

BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STORE DESIGN AND IMAGE THROUGH AN INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE PROJECT

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Abstract

Contemporary shopping culture focuses on fashion and trendy products, often at the expense of addressing consumers' essential needs and requirements. The abundance of alternative products in the marketplace presents considerable challenges to customer satisfaction. To tackle these challenges, researchers across various academic fields have emphasized the significance of store image. Establishing an effective store image requires adopting customer-centric strategies and meticulously designing the store environment—critical elements in attracting consumers. This study explores the relationship between store image and the design process, proposing that an effectively designed store interior can capture consumer attention and offer valuable guidance. The study specifically examines the design and implementation of a retail establishment specializing in doors and kitchen products, located in the Meram district of Konya province. An empirical investigation was conducted using methods such as observation, interviews, photography, measurements, and project planning, all carried out systematically. The findings suggest that incorporating design elements—such as location, colour, lighting, materials, air conditioning, and product displays—can result in a store design that not only directs consumers effectively but also enhances the overall corporate image. Ultimately, this study aims to establish a foundational framework for future research into the relationship between store design and image.

Keywords: Store Design, Application, Image, Interior Design Project.

MAĞAZA TASARIMI VE İMAJ İLİŞKİSİNİN İÇ MİMARİ PROJE ÜZERİNDEN KURGULANMASI

Özet

Günümüzde popüler alışveriş kültürü tüketicinin gereksinimleri ve ihtiyaçlarından çok, moda ve trend türnlere doğru evrilmektedir. Ürün satışında alternatiflerin coğalması, müşteriyi memnun etmeyi zorlaştırmaktadır. Bu zorluğun üstesinden gelinmesi için farklı disiplinlerdeki araştırmacılar mağaza imajına dikkat çekmektedirler. Mağaza imajının kurgulanmasında, müşteri odaklı yaklaşımları benimsemek ve mağaza atmosferini etkin bir şekilde tasarlamak temel faktörler arasında yer almaktadır. Çalışmada mağaza iç mekân tasarıının tüketicinin dikkatini çekeremesi ve onu yönlendirebilecek çözümler sunabilmesi düşündürmekten yola çıkılarak mağaza-imaj ilişkisinin tasarım sürecine etkisi amaçlanmaktadır. Çalışma kapsamında Konya ili, Meram ilçesinde kapı ve mutfak satışının gerçekleştiği mağazanın tasarımından uygulamaya kadar geçen süreç ele alınmıştır. Gözlem yapma, görüşme, fotoğraflama, ölçü alma ve projelendirme süreçlerinin adım adım gerçekleştiği empirik bir çalışma yürütülmüştür. Çalışmada literatürde yer alan konum, renk, aydınlatma, malzeme, iklimlendirme ve sergileme gibi mağaza tasarım bileşenlerinin dikkate alındığı tasarım süreci hem tüketiciyi yönlendirebilecek şekilde uygulanması hem de kurum imajına olumlu katkı sağlayabileceği ön görülmektedir. Böylece mağaza tasarımını ve imaj ilişkisini yönelik uygulamalara aittlik olması hedeflenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mağaza Tasarımı, Uygulama, Imaj, İç Mimari Proje

1. INTRODUCTION

Design is a plan or an idea developed to address a specific problem. The design process involves a structured series of steps that must be followed to effectively plan and implement the envisioned solutions (Demiraslan and Demiraslan, 2020). Each design is customized to meet the user needs, the geographic context, and the particular conditions of the sector it is intended to serve. For example, the principle of "hygiene" is a critical consideration in the design of healthcare facilities, while the concept of "image" plays a crucial role in retail store design. In a highly competitive retail environment, a deep understanding of how store image is perceived is vital to meeting customer expectations and demands, which in turn influences product sales (Erciş *et al.*, 2016). Store image refers to the perception that consumers have of a store, encapsulating their overall impressions. A variety of factors contribute to this image, including a store's physical characteristics, the behaviour and attitude of the staff, and the quality of the products offered. Together, these elements form the store's overall image. (Yücel and Yücel, 2012).

