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# Opportunities and risks of combining shopping experience and artistic elements in the same store: a contribution to the magical functions of the point of sale

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## ABSTRACT

This article draws on the construct of store atmospherics to address one of the latest developments in that field, i.e. the strategy of incorporating artistic elements into the store. On the one side, incorporating artistic elements in store atmospherics constitutes an innovative way for retailers to differentiate their shopping experience. Such a hybrid retail strategy seeks to offer maximised hedonic gratification to store visitors, while adding symbolic value to the commercial offering. Store traffic and sales are thus stimulated. Incorporating artistic elements is also a magic way to conceal the store's transactional purpose; through this association with the art world, the store is viewed as less mercantile. However, there is a risk that consumers will view the store as a 'museum' and visit without purchasing. Therefore we conduct a conceptual investigation of that experiential strategy in order to assess its effects on retailer's commercial and marketing performance.

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## KEYWORDS

Shopping experience; store artification; art; store museumification; hybrid retail strategy; retail performance

## Introduction

In the 1960s, Andy Warhol prophesised that in the future 'all department stores will become museums, and all museums will become department stores' (Twitchell, 2004, p. 227). Today, in a context of rising competition between retail shopping experience offerings, some stores started introducing artistic elements as an innovative way to attract consumers (Hollenbeck, Peters, & Zinkhan, 2008; Kozinets et al., 2002; Moore, Doherty, & Doyle, 2010). It is an opportunity for maximised consumer hedonic gratification, while adding symbolic value to the commercial offering (Dion & Arnould, 2011; Joy, Wang, Chan, Sherry, & Cui, 2014; Kapferer, 2012, 2014). As demonstrated by Ryan (2013) in his study of Las Vegas, introducing art in commercial settings adds a cultural appeal to the place. For a retailer, such strategy equals designing an experiential hybrid (Schmitt, 1999) that maximises both store's attractiveness (volume of visitors) and value (generated turnover) (Badot & Lemoine, 2014). Additionally, since artworks are unique by nature, they may serve the strategic purpose of store atmospherics – i.e.

bringing differentiation and therefore competitive advantage to the retailer in the marketplace (Turley & Chebat, 2002).

Manifestations of brands' collaborations with the art world are seen at the retail level mainly in flagship and department stores (Kent & Brown, 2009). Examples are numerous for luxury and lifestyle brands. Louis Vuitton regularly displays artworks in-store and six of its flagship stores (Paris, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Taipei, Singapore and recently Venice in 2014) feature an *Espace Culturel*, i.e. a dedicated art exhibition space. The fourth floor of the new Chanel store in Ginza, Japan is entirely dedicated to art (exhibitions, concerts, film projections, performing arts events). The Citroën DS flagship store in Paris is conceived as an 'art and lifestyle' space. Nike's latest *Sport is Art* store in Hong Kong blends items for sale with contemporary artworks, making it resemble an art gallery. Emblematic Parisian department store Galeries Lafayette has a permanent art exhibition space – *La Galerie Des Galeries* – on the first floor, while Le Bon Marché pursues a similar strategy, occasionally displaying monumental artworks of international artists. In 2014 the theme was Japan, and in 2015 Brooklyn, New York. For some product launches, Le Bon Marché hosts live DJ music sessions, such as one by Parisian artist Long Courrier in 2014. In China, the opening of the new Shanghai Burberry flagship store in 2014 was conceived as an art happening in itself: a live music performance followed the fashion show, which was staged as a Broadway musical. Audio-visual artistic content related to Burberry's universe was displayed throughout the store. Interestingly, this art-inspired trend of hybridising retail practices is also starting to spread to non-luxury brands. A striking illustration was the 2014 cooperation between famous artist Jeff Koons and the H&M fashion retailer, supported by a media campaign named *Fashion loves art*. The 'Jeff Koons for H&M' collection comprised a leather handbag with Koons' famous Balloon Dog print, sold in a few selected H&M stores worldwide.

