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# [EXPERIENCE IN TRANSITORY ENVIRONMENTS AND TRANSIBILITY IN PRODUCTS]

A transition by definition means something that provides scope for a change to happen from the starting point and the ending point. This life cycle of a transition explains a phase change which may be in terms of experience, physical environment, state etc.

# Experience in transitory environments and transibility in products

## Objective

To study and articulate the aspects of experience in transitory environments, and recognize opportunities for new products, spaces, services, which enhance or differentiate the existing environments. Hence, identify and enunciate the formation and creation of such opportunity areas, so as to form basic model of such methods of creative manipulations in the transiting environments.

## Relevance

The hypothesis hints to that the frequency of occurrence of these transitory spaces is very high. In a wider perspective these occur almost every time around us. For example, reading this document. Some of these environments are opportunities to explore more, like enhancing the experience of reading this document. Such opportunity areas that have been developing in enhanced experiential environments are - *lifestyle spaces that may include retail, office space, home space, public environments etc.* In the context of our example, reading this

document also happens in the virtual environment the 'Screen Age' has to offer. So, a better program than Microsoft Word may appear more pleasing, while reading this document.

## Methods

**Secondary Research** will focus at information on the kind of existing environments and spaces that use such insights in alternative ways.

Books, Web, Papers by Experts, Current Affairs, Case Studies related to it can be considered for the relevant background work on the project.

**Primary Research** will aim to gain new insights into the subject of transitory spaces and related aspects. This will happen through broadly the following methods:

### *Group Discussions*

Elaborate discussions on various topics related to the subject will pool in variety of ideas into the process of collecting insights. Topics can range from associated attributes to experiences in such spaces to brainstorming in order to create an entirely a new experience. Thus, collating a lot of lasting impressions and 'those that worked' ideas will become one comprehensive thought bank. Which can be further analyzed to filter relevant information.

### *Expert Talks*

As the group discussions bring in more ideas, so will these expert talks. Those experienced in the subject of experiential spaces, media usage, retail environments, environmental graphics, product design etc., are sources of large amount of seasoned and filtered information and provoking thoughts.

### *Observational and Interactional*

Nothing is more insightful than witnessing the actual moment. Hence, passive and active observations of behavior, interactions and motivations of people in selected environments. For example, the activity of buying products, new launch at specific intervals, a service sales discussion (e.g. Travel package) between the seller and the buyer, a changing website theme etc. Broader observations like, recognizing frequently occurring situations that form such transitional environments throughout the day, for instance, a candle light dinner. These will give spontaneous cues into the verity of the topic.

### *Simulation*

To reveal overlooked aspects an experimental way of simulating situations and spaces that induce experience will be very beneficial. This is possible by the method of prototyping and performing/ enacting some observed situations and new created ones. This will unveil layers of

information that may not come about with other methods. Such simulations will draw more views and comments on the subject through the prototypes, in form of tangible objects, spaces or videos, audio, digital applications etc.

### **Outcome & Benefits**

The outcome of the project can be both in the form of models for application in creating and simulating transitory environments and tangible products, spaces that enhance the experience of the environment. Hence, these can be applied to support new ideas and innovations in lifestyle environments, like retail, public etc. Professionals ranging from designers to marketing managers will have a more effective understanding of utilizing resources to trigger such opportunities to generate stimulations, impulse, suggestions for a more optimized exchange behavior between the buyer & seller. The project will be a structured and filtered reference for studying associated subjects. Anthropological aspects like development of behavior and interaction under the influence of such environments, will aid social scientists understand the effects subjectively. The project will be a comprehensive study on experience in transitory environments, with effort to explain specific effects on retail & lifestyle.

## Acknowledgement

Just as there is no limit to the depth of the ocean and the height of the mountains, I cannot claim perfection in making this project, but at the same time I have put best of my efforts for the successful completion of this project report. This project has not only helped me to acquire an insight into the subject matter of Retail Management but has taught me the application of theoretical knowledge for practical solutions as well.