This study aims to explore the physical features that significantly influence store image, focusing solely on these elements while excluding other relevant factors. The specific physical characteristics addressed include the store entrance, exterior façade, display windows, store environment, parking facilities, lighting, colour, product displays, and technical infrastructure, as outlined by Arslan and Bayçu (2006). In the fields of business and marketing, these physical attributes, collectively referred to as "store atmosphere," are considered "store design" within the scope of this research. While various studies (Altunışık and Mert, 2001; Baltas and Papastathopoulou, 2003; Hansen and Solgaard, 2004) have examined diverse elements influencing store image and consumer preferences—including brand, product assortment, pricing strategies, store location, atmosphere, service quality, and employee interactions—there is a notable gap in research specifically investigating the relationship between store image and spatial design (Yıldırım, 2015).

Currently, it is proposed that an integrated approach to interior architecture and store design will make a substantial contribution to the scientific field, warranting further exploration in this study. The research includes an empirical analysis that follows a systematic progression, including observation, induction, testing, evaluation and conclusion. The choice of this empirical methodology is particularly effective due to its alignment with the architectural design process, which consists of phases such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation, and application. In the literature on store design, various elements are identified and categorized, including both exterior components (such as location, accessibility, and façade) and interior elements (such as lighting, colour, display, materials, and air conditioning). These components form the foundational framework of the study, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between store image and spatial design.

1.1 Literature Research on the Relationship between Store Design and Image

In general, the concept of image refers to the impression that an individual or group seeks to project or the impression they leave on others. It represents an expression of one's perceptions or emotions regarding an object (Morello, 1984). In the consumer context, this notion manifests as a brand image with products, while it is referred to as a store image when discussing the retail environment where these products are purchased (Erciş *et al.*, 2016). Numerous factors contribute to the construction of store image, including brand identity, product quality, customer service, employee interactions, store environment, and store design (Yıldırım, 2015). Berkin and Usal (2012) argue that effective store design is a significant factor in attracting consumers, who are often required to make quick decisions. Similarly, Bozpolat (2017) highlights the crucial role of store design in the contemporary competitive environment, emphasizing its importance for establishing a favourable image and differentiating it from competing brands. Bakırtaş (2013) notes that the financial investment required by business owners to enhance their competitive edge can be substantial. Therefore, store design has a significant impact on consumer purchasing decisions, levels of satisfaction, and perceptions of quality. Ultimately, it plays a pivotal role in shaping customers' intentions to revisit the store by creating a lasting image in their memory (Haritaoğlu, 2021).

Sociologists Gronow (1997) and Odabaşı (1999) categorize contemporary individuals as hedonists, emphasizing that pleasure plays a significant role in their consumption behaviours, alongside their needs and preferences. Store designers actively address this focus on pleasure in the creation of retail environments. Stores must be meticulously designed to effectively meet the needs and expectations of consumers while aligning with their brand identities. Additionally, the competitive nature of the current market further

accentuates the importance of this approach. As a result, it is essential to examine the types of stores preferred by consumers and the underlying reasons for these preferences, as this information is vital for informing store design and guiding industry professionals (Yıldırım, 2015).

The increase in retail alternatives and the diversity of consumer preferences make achieving customer satisfaction a significant challenge (Kachaganova, 2008). Designers play a crucial role in addressing this challenge and ensuring that a store is favoured by consumers. According to Danziger (2006), designers activate people's instincts for search and discovery, which allows them to influence shopping behaviours by engaging consumers from the moment they enter the store through thoughtfully designed store components. Based on literature studies, store design components can be categorized into two groups: exterior components, such as location, accessibility, and façade, and interior components, including lighting, colour, displays, materials and air conditioning. Researchers have indicated that these components are essential to the holistic relationship between store design and its image.

1.1.1. Store design components

When designing or reorganizing a store, business owners must prioritize three key objectives. First, the store atmosphere must align with its image and be consistent with the company's overall strategy. Second, an effective store design should actively influence consumer purchasing behaviour. Lastly, the store's productivity, measured as sales per square meter of retail space (Levy and Weitz, 1998), is a critical factor. To achieve these objectives, it is essential to meticulously design both the exterior and interior elements of the store. These components play a significant role in guiding consumers and ensuring a satisfactory shopping experience. Furthermore, given the dynamic nature of the retail sector, fluctuations in product offerings will necessitate adjustments to the store layout. Consequently, the incorporation of flexible design strategies is crucial for effectively accommodating such changes.