Such manifestations in retail environments are part of a broader phenomenon of some brands establishing links with the art world. First conceptualised by Heinich and Shapiro (2012), this strategy is called *artification*: non-art is made art, products gaining the status of cultural – rather than commercial – goods. Some examples of the forms *artification* takes are:

- Brand museums (Hollenbeck et al., 2008). These are themed flagship stores, with the addition of historical linkages and museum-like characteristics, offering a 'cultural experience' to visitors. Luxury brands offer some interesting applications, such as the Christian Dior and Louis Vuitton museums in France. Among mass-market brands with museums we find Coca-Cola (Atlanta, USA), Haribo and Perrier (both in France). In total, there are over 1500 brand museums in the world (de Lassus, 2014).
- Some brands have recently launched mobile museums: architectural structures that travel internationally, such as the Prada Transformer and the Chanel Mobile Art Container (Kapferer, 2014).
- Exhibitions featuring the brand, its founder or an emblematic product. Held in museums – i.e. 'agents of consecration' (Kapferer, 2014, p. 377), these events are therefore identified as cultural exhibitions. In Paris, the Grand Palais museum exhibited Bulgari then Miss Dior in 2013, Cartier in 2014, Jean-Paul Gaultier and Louis Vuitton in 2015. The 2013 *N°5 culture Chanel* exhibition held in the

Contemporary Art Museum of Palais Tokyo staged a storytelling event about founder Coco Chanel's collaborations with artists throughout her life.

- Art foundations: Cartier, Louis Vuitton, Pinault, among others (Kapferer, 2014). As patrons of the arts, some luxury brands are now competing with museums (Joy et al., 2014).
- Sponsorship of art exhibits and cultural events (O'Reilly, 2005; Schroeder & Borgerson, 2002). The champagne brand Ruinart regularly sponsors contemporary art fairs worldwide, such as Art Basel Miami and Hong Kong. It asks artists to create monumental artworks for the occasion, inspired by the brand's distinctive features. During H&M's collaboration with Jeff Koons in 2014, the fashion company was also the official patron of Koons' retrospective exhibition, held both in Paris, at the National Museum of Modern Art Georges Pompidou, and in New York City at the Whitney Museum of American Art.
- Cultural showcases made by some brands to promote themselves, such as NikeTown (Joy et al., 2014; Penaloza, 1998; Sherry, 1998).

Replaced in a sociological perspective, artification is one of the latest trends in bringing re-enchantment to the contemporary customer. Max Weber's (1964/2002) disenchanted world (*Entzauberungder Welt*) resulted from the historical process of the disappearance of the magical in modern societies and the related rationalisation of consumer practices (Roederer, 2013). As an attempt to escape Weber's iron cage of rationality, the postmodern Western society that arose from the 1960s cultural revolution created 're-enchantment' (Badot, Bucci, & Cova, 1993). Re-enchantment is the reintroduction of the magical, irrational, mystical and spectacular dimensions into commercial offerings (Badot & Filser, 2007; Filser, 2002). The subsequent aesthetisation of everyday life (Lipovetsky, 2013; Maffesoli, 1985) has led to the rise of the emotional criterion (*aesthetis* meaning 'emotion' in Ancient Greek) in the realm of consumer practices. It also meant the collapse of boundaries between art and craft, occurring simultaneously with the de-aesthetisation of art – the loss of art's sacred aura that had kept it apart from everyday life (Badot et al., 1993). Lipovetsky (2013) calls the current stage that of 'artist capitalism': art is entering the commercial and entertainment realms. According to him, the intensification of competition in saturated markets, combined with more demanding consumers, have led to the current aesthetic inflation. Therefore 'aesthetic investment' has become an imperative, even more so in a context of economic downturn.

Our article is about artification of the customer shopping experiences. Indeed, these are ever more influenced by the evoked hybridisation between the art sphere and the commercial sphere (Joy et al., 2014; Kapferer, 2014). Following Verhoef et al. (2009), we define the customer shopping experience as the holistic combination of the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses to the retail environment. Additionally, we refer to the POS paradigm (Person × Object × Situation), i.e. the interactionist model of consumer decision-making (Punj & Stewart, 1983). The experience is seen as an interaction between an individual, an object and a situation. Finally, the objective of the shopping experience for the retailer is to maximise the value of the transaction, by increasing the level of consumer hedonic gratification (Roederer, 2013). We term 'artistic elements' the tangible and intangible

elements of the shopping experience that consumers view as art: the retailer's choice of the artwork should fit the target market's perceptions of art (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008a, 2008b). Indeed, our ambition here is not to define what art is; for our purposes, art is that which is considered art in the consumer's perception. Evaluation of the arts is an emotionally subjective experience and this experience is always unique, with a variety of meanings assigned (Fillis, 2004, 2011). Considering this inherent subjectivity, however, the literature also shows that consumers have 'a general schema for what constitutes art' (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008a, p. 213) and are able to distinguish art from non-art (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008a; Joy & Sherry, 2003). What matters here is that consumers can identify the artworks and artistic elements in the retail environment – selected by the retailer – as art. We therefore conceptualise the 'artified shopping experience' as the experiential strategy of combining the shopping experience and artistic elements in a given store.