The project report will be incomplete without acknowledging the contribution of all those who have helped me in successful completion of this project. My humble thanks to our mentor Dr. B. Baral for providing me his kind support and all the relevant information, on the basis of which this report has been prepared.

Lastly, I would like to thank my friends for their encouragement and valuable ideas which I have incorporated in this project.

Anuj Agrawal

## **Experience in transitory environments and transibility in products**

- 1. Transitory Spaces**
- 2. Spar, Food Retail – Case Study**
- 3. Psychographics-The New Demographics**

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# 1 Transitory Spaces

A transition by definition means something that provides scope for a change to happen from the starting point and the ending point. This life cycle of a transition explains a phase change which may be in terms of experience, physical environment, state etc. Environments are conducive spaces which induce a certain intangible effect on the people within the environment. This effect is what we realize and take away with us as an 'experience'. Thus, an environment may not need an elaborate space or time to enunciate its effects. From the smallest of spaces to those covering large expanse, virtual spaces, situations, a group in discussion, all account for a transitory environment.

## **How these transitory or temporary spaces are formed?**

It may be a deliberate effort to establish a certain surrounding or a situation created by people around through exchange of thoughts, both can leave a lasting effect. The objective for the creation of these environments is mostly defined, and when not, it leads to certain anticipation to develop which again has scope for experience. For instance, we take an online web portal of a company like BMW, which already has defined user imagery. Even before visiting this web portal,

the web user has some fixed notions about how the experience 'would be'. This gives birth to anticipation. Hence, for the formation of such spaces we may or may not make a deliberate effort, but we might intervene to enhance the effects of this environment.

### **Where can we find these transitory spaces?**

It is pretty easy to find such environments. A working desk, a group discussion, a cafeteria, etc. can be immediately included in such spaces. Purposefully created spaces such as an exhibition, an expo, a window display in a shop, roadside eating joints, billboards, are good examples of such spaces. The 'screen age' has also given us a novel and limitless environment to explore these transitory spaces.

### **How to create experiences in such environments?**

It's rightly said that great experiences don't happen by accident, they are the result of deep thought and deliberation. Experience is an interaction with one's environment which leads to moments of engagement and leaves behind a memory. Experiences shape perceptions and influence our psyche. While every moment, technically, is an experience of some sort, there is something striking and special about certain experiences that make them superior and memorable. Despite the materialistic bias of our culture, it is the experiences and not objects or things that hold the focus of our activities. Though physical objects are tangible and visible but their

primary function is to engage us in an experience, which is largely an intangible concept.

Aesthetics play an important role in delivering the capacity for an experience. For example, art may unconsciously blossom from an exalted craftsman in rare moments of inspiration which may have the capacity to create a transcending experience. Experiences which are intended to create surpassing and everlasting impact should be immersive and sensorial, that is, they should be - a delight to one's eyes and pleasure to one's mind!

Experience refers to a holistic view of situations, an integrated process, wherein the reality and fantasy empower one another in such a way that they connect to the mind in its whole, bringing it to a flow or stirred up state. Simply put, experience is an interaction with any product, artifact, system or the environment as a whole such that this interaction leads to some sort of sensory gratification and addition of value, tangible or intangible, desirable or undesirable. There are extensive ways of defining experiences even as simple as this, like, the sense of smell for which we often use the descriptor based on the sense of taste, "the salty air" is a way of defining an experience making use of a simile. An experience is, therefore, the conjurement of the individual aspects to create a holistic impact.

### Transibility

A product is transible when it gives a transitory experience. Hence, the transibility of a product can be determined by the semiotic product analysis. In our everyday life we search for usable hints and signs, which can guide our interpretation of reality. The process of perceiving a product happens in milliseconds, where we tell the kind of product it is, what qualities it has and even who the user should be.

### Social Construction Theory – (George Herbert, Dittmar 1990)

The physical objects become a sign with symbolic qualities that people can interpret and thereby retrieve information about both personal qualities of the user and the product.