Demirci (1998) emphasizes that both the interior and exterior components of a store are crucial in the process of image formation. The author also notes that potential consumers often begin to form their initial perceptions of a store based on exterior elements, such as location, accessibility, and façade, even before entering the establishment. Once inside, their impressions are further shaped by the interior components. Furthermore, Berman and Evans (1998) propose an alternative classification of store design elements, which includes the following categories:

- External store variables,
- Store interior environment variables,
- Planning and design variables,
- Decoration and point-of-purchase variables.

External Store Components

Exterior elements play a crucial role in influencing consumers as they pass by a store and in persuading them to enter (Dunne and Lusch, 1999). Key exterior features include the store's location, access for vehicles and pedestrians, adequate parking, façade characteristics, and lighting—all of which significantly impact store design.

Businesses carefully select store *locations* based on various factors to maximize profitability. Important external factors include the size of the lot, ease of access, availability of suitable parking, and proximity to customers' residences (Van Nes and Bovy, 2000). Stores located on busy streets in city centres facilitate smooth customer circulation.

In the design of store façades, it is essential for businesses to be prominently displayed, easily identifiable, and memorable to passersby. A critical component of the store façade is the brand name. Since consumers associate the brand with its nameplate, the sign must be clearly legible and easily comprehensible. Furthermore, it should be seamlessly integrated with the overall style, scale, materials, and design of the façade (Gül, 2022). Additionally, the design of store entrances is of significant importance. The entrance acts as a transitional space that separates the store from external elements. Researchers emphasize that the entrance should be thoughtfully designed to facilitate customer convenience and effectively guide them into the store (Karaaslan, 2015; Demirci, 2000).

In the context of store entrance design, several key criteria must be considered. First and foremost, the entrance should feature adequate lighting to create a welcoming environment. Additionally, the design must be free of slopes, columns, or steps to ensure accessibility. The entrance doors should be easily operable, and the flooring must provide a non-slip surface to guarantee customer safety. Furthermore, display windows should be strategically designed to attract the attention of potential customers (Lewison and DeLozier, 1986). It is also important that the visual displays within these windows be frequently updated to maintain an engaging and stimulating atmosphere while effectively representing the products offered inside (Dunne and Lusch, 1999). Various styles of display windows exist, including open, closed (Mun, 1981), flat, angular (Morgan, 2008), and angled (Mun, 1981). The selection of the most suitable style should be determined by a designer, considering the store's overall image and spatial characteristics.

Interior Environment Components

In store design, it is crucial to effectively design the interior components so that consumers can perceive and evaluate both the space and the products within. The relationship between display elements and the dimensions of the space, as well as the design of circulation areas, should be organized in a way that enriches product visibility (Berkin and Usal, 2012). According to Levy and Weitz (2009), designers bear significant responsibility for the interior design of a store, ensuring alignment with the brand's image and strategy, positively influencing consumer behaviour, and providing flexibility. Interior architects categorize the components of store interiors into several elements: lighting, colour, displays (Berkin and Usal, 2012), materials, and air conditioning (Yıldırım, 2015).

Lighting is a fundamental component of store design. An effective lighting strategy includes several key qualities: enhancing product visibility, emphasizing special display areas, establishing a visual balance among various store elements, facilitating sales, and creating diverse atmospheres (Green, 2011). Areas that are dark or difficult to see could lead to an unsettling customer experience. Research indicates that appropriate lighting can encourage consumers to linger longer in retail environments. In retail settings, artificial lighting is predominantly utilized and can be categorized into three primary types: general interior lighting, local lighting, and point lighting. General lighting is designed to illuminate the overall space and assist customers in navigating the store. Typical fixtures used in general lighting include linear fluorescent lamps, recessed spotlights, and pendant lighting. Local lighting provides direct illumination for specific tasks or areas. Track lighting and pendant light systems are commonly preferred for local lighting applications. Point lighting, often referred to as decorative or accent lighting, serves to draw attention to particular products. LED fixtures and spotlights are frequently used for point lighting, effectively directing customer focus toward featured items. The selection of types, colours, textures, and the overall atmosphere of the lighting can significantly affect the dynamic characteristics of the environment (Gül, 2022).