Prior research has investigated the strategy of incorporating artistic elements in the shopping experience from a consumer's perspective, i.e. individual perceptions of artified store environments (Joy et al., 2014; Nuttavuthisit, 2014). Significant contribution has been made on aesthetic style, i.e. a consumer's cognitive vs. emotional tendency to react to an aesthetic/cultural stimulus in the context of a shopping experience (Godey, Lagier, & Pederzoli, 2009; Lagier, 2009; Lagier & Godey, 2007). What is lacking in the present literature, however, is a comprehension of the effects of the artified shopping experience on store performance, i.e. from a retailer's perspective. In attempting to fill that void, we therefore adopt the retailer's perspective and use the store atmospherics framework, applied to the analysis of artistic elements in the store. Prior literature has identified three dimensions that a retailer can manipulate to impact consumer emotions and behaviour: ambient/sensorial, design and social factors in store atmospherics (Baker, Grewal, & Levy, 1992; Baker, Grewal, & Parasuraman, 1994; Baker, Parasuraman, Grewal, & Voss, 2002; Bitner, 1992; Lemoine, 2003, 2004, 2005; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Puccinelli et al., 2009; Verhoef et al., 2009). Focusing on artistic elements in the store, our work aims to contribute to the field by considering the artistic dimension as a new, fourth dimension of store atmospherics. Specifically, this article assesses the impact of the artistic dimension on consumer emotions and behaviour from a theoretical perspective. Additionally, drawing on prior work on the magical dimensions of the store including artistic elements (Dion & Arnould, 2011; Joy et al., 2014; Kapferer, 2014), we aim at understanding the magical function of the artified shopping experience in terms of its effects on store's marketing and commercial performance. We wish to contribute by assessing both the positive and negative potential effects of the artified shopping experience on store performance. Finally, our article aims to fill a gap in the existing literature by offering a comprehensive view of the artistic dimension of store atmospherics and of its various components.

By theoretically exploring the effects of incorporating artistic elements into the shopping experience on store performance, this article thus seeks to offer strategic and managerial insights to retailers who are thinking about adopting this hybrid strategy. Indeed, such strategy promises the benefits of art-induced hedonic overstimulation of the consumer, potentially beneficial for store performance. But it also

implies the risk of museumification of the shopping experience, i.e. the store being visited as a museum without generating sales.

### A strategic view of the artified shopping experience

Figure 1 offers a strategic view of the artified shopping experience in terms of its potential impact on store performance. The model integrates the artistic elements in the shopping experience as a fourth dimension of the store atmospherics independent variable. It links it to the store performance dependant variable. Store performance is considered at a double level. Store’s commercial performance is assessed in terms of store attraction (traffic), conversion (percentage of visitors purchasing) and sales. Store’s marketing performance is assessed in terms of perceived value of store’s offering, store differentiation, retailer/store image and brand image. The model outlines the mediating role of customer emotions, where emotional state refers to the pleasure and arousal dimensions of Mehrabian and Russell’s (1974) PAD scale.

Figure 2 offers a detailed view of the artistic dimension of store atmospherics, based on the artistic features of the shopping experience as evidenced by the literature.

Figures 1 and 2 present the theoretical framework of the role of artistic elements in the field of retail shopping experience strategies. The following sections of this article will discuss the opportunities and risks of the artified shopping experience for store performance.