It is a designer's job to decode the common values and opinions that exist in the culture and reproduce them into forms that embody of the appropriate symbolic meaning.

### Cognitive Prototype Theory (Roch, 1978)

We build understanding of a new product by attributing prior experiences into our perception of the product. The concept here is of familiarity. The more we are seasoned to perceive in a particular way, the more we associate new objects/ spaces to the previous experiences. For example, when we see a chair we don't decode it as a stool, although both of them serve the function of seating. It is the subtleties of the form that provides cues to decipher the product.

### Semiotic Theory

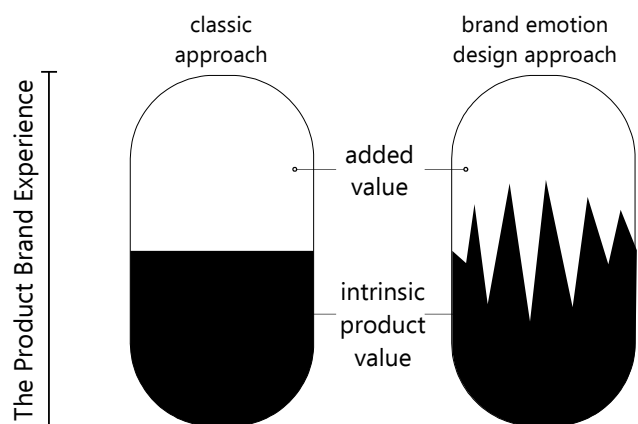
The nature of sign is such that it stands for or represents something other than itself. The reason why certain products evoke certain thoughts, emotions, impressions and associations is because it displays signs that consciously or unconsciously trigger these reactions. There are three categories of the semiotic theory:

**Representamen:** Concrete physical aspects and attributes of design (form, color, material etc.)

**Object:** spontaneous impression that the product evokes ( association, metaphor, analogy)

**Interpretant:** Subjective meaning or experience of the product, usually when the product is perceives in context.

Hence, we can summarize these as,  
Representamen – Stimuli, Object – Sign,  
Interpretant – Objective Understanding.





### Positive Space

People have innate capacity to experience and feel the environment and elements within the environment. Everything about a product that can be more significant than the product is the Positive Space. This Positivity can also be referred to as the halo of the product, or the Aura of the product, which are all the intangibilities it offers. The `aura` can change with the context of use (environment, time of the day, other people involved). The capacity to experience in us is unbounded. For instance, we can experience the pleasure of buying, without actually buying. Responsive design is the key to creating such experiences. A lot of web designs are made responsive, to adjust to any kind of platform- laptop, mobile phones, PDAs etc. There is nothing but one original design, a somewhat plastic design, or an extensible design, that morphs and adapts itself to environments. Thus, the aura of such an intangible product becomes responsive too, to the environments around it.

Creating potential in positive space through:

- Empowering products
- Delight
- Connection
- Prototyping

Design has been used as a tool in business since a long time now. It is becoming essential to find a way to test whether people are able to identify good design and understand how they value it. This would add largely to the Brand Evolution

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Design approach practiced across the globe by various brands. The BED approach was first tested by Mathij's Van Dijk and Jeroen Van Erp, the Netherlands. In the paper published by them ' Brand is the product: Product is the Brand'

### Selling Environments: the use of senses in consumption space

Before looking at live transitory environments, knowing how the selling environments become hubs for sensorial experiences is important. At a shop, there is bound to be interaction between the shop image (including merchandise) and the consumer. This is facilitated by a various media. From, a Mall's Façade to the tiniest of shelf talkers, and all the orality inside the mall, account for such interaction. The luxuries, fittings and fixtures inside a shop must compensate for the 'poverty' of the product on display- this can be called as phenomenon of adjacent attraction. A more popular term being Visual Merchandising, the physical presentation of products in a non-personal approach, to promote the image of a firm and the sale of merchandise to the consumer. Even the user participates as a part of the 'product' under scrutiny by him, such is the value addition. These experiences have evolved with time and with the help of designers, trying to tap each part of participation of the consumer to make the experience more multisensory. Superquin, a super market in Ireland, pays consumers for their services, if they help to improve the functioning of the super market. Tips concerning faults in sign boards, products, expiries etc. are rewarded with an apple tart and

other such things. Here, the shopper is selling Quality Control Services, to the store. Albert Hejin, a Dutch supermarket encourages consumers to prepare recipes published in supermarket magazines, within the supermarket, with the products available inside the supermarket. This brings popularity to various aspects of the store with just one promotional activity.

