wide range of topics in interior architectural design. Different results can be obtained by testing the same activity on different project subjects and student groups at different levels. The significance of experimenting with new activities and adopting innovative approaches to encourage creativity in interior architecture education is vast. The aim of this study is to serve as a preliminary example of the application of new creativity techniques. In future studies it is recommended to create more organized research environment with more participants and to make protocol analyzes for more comprehensive evaluation of the PICLed Brains activity.

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Uzun Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı tasarım stüdyosu dersinde mağaza tasarım sürecinde yaratıcılığı destekleyici bir metodun kullanımı hakkında deneyim elde etmektir. Mağazalar, satış eyleminin gerçekleştiği mekanlar olarak markanın tüketici ile aktif olarak bulunduğu ortamlardır. Marka kimliği, mağazalar aracılığıyla müşteriye aktarılmaktadır. Bir markanın ambalajı, çalışanlarının kıyafeti, logosu gibi her türlü görsel tasarım bileşeni marka imajını etkilerken markanın içinde bulunduğu yapı ve iç mimari tasarımı da görsel kimlik konusunda göz ardı edilemez unsurlar konumundadır. Görsel etkinin fonksiyonellik kadar önem kazandığı bir alan olan mağaza tasarımı, mağazacıların satışları artırma ve müşterilerin ihtiyaçlarından öte isteklerini karşılama konularında rekabet açısından önemlidir. Markalar için mağaza tasarımının önemi yadsınamaz. Bir mağazayı diğerlerinden ayırmanın tek yolu müşteriye özgün bir mağaza imajı sunmaktır. Bu aşamada da mağaza tasarımında yaratıcılık önem kazanmaktadır. Cross (1997: 430) tasarımında yaratıcılığın problem ile çözüm arasında bir yaratıcı sıçrama olmaktan ziyade, anahtar konsepti belirleme yoluyla problem alanı ile çözüm alanı arasında bir köprü kurmak olduğunu belirtmektedir.

Bu çalışma kapsamında yapılacak araştırmada, tasarımcılar İç Mimarlık bölümü üçüncü sınıf öğrencileridir. Öğrencilerin iç mimarlık eğitimleri kapsamında aldıkları dördüncü tasarım stüdyosu dersidir. Her dönem farklı bir konu çalışan öğrenciler için, satış çevresi tasarımı yeni bir konudur ve bu konuda yeterli altyapıya sahip değildirler. Bunun yanı sıra tecrübesiz oldukları için kullanabilecekleri ilham verici kaynaklar deposu da sınırlıdır. Bu nedenlerle uyarıcıların; daha güçlü ve yaratıcı tasarım fikirleri ortaya koymaları konusunda öğrencilere faydalı olabileceği öngörülmektedir. Vangundy (2005) tarafından yazılan "101 Activities for Teaching Creativity and Problem Solving" isimli kitapta yer alan "Pickled Brains" adlı metot mağaza tasarım projesinde, konsept geliştirme aşamasında çalışmaya entegre edilmiştir. Metot kullanımı ile çeşitli uyarıcılar sürece dahil edilerek, tecrübesiz, probleme yabancı, yeterli altyapıya sahip olmayan öğrencilerin daha güçlü ve yaratıcı mağaza tasarım fikirleri ortaya çıkarmalarına destek olmak amaçlanmıştır.

Sürecin sonunda öğrencilere uygulanan anketten elde edilen veriler incelendiğinde, öğrencilerin büyük çoğunluğunun yaratıcılık, farklı konularda araştırmalar yapma ve çok yönlü düşünme becerisi kazanma açısından metodu faydalı buldukları sonucuna ulaşılmaktadır. Öğrencilerin metot ile ilgili en zorlayıcı buldukları nokta ise anahtar kelimelerin kısıtlayıcılığıdır. Öğrencilerin çoğu metodu sonraki çalışmalarında da kullanmayı düşündüklerini belirtmişlerdir.

Öğrenci çalışmaları incelendiğinde uyarıcıların mağaza tasarımı ve konsept geliştirme konusunda öğrencilere fikir verdiği açıkça görülmektedir. Üç örnek çalışmada da “merdiveni düşün” uyarıcısı ortaktır. Öğrenci 1, “merdiveni düşün” uyarıcısını, “renkli yap” uyarıcısı ile birlikte yorumlamış ve merdiveni renk ile vurgulamıştır. Öğrenci 2 ise “yumuşak yap” uyarıcısından yola çıkarak merdiven duvarına yumuşak bir pano yapmıştır. Böylece “merdiveni düşün” uyarıcısını da tasarımında kullanmıştır. Öğrenci 3 ise “merdiveni düşün” uyarıcısını kullanarak merdiveni vurgulamak amacıyla bir trabzan tasarlamıştır. Trabzanın tasarımında ise “taşımayı dene” ve “asimetrik yap” uyarıcılarından ilham almıştır. Üç çalışmada da ortak olan “merdiveni düşün” uyarıcısının öğrenciler tarafından çok farklı yorumlandığı gözlemlenmektedir. Bu örneklerden yola çıkarak metodun öğrencileri kısıtlayarak yönlendirmekten ziyade değişik fikirler ortaya çıkmasına olanak tanıdığı söylenebilir. Mağaza tasarımı yapılırken kurumsal kimliğin beraberinde getirdiği kısıtlamalar bulunmaktadır. Bu kısıtlamalara rağmen farklı ve yaratıcı mağaza tasarım fikirleri yaratmak amacıyla “Pickled Brains” adlı metodun kullanımının bu çalışma kapsamında öğrencilere değişik bakış açıları kazandırdığı söylenebilir.

Unutulmamalıdır ki bu çalışma kapsamında Pickled Brains metodu tasarım stüdyosu dersi sürecinde mağaza tasarımı yapan 13 kişilik bir öğrenci grubu tarafından değerlendirilmiş ve öğrenci çalışmaları yazar tarafından yorumlanmıştır. İç mimarlık eğitiminde yaratıcılığı teşvik etmek amacıyla yeni metodların denenmesi ve yenilikçi yaklaşımların benimsenmesinin önemi büyüktür. Bu çalışmanın yeni metodları deneme açısından başlangıç niteliğinde bir örnek teşkil etmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Gelecek çalışmalarda daha organize bir şekilde hazırlanan ve daha çok katılımcının olduğu bir araştırma ortamı oluşturulması ve protokol analizleri yapılarak metodun daha kapsamlı değerlendirilmesi önerilmektedir.