In store design, *colour* plays a crucial role in appealing to customers' visual senses and capturing their attention. Numerous studies and experiments have demonstrated the significant impact of colour on human psychology. When selecting colours for spatial design, it is essential to consider architectural features, psychological effects, the quality of the light source, and their relationship to the store's overall image. Different colours evoke distinct psychological responses: red and yellow are particularly striking, blue promotes a sense of relaxation, orange is perceived as inviting, green evokes associations with nature, and navy blue conveys trustworthiness. Grey is generally regarded as a professional colour that represents seriousness. Therefore, the careful selection of colour combinations in store design significantly influences the store's image and brand awareness (Gül, 2022). Additionally, the incorporation of colours such as white, grey, and beige throughout the store environment enhances the perception of quality among consumers (Grossman and Wisenblit, 1999).

Display, along with various elements such as colour and lighting that engage consumers' senses within a retail environment, plays a significant role in influencing shopping behaviour. The primary objective of a display is to attract customers, encourage prolonged engagement in the store, and ultimately facilitate product sales. To achieve this, it is essential to organize elements such as lines, shapes, sizes, textures, weights, and colours in a manner that fosters a high-quality perception of the interior space (Yıldırım, 2015). Horizontal lines and shapes are associated with creating a perception of tranquillity, comfort and serenity within the environment, while

angled lines and shapes evoke a sense of dynamism and energy. Additionally, circular shapes contribute to a more fluid ambiance, guiding the attention of customers (Samson and Little, 1993; Hoffman and Bateson, 1997). Display elements can be classified as either fixed or movable, based on the brand identity and the physical attributes of the store. Fixed display elements include shelves and permanent hangers, while movable display elements encompass items such as portable hangers, display cases, tables, mannequins, gondolas, discount baskets, stands and cubes. Researchers (Meyer vd., 1988; Lewison, 1997; Arslan and Bayçu, 2006) outlined several general functions of display elements:

- Reflect the store image,
- Help sell products,
- Protect products,
- Create a logical sales and usage group,
- Develop a simple and well-organized layout,
- Maintain a clean and tidy appearance,

Create an attractive and informative environment.

An essential component of store interior design is the implementation of an effective *air conditioning* system. Proper ventilation and temperature regulation are crucial in creating a comfortable shopping environment. The quality of indoor air significantly influences customers' perceptions and overall experience. A store that feels stuffy and excessively warm fails to convey an image of luxury, while an overly cold atmosphere can deter customers and create an unwelcoming ambiance. Therefore, managing air conditioning systems effectively within retail spaces is vital. During summer, the indoor temperature should be kept cool; in winter, it should be warm; and throughout all seasons, the air should remain fresh and well-circulated. If customers experience discomfort due to poor air quality—whether from excessive heat, cold, or stale air—they are less likely to prolong their stay. Moreover, the choice of air conditioning system contributes to the store's overall image. Selecting an appropriate system is crucial, as it directly impacts customer perceptions and enhances the shopping experience (Arslan and Bayçu, 2006).

The selection of materials in store design plays a crucial role in shaping the overall perception of the space. While cost considerations are an important factor in material selection, opting for inferior materials can negatively impact the store's image. Therefore, material choices should be guided not only by budgetary constraints but also by durability and long-term usability. A thorough understanding of material properties, application techniques, and performance characteristics is essential for achieving an effective store design. The choice of materials—including their type, colour, and texture—directly reflects the store's intended image (Özkan, 2009). Material usage in store design can be categorized into three primary areas: flooring, walls, and ceilings. The selection of flooring materials is influenced by regional, geographical, and consumer-related factors. Common flooring options include marble, mosaic, travertine, granite, cotto, vinyl, ceramic tile, porcelain tile, laminate, solid wood, carpet, linoleum, concrete, epoxy, and polyurethane (Gül, 2022). Generally, dark-coloured flooring materials are preferred in stores that market luxury and high-end products, while light-coloured flooring is commonly used in businesses with high customer traffic and more affordable offerings (Karaaslan, 2015). Ceiling materials also play a significant role in influencing spatial perception, particularly in terms of height. Ceilings are designed based on technical and installation requirements and may be either regionally adapted or left open, depending on the store's branding and budget. Open ceilings, which expose mechanical and structural elements, often create a contemporary and industrial aesthetic (Din, 2000). It is important to note that lower ceiling heights can evoke a sense of confinement; thus, ceiling material selection should align harmoniously with the overall store image. Additionally, flooring and ceiling choices often influence the selection of wall-covering materials. Common options include paint, plaster, wood, stone, concrete, brick, metal, porcelain, glass, mirrors, plastic, paper, fabric, and other decorative finishes (Bilgen, 2018). When selecting materials, designers must consider factors such as form, colour, texture, application methods, acoustic properties, light sensitivity, and structural characteristics, all of which contribute to creating a cohesive and visually compelling store environment.