## 2

### **SPAR, Food Retail**

**Spar**, is the world's largest food retailer, with approximately 20,000 stores in 35 countries worldwide. Spar originated in the Netherlands in 1932 and now, through its affiliate organizations, operates through most European countries, South Africa, Asia and Australia. It operates on a principle similar to retailers' co-operatives elsewhere, with owners grouping together to get bulk discounts from suppliers/wholesalers. It has its headquarters in Amsterdam. In India it has its flagship store in Bangalore, where it also has the corporate office. India now has 5 Spar stores - 3 Bangalore, 1 Hyderabad and 1 in Mangalore. The Spar store in Bangalore is the largest store in India. The store is just over 80,000 sq. ft. on only a single floor.



*Picture 1: Facade of SPAR, Bangalore, India. The store has a baggage counter highlighted with the SPAR branding, and shopping carts next to it. This provides hassle free entry to each customer.*



**Picture2:** The entrance to the store is the main transitory, which decides footfalls for the store. The clear demarkation of the entrance here makes the access to the store easy



**Picture 3&4:** The shelving systems and displays are strategically divided to make the most moving products meet the eye first on the shelves. The processed cheese section which is not a fast moving product in India, is kept at eye level to increase its visibility.



**Picture 5&6:** Spar is a complete Shopping Centre, with overplay of Food Retail. Freshly baked cakes, Steaming Hot Biryanis, or packed processed Cheese, they have it all. These allow for consumers to savour the fresh food within the premises of the store



**Picture 6&7:**The perishable product zone should be kept at the end of the store, touching with FMCGs that are almost close to Exit ( Entry being from a different door)

## Emotions at SPAR Retail, Bangalore:

It is not the rationality, but the emotionality of the consumer bond that is central to current sales methods. An extensive research was done on Spar, food retail, for gaining cues into how the environments within a store are modified to make an experience more transible, and test the effectiveness of such creative manipulations, from the users' point of view.

The excitement and anticipation of a transit to the supposedly 'India's largest mall' has quite a number of attachments to it. Emotions coming through in the spur of the moment are overlaid to blend with each other. When supported by a really large positive space of the entities for sale, the most driving aspect of such a space is being able to sense, which is inherent in humanity. The urge for possession in us drives the retail ideology to grow.

## Transitory occurrences at Spar:

**Facade & Baggage counter:** The Façade extends almost to the length of the passageway on the lower ground floor. The red colour thrown all over the façade attracts a lot of glances that convert into footfalls. Baggage Counter - Two guards, change duties, traffic in large numbers even on a working day. Baggage misplacement is easy. People keep their baggage there to move around the mall.