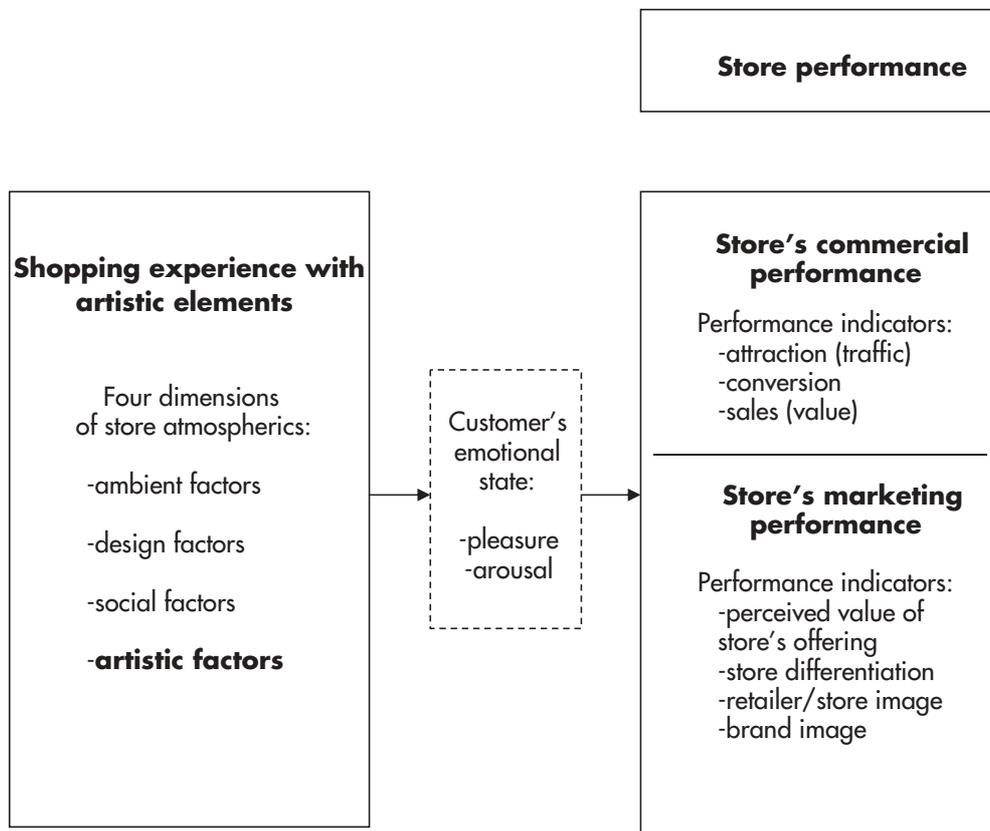


Figure 1. Emergent conceptual model of the impact of store artification on store performance.

<b>Artistic dimension of store atmospherics</b>	<b>Operationalization</b>
<b>Presence of artworks</b> -inside the store -in store windows -in a dedicated art exhibition space	-yes/no -yes/no -yes/no
<b>Performing arts events</b> -music concerts -other live art performances	-yes/no -yes/no
<b>Museum-inspired merchandizing techniques</b> -product displayed on pedestals -use of focused lighting -digital signage content with artistic effect -display of items for sale alongside artworks	-yes/no -yes/no -yes/no -yes/no
<b>Store architecture and interior design</b> -design by artist-architects -perception of artistic features in the architecture -art galleries-inspired 'white cube' interior design	-yes/no -yes/no -yes/no
<b>Display of co-branded products made with artists</b>	-yes/no
<b>Behaviour of store employees as museum curators</b> -knowledge about artistic elements in the store -educational approach of assistance to art appreciation -soft guidance without pressure to buy	-yes/no -yes/no -yes/no

Figure 2. Components of the artistic dimension of store atmospherics.

## Re-enchanting the shopping experience using art: beyond the transactional dimension

Re-enchantment of the shopping experience means that retailers go beyond the utilitarian aspects of commerce (Badot, 2005) by offering consumers store-induced fun, fantasy, excitement and memorability (Tynan & McKechnie, 2009). After showing why and how retailers try to produce sensorial and hedonic overstimulation, this section emphasises some recent developments in this area that are inspired by the art world. We present the option of incorporating artistic elements into the store as a renewed way to induce customer emotions and satisfaction.

### *Store atmospherics differentiation using artistic elements: how to reinvent the hedonic shopping experience?*

Since Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), we know that the shopping experience itself can be a source of hedonic gratification (i.e. satisfaction). The customer's decision-making process in the store is based on three dimensions: fantasies, feelings and fun. To create

these dimensions, some retailers use atmospherics, defined initially by Kotler (1973, p. 48) as 'the effort to design buying environments to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance his/her purchase probability'. So far, extensive literature on the topic has identified three kinds of consumer cues: design/architectural, ambient (sensorial dimensions) and social (pertaining to customers and/or salespersons' presence and interaction) (Baker et al., 1992, 1994, 2002; Bitner, 1992; Lemoine, 2003, 2004, 2005; Puccinelli et al., 2009; Verhoef et al., 2009). Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) PAD model explains the impact of such environmental stimuli on an individual's emotional reactions, consisting of three dimensions (pleasure/displeasure, arousal/non-arousal, dominance/submissiveness). By manipulating environmental and sensorial elements, the retailer can enhance customer pleasure and arousal, and therefore favourably orientate their behaviour, i.e. propensity to buy (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982).