The literature review indicates that store design should be meticulously planned to guide customer behaviour and facilitate effective shopping experiences. It is essential that the exterior and interior components of the store are cohesively integrated. In this context, the author of the study conducted a comprehensive store design

and implementation process, taking into account not only the findings from the literature but also the environmental, physical, and economic factors relevant to the design area.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

This study examines an interior architecture project that investigates the direct influence of store design on the development of store image, as identified in existing literature. The project design process is articulated through an empirical methodology based on observation and sensory experiences. The alignment between the steps in this empirical method and those in the design process has played a crucial role in determining the study's methodological approach. Numerous scholars suggest that the design process follows a structured sequence of clearly identifiable steps. Canbay Türkyılmaz (2010) categorizes these steps as follows: information acquisition, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and application (Figure 1).

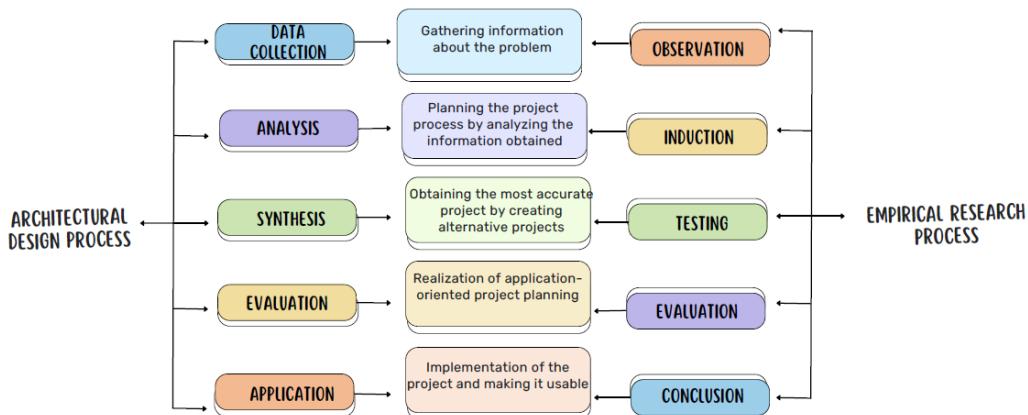


Figure 1. Study Methodology (Visualization Belongs to the Author)

A showroom in the Meram district of Konya, showcasing doors and kitchen products, was selected as the study area for this project. The research outlines an interior architecture project process that is carefully tailored to the environmental characteristics of the space and incorporates the design components that reinforce the store's image. The information-gathering phase utilized various methodologies, including observation, photography, interviews, and on-site measurements related to the store's layout and design. Subsequently, the project process was systematically structured through a comprehensive analysis. Initially, sketches were developed, and multiple alternative draft proposals were generated. Following this, the synthesis phase was carried out by selecting the most suitable proposal based on both aesthetic appeal and functional effectiveness. The evaluation stage included the production of detailed drawings to facilitate the implementation of the selected design. Upon completing this phase, the store was rendered operational through the application of the finalized design. Each stage of the process was interdependent, reinforcing one another, thereby demonstrating the intrinsic connection between the empirical study and the interior architecture project.