**The entrance:** Short time span of the entrance makes apt environment for moving ahead.

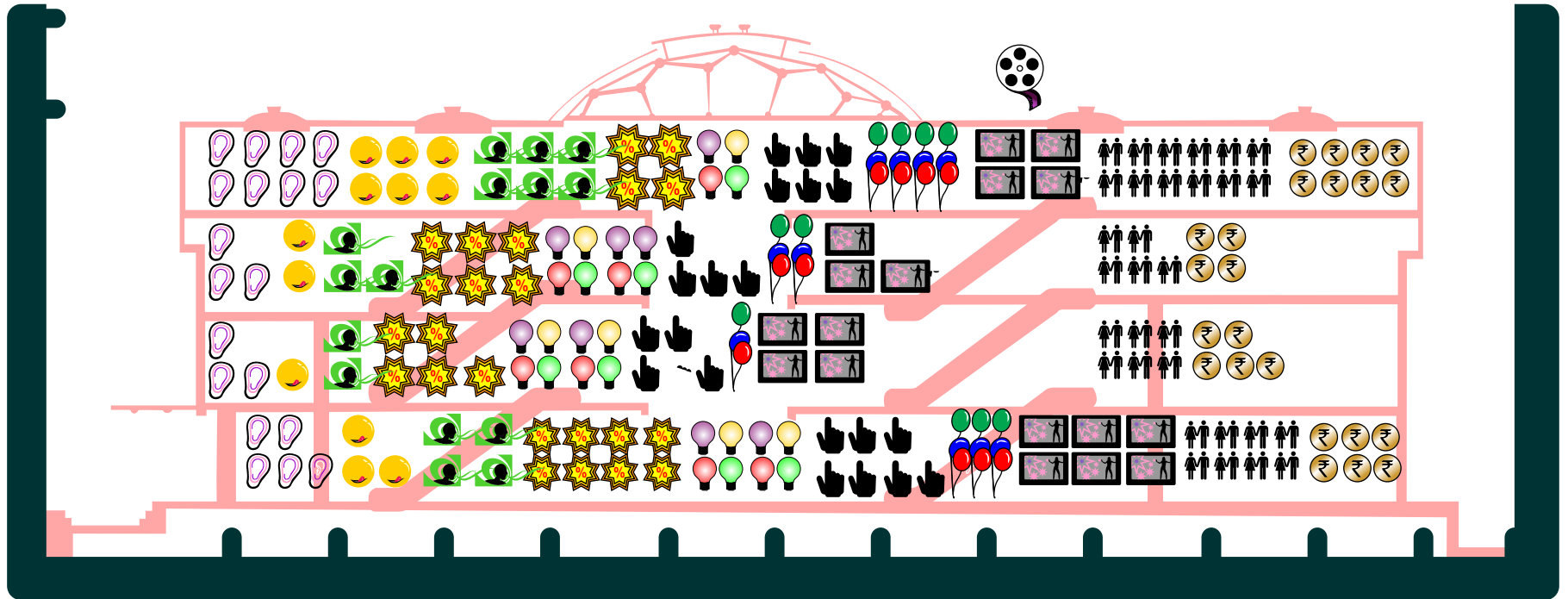
Though the organized clutter of a commodity store is palpable. The range of products is always maximum. Hence, the question of not buying is diminished largely. With the exposure to so many products, there is bound to be some interest shown by most of those entering, regardless of their persona. Hence, immediately a large amount of potential customers increase proportionally to the number of products that are available for exposure.









**Aisles:** The aisles, being the most visited transitory environments, are the most selling spaces. They also have a lot of merchandise placement changes. The aisles bear almost all the package ready goods, hence, to maintain differentiation among brands and user imagery, a lot of highlights are created through grouping. The positive space around these products allow for features to be highlighted and result into a visual pause for the consumer's eye. The visual medium being the strongest, is played up in this scenario.



**Figure 1:**The layout of SPAR, perishables and FMCGs are at the back and apparels in front. This makes the regular customers pass through the complete store, generating higher impulse.





 impulse	 celebrative	 auditory	 olfactory	 revenue
 interactive	 food joint	 screens	 crowd	

# ₹TAIL

## mediascape

media mix and its effect on revenue in Malls

**Product :** The product itself is probably the most significant part of selling itself. A good product carries all the positive space, the aura that it needs to draw a potential consumer towards it, and convert him into an end consumer. The product attributes should show through its packaging. Packaging is a very important marketing strategy to glamorize your product in order to attract the consumer's attention. Sometimes packaging is so important that it cost more than the product itself in order to lure the consumers to buy it. Packaging should definitely be included in the 4 major P's of marketing (product, place, promotion and price).