However, since retailers are increasingly using store atmospherics as a strategic tool to attract customers (Turley & Chebat, 2002), its effectiveness in achieving and keeping a competitive advantage over competitors has minimised (Roederer, 2013). Retailers need to find innovative ways to differentiate their shopping experience – and consequently their company's offering (Badot & Lemoine, 2013; Roederer, 2013). Ryan (2013) has demonstrated that art can bring significant differentiation – and unique appeal – to a commercial and entertainment destination (i.e. the city of Las Vegas). For a particular store, introducing artistic elements is a recent strategy adopted by some retailers – mainly luxury flagship stores – to offer a new kind of consumer stimulation (Dion & Arnould, 2011; Joy et al., 2014; Kapferer, 2014). Adopting an 'aesthetically oriented strategy' (Joy et al., 2014, p. 361) results in a hybrid retail experience for the consumer: elements of art galleries and museums are integrated into the shopping experience. Here, the consumer experience is directed by the retailer (Nuttavuthisit, 2014). In some cases, such as Louis Vuitton flagship stores studied by Joy et al. (2014), the integration of artistic elements into the store environment is so accomplished that it ceases to be a mere experiential theme; instead these stores turn to be 'art institutions' (2014, p. 349).

Why should art be considered a differentiation tool for store atmospherics? First, the very nature of an aesthetic object is to be unique: it cannot be compared nor successfully duplicated by competitive producers (Hirschman, 1983). Integrating artistic elements therefore can create a unique store environment. Additionally, the aesthetic response, i.e. the appreciation of artistic elements by the individual, is complex since it consists of three dimensions (Charters, 2006; Wagner, 1999):

- Affective: it induces a hedonic response (i.e. pleasure) in the individual.
- Cognitive and symbolic: the cognitive aspect is significantly greater than in experiential consumption in general. Symbolic elements can be inner-directed (relating to one's sense of identity and self-development) and/or outer-directed (used by the individual to communicate messages to others).
- Sensory: it may provoke involuntary physical responses in the individual.

The perspective of affecting the individual at three different levels makes artistic stimuli particularly interesting for retailers aiming to impact their customers in a memorable way, and to create a unique perception of their store atmospherics.

In designing a shopping experience, the retailer is actually producing an experiential packaging for store's products (Filser, 2002; Turley & Chebat, 2002). Following Holbrook's (2000) 'four Es', this packaging consists of experience (i.e. emotions and pleasure), entertainment, exhibitionism (i.e. consumers' interactions with the brand), and evangelising (i.e. promotion of brand's values) happening inside the store. As demonstrated above, including some form of art constitutes an option for renewing the experiential packaging, namely by enriching its symbolic content: we refer here to the socio-cultural rhetorical dimension of the experience (its 'value of sign') evidenced by Roederer (2013). For instance, the avant-garde, experimental and radically different values associated with contemporary art explain why luxury brands introduce such artworks in their stores (Dion & Arnould, 2011). Louis Vuitton, Chanel or Burberry are some of examples of brands making such art choices for their retail staging. It echoes Schmitt's (1999) 'Think' dimension of experiential marketing of creating a cognitive experience that engages customers creatively, using surprise and provocation.

### ***Artistic elements induce an emotional response: a new source of hedonic gratification***

Why is art interesting for a retailer seeking to design a hedonic shopping experience? Art is associated with the 'production' of beauty: its purpose is aesthetic, as opposed to science whose aims are rational (Lalande, 2010). Aesthetics pertains to the appreciation of beauty: the aesthetic stimulus possesses characteristics that can induce sensations and emotions in the individual (Botti, 2000; Lagier, 2009). The aesthetic object exists primarily for the appreciation of its beauty or its emotionally moving characteristics (Charters, 2006). Unlike product styling for instance, where the aesthetic component may be peripheral, here it is considered indispensable to the act of consumption. The nature of involvement is also different: the perception of an artwork induces right brain hemisphere arousal, which functions through associations and metaphors (Botti, 2000; Bourgeon-Renault, 2000). Given that artistic elements induce an emotional response, they constitute a renewed source of hedonic gratification for customers looking for fantasies, feelings and fun (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Following Ritzer (2005), we suggest that introducing artistic elements in the store can re-enchant the shopping experience in a new way, i.e. create an affective experience for consumers in the 'Feel' dimension of experiential marketing (Schmitt, 1999).