3. FIELD STUDY

The study area is situated in the Konya-Meram region, specifically at Meram Yeni Yol Street, No. 35. This street is lined with low-rise residential buildings, business centres, and various entertainment and shopping venues. Many residential structures have ground floors repurposed for commercial use, contributing to the lively atmosphere of the area. The street experiences a steady flow of both pedestrian and vehicular traffic, remaining active throughout the day due to its diverse range of businesses, shops, and entertainment options. This location is particularly appealing to middle- and upper-income groups (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Location and façade of the study area (Google Earth, 2021)

The study focuses on the ground floor of a three-story business centre. The basement, designated for storage, is excluded from this analysis. The space allocated to the Dorteck Door and Sirio Kitchen brands will function as a showroom, spanning approximately 180 m², with dimensions of 7.80 meters in width and 22.60 meters in length. The ceiling height is 4.00 meters, gradually reducing to 3.65 meters at the edges where structural beams are present. The primary street-facing façade and the side façades feature large glass surfaces. Notably, the walls, ceiling and floor of the space currently lack any finishing materials (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Plan and before application images of the showroom store (Author Archive, 2021)

The information-gathering phase involved observations, photography, measurements, and interviews with company representatives. After collecting and analysing the data, preliminary draft designs were developed.

A follow-up meeting with company officials was held to review these drafts. Through this collaborative process, the most feasible proposal—balancing cost-effectiveness and design integrity—was selected, leading to the preparation of the preliminary project. Once the preliminary design was finalized, cost estimates were calculated, and pre-implementation manufacturing drawings were completed, marking the start of the project implementation phase (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Application phase images (Author Archive, 2021)

The store design was meticulously crafted to meet the preferences of middle- and upper-income demographics, with a primary focus on elements such as colour, lighting, materials and air conditioning. The overall aesthetic aimed to reflect the branding of Dorteck Door and Sirio Kitchen (Figure 5).