Most consumers judge a product by its packaging before buying. So it is logical to say attractive packaging is crucial in order to get the first time buyers to buy your products. Without attractive packaging, who would buy it in order to try it? Your first step to enter the market is crushed if the packaging is ugly.

**Displays:** Layouting plays a major role in aggregating the sales of the products. There are a lot of standards followed in the layouting of current shopping centers. A store is divided into Zones (according to the product mix each zone offers), layed out strategically to make the customer move almost throughout the store. This increases impulse points and thus affecting sales. The general layouting is explained through the infographic on the previous page.

The perishable product zone should be kept at the end of the store, touching with FMCGs that are almost close to Exit ( Entry being from a different door). A majority of consumers are potentially FMCG and F&V customers. A shopping center is driven by products under FMCG and the F&V category, thus this format of layouting has proven to drive sales in almost all the big brands across the country.

Subtle variations within a zone are made to make the consumer travel throughout the zone, while he looks for the desired product. This again adds to the impulse points within the zone. The 'Ribboning' effect created by fruits placed along with each other, visually arrests the customer, urging him to take a closer look. This hierarchy of information revelation, in the store makes for a story that is stiched to make the consumer travel and end up with the 'fruits' of his fancies. The ulterior motive of any human action is the experience. This is exactly what can be observed in this case.

**Olfactory/ Flavour/ Aroma:** Spar is a complete Shopping Centre, with overplay of Food Retail. Freshly baked cakes, Steaming Hot Biryani, or packed processed Cheese, they have it all. These allow for consumers to savour the fresh food within the premises of the store, adding to the whole experience of shopping. The concept of shopping experience touches upon all our senses. The sense of taste and aroma, have been not in use, but of late it has become an upcoming trend. Spar, exploits this sense to the fullest. Organizing

food festivals on a regular basis is another activity that makes the store a more desired one for those hanging in the mall for longer duration, overlapping their time with lunch and dinner.

Fragrances also draw people to follow it, almost mystically. This innate capacity to experience such little variations is what makes a difference to the complete cycle of the exchange process.

### **Auditory**

The Indian consumer, comes from a background of a market that is, crowded, noisy, labyrinth, chaotic, aromatic, and visually cluttered yet having that order in chaos. Big Bazaar is a perfect example of following the same as a strategy for building a brand for the Indian mass. Spar, is more organized, yet it shows some features of an Indian Street Market. For example, there are pillows that have been heaped to show the availability of options at the store. The heap draws a consumer, because of it being a clutter within such an organized environment. This becomes a strategy for building focus points within the store.

# 3

## Psychographics-The New Demographics

Scale a wall. Swing a golf club.  
Get warm in front of the fire.  
Read a good book. Play video games. Have afternoon tea.

What do these things have to do with shopping? They are all activities consumers can participate in at various retail environments around the country — before, after, or even while they shop. Retailers and retail developers are banking on the fact that given a more three-dimensional shopping experience replete with sights, colors, sounds, textures and movement, consumers will stay longer, shop more, and leave with lasting memories. They are even reaching out to the untraditional shoppers, building in leisure options for men accompanying their wives as they shop for clothes or home furnishings.

This movement toward lifestyle-oriented, experiential shopping reflects a major shift in the way that retailers are now targeting shoppers. For decades, particularly with malls as the engines of the shopping experience, demographics reigned supreme. Factors like household income, population and age drove retail — where it was clustered, how it was designed and its merchandise mix. In this modern era of information at our fingertips, demographics are no longer enough to understand consumer preferences. Today's savvy shoppers know they have options, and they make decisions not based on their social standing, but on their likes and dislikes, who they are, and who they want to be.

To truly understand their behavior and purchasing habits, retailers must examine psychographics, the measure of their attitudes, values and lifestyles, and integrate them into their brand strategies, and ultimately their retail environments.