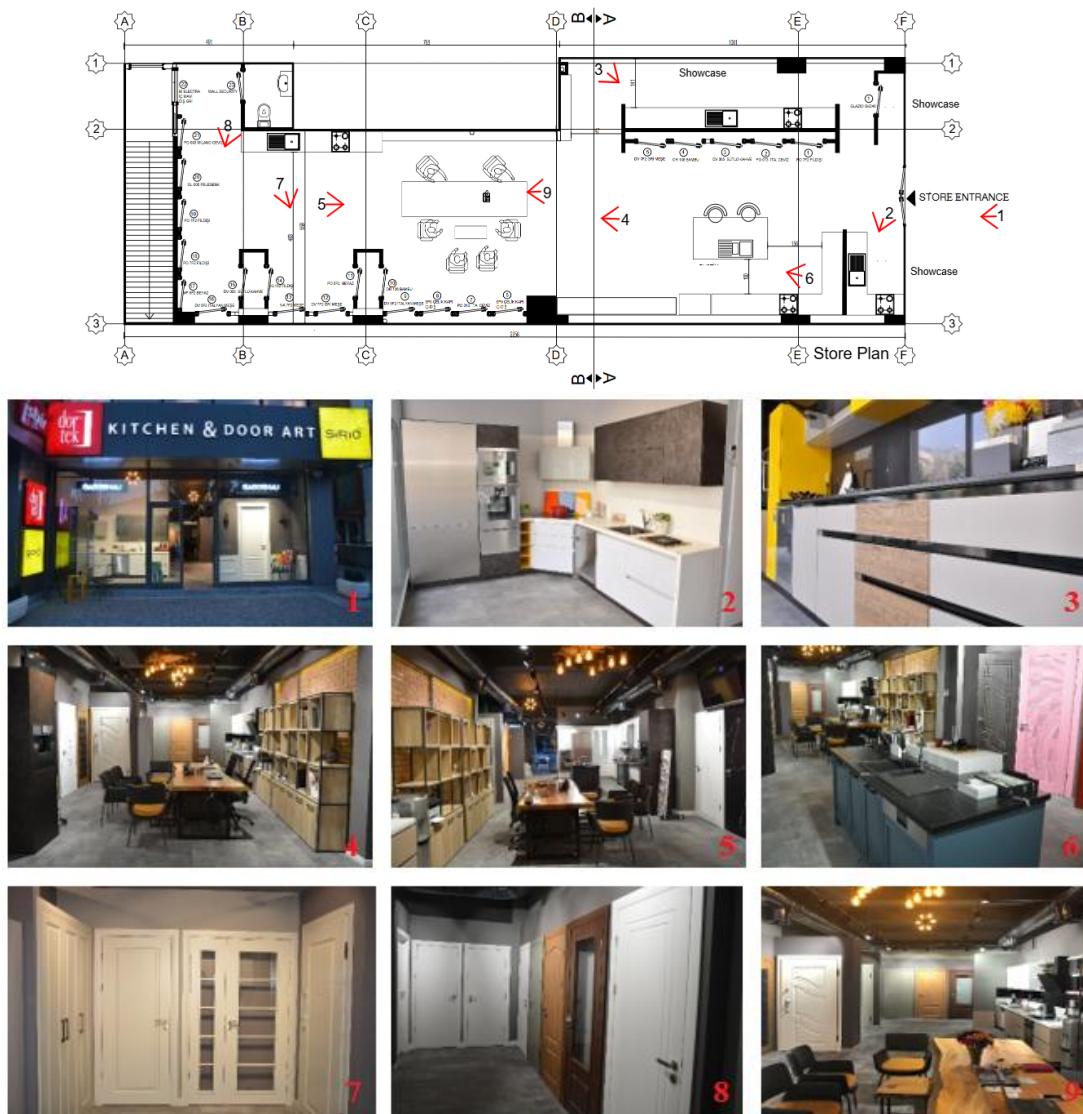


Figure 5. After application store exterior and interior images (Author Archive, 2021)

Special attention was given to the facade design to optimize both pedestrian and vehicular traffic flow. The corporate logos of the two brands, featuring striking red and yellow hues respectively, influenced the selection of a neutral smoke colour for the façade. This choice was intended to balance the visual impact of the two brands. The arrangement of display cases featured closed displays placed on either side of the store entrance, effectively showcasing products from both brands. Given that a portion of the facade on the right side was glass, a secondary kitchen display was integrated alongside an additional showcase. Five distinct doors, each exhibiting different colours and features, were prominently displayed on the back wall of the secondary kitchen exhibit. The store design utilized a slab-sided plan, which helped optimize circulation and display areas. Secondary wall surfaces were constructed with plasterboard materials to effectively display the doors. These surfaces were finished with a concrete-like plaster to achieve an industrial aesthetic, providing an appropriate backdrop for the diverse display doors and kitchens. To outline the sales personnel area from the surrounding spaces, the corresponding wall was covered in brick. A wooden log table was selected for the staff workspace, contributing to a warm and inviting atmosphere. The installation system was intentionally designed to ensure that the kitchen adjacent to the table was suitable for daily operations. The flooring was completed with grey wooden laminate, while the exposed concrete ceiling was preserved in its original state, with only a fresh coat of paint applied. This design approach ensured a cohesive integration of the floor, walls and ceiling. The VRF air conditioning system, along with heating and ventilation installations, was deliberately left exposed on the ceiling to enhance the loft style. General lighting was provided by a pendant chandelier, while rail spotlights and hidden LED lighting were utilized for localized lighting needs.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In today's competitive environment, consumer preferences are increasingly influenced by various factors, making it essential to adopt innovative strategies within the service sector. Research indicates that a customer-oriented approach, combined with effective store design, plays a significant role in shaping shopping preferences. Modern consumers are looking for store environments that offer enjoyment and entertainment, in addition to the traditional considerations of price and quality. The positive effects of store design on brand image are well-documented, especially within the fields of marketing and business, as they foster a distinct perception of the store among consumers. Although store design is often categorized as an element of the store atmosphere in these disciplines, the limited number of studies exploring the connection between store design and brand image within design theory underscore the originality of this research.

The analysis of store design should be approached from the perspective of designers with specialized expertise in areas such as spatial configuration, branding, perception, and user experience, rather than merely from a business or marketing standpoint. In this context, the key spatial components of store design are examined systematically, with appropriate methodologies proposed. Existing literature identifies these components, which range from store location and display layout to preferred colour schemes and material selection. This study classifies these components into two primary categories: exterior and interior, presenting a design and implementation framework that ensures consistency with the overall store image.

Thus, the theoretical review, along with the resulting store design application, is built on the relationship between image and store design. It is anticipated that involving architects and interior designers as experts within the marketing domain will offer valuable insights and significantly contribute to the design field. This strategic approach is expected to elevate the quality of shopping experiences, aligning them with consumers' aspirations and expectations for spatial environments.

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