### *The “Real” Deal*

With the heyday of heavily themed and entertainment-loaded regional shopping malls rapidly drawing to a close, the retail industry has discovered an important lesson about today's shoppers: They seek authenticity — even if it's manufactured authenticity. No longer willing to sit in traffic, battle for a parking spot and walk miles from one end of a shopping mall to the other, shoppers are now favoring convenience and accessibility—retail environments that function as natural extensions of their everyday lives. More than that, they seek real community where they shop — active public spaces; connections to where they live, work or play; and places to see and be seen.

For retailers, this translates to creating a sense of authenticity in their messages to their consumers and shopping environments. Today's customers are smart, and by the time the members of the technologically savvy and diverse Generation Y reach consumer age, they will have been bombarded by competing brands since birth. Standing apart from this fray of clamoring brands means finding a balance between what's new and exciting, and what's real. These customers want to know the why behind the products, and they aren't fooled by hyped-up image. Using design to

create a clear voice above the fray will foster a loyal community of followers to your brand.

## Transitory Experience

It's rightly said that great experiences don't happen by accident, they are the result of deep thought and deliberation. Experience is an interaction with one's environment which leads to moments of engagement and leaves behind a memory. Experiences shape perceptions and influence our psyche. While every moment, technically, is an experience of some sort, there is something striking and special about certain experiences that make them superior and memorable. Despite the materialistic bias of our culture, it is the experiences and not objects or things that hold the focus of our activities. Though physical objects are tangible and visible but their primary function is to engage us in an experience, which is largely an intangible concept.

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they connect to the mind in its whole, bringing it to a flow or stirred up state. Simply put, experience is an interaction with any product, artifact, system or the environment as a whole such that this interaction leads to some sort of sensory gratification and addition of value, tangible or intangible, desirable or undesirable. There are extensive ways of defining experiences even as simple as this, like, the sense of smell for which we often use the descriptor based on the sense of taste, "the salty air" is a way of defining an experience making use of a simile. An experience is, therefore, the conjurement of the individual aspects to create a holistic impact.

Allegiance is its consequence. Imagination is its prerequisite. Design! The ambiguity of the word itself has been under articulations from even before it was realised among humans. We have been evolving it, and vice versa since then.

The definition has changed and morphed itself in many variations. The act of discovering fire and finding mass to energy conversions find relationships subconsciously in our mind. This relationship has always been constant in acts of innovation, discovering, insights, creations, recreations and experience.

Hence, the act, the process of doing is more true to the definition than the outcome. The positives and negatives may be articulated later which may also lead to another process to evolve.

Design is how we craft our imagination, whims, practice and processes in a way that it facilitates the achievement of its objective. Its how we

promote an idea in an appealing manner while also eliciting specific human thoughts, emotions and behaviours. At the same time, these objectives must be accomplished within a host of constraints, including the physical space, the surrounding environment and the content and purpose of design. Design cannot be stirred up to a critical mass. It is subjective, ambiguous, complex and the consequence of human imagination and creativity. Another important prerequisite of design is keen observation of the objects, events and things around us. Observation leads to indulgence, indulgence leads to innovation, and innovation leads to gratification. Design circumvents it all. Design can make immense difference in the viewer's experience across a wide spectrum of endeavours. It is the most important ingredient in creating a holistic appeal. Just as there are ways that a composer can communicate joy, anger or sadness in his music and a painter can communicate confusion, turmoil or agitation on the canvas, a designer can communicate the horizon of human imagination through design.

Design has been much related to scope. Where, the depth and breadth of a scope might be looked upon for design opportunities. This leads to intentional intervention in any ongoing process. Ironically, the free-will in us, makes things easier for an unintentional intervention.

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## Buying Into It All

So what does it all mean? Understanding how your customers and how they respond to your brand is critical. Creating a strategy to remain fresh and personal means stretching that brand across and within your channels. One crucial means toward achieving that goal is through dynamic, brand-driven design: what your customers see and feel whenever they enter your store, open your web site or flip through your catalog. Design that enables the best, most consistent customer service from your employees. Design that meets and surpasses customer expectations. And ultimately, design that makes a lasting impression, scripting your customers in a larger experience and allowing them to make it their own.

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