Incorporating artistic elements into the store therefore means offering consumers the opportunity to have an aesthetic experience, i.e. interactions between a person's mind and art objects (Colbert & St-James, 2014), in a retail environment. We adopt Dewey's (1934/2005) view that the aesthetic experience is the experience appreciated for its own sake and perceived through emotion – the individual lives a happy absorption in a heightened life moment. In Dewey's view, the aesthetic experience is not distinct from, but part of the everyday experience and life; in our case the commercial context of a retail store. Importantly, it requires the individual's active participation: interaction is essential for an aesthetic experience to occur (Dewey, 1934/2005; Fillis, 2011; Nuttavuthisit, 2014). The consumer co-creates his satisfaction in the store (Ramsey White, Hede, & Rentschler, 2009), as otherwise in hedonic consumption (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Co-creation in an artistic experience means that the consumer

engages in a process of appropriation and meaning making, engaging with the artwork on a cognitive, emotional, sensory and imaginary basis (Caldwell, 2001; Charters, 2006; Colbert & St-James, 2014; Minkiewicz, Evans, & Bridson, 2014). In the service-dominant logic view, a consumer's active participation in the aesthetic experience implies a high level of engagement on his part (Ramsey White et al., 2009). It results in the co-creation of positive perceived value for the organisation and its commercial offering, and the future co-production of similar experiences is more likely (Ramsey White et al., 2009).

By incorporating artistic elements into the shopping experience, the retailer offers customers an opportunity for interaction with those elements, possibly resulting in co-creation of positive perceived value for the store and its offering. A good illustration are Burberry's London and Shanghai flagship stores, offering an experience rich in artistic content, and designed to be fully interactive by inviting customers to co-creation – which is supported by the online–offline integration of the experience.

### **The magical function of a store that contains artistic elements**

Among the symbolic functions of the store is the magical function, as illustrated by Badot (2005). Here we demonstrate how artistic elements produce magical effects on the store and its offering, through the two laws of similarity and contiguity with the art world. The presence of magic also hides the transactional purpose of the store, while adding perceived value to its commercial offering.

#### ***Magical effects of artistic elements on the store and store's offering***

Magic refers to 'supra-natural forces in action on earth thanks to the mediation of objects, icons and shamans' (Kapferer, 2012, p. 460). Following Dion and Arnould (2011), introducing artistic elements in the store activates two laws of magic – the effects of similarity and contiguity with the art world – which give an 'auratic' status to the store and its products. The similarity with the art world effect results from various elements in retail staging:

- The architecture of flagship stores, which makes them look like artworks themselves or 'pieces of urban art' (Kapferer, 2012, p. 460). Stores are designed by famous architects; some examples mentioned by Dion and Arnould are Rem Koolhaas for Prada Epicentre stores, Renzo Piano for Hermès, and Frank Gehry for Louis Vuitton. Often these star-architects consider themselves artists and are recognised as such by brands and customers. Therefore their flagship store creations turn out to be 'artistic architectural statements' (Kapferer, 2014, p. 379). Sometimes the store's interior architecture imitates an art gallery (Nobbs, Moore, & Sheridan, 2012), namely the 'white cube' design (Riot, Chamaret, & Rigaud, 2013, p. 931). Joy et al. (2014, p. 351) speak of 'stores-as-museums'.
- Museological techniques, i.e. techniques inspired by museums, are used for merchandising. These include screens in-store showing brand-related content video – i.e. digital signage – that are high on sensory cues: such visual stimuli mimic the hedonic effects of art (Dennis, Brakus, & Alamanos, 2013). Another technique is displaying sale items on pedestals, and using a focused lighting to enhance specific

elements of the offering (Joy et al., 2014). This technique makes products resemble 'icon(s)' or 'holy statue(s)' (Kapferer, 2012, p. 460). Additionally, as items for sale are displayed alongside artworks in an art dedicated space, the result is that they are perceived as equivalent (Joy et al., 2014). This specific staging is a type of sacralisation mechanism through which the profane (goods for sale) become 'sacred' by association (Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry, 1989; Hollenbeck et al., 2008).

- Display of co-branded products made jointly with artists, who have been invited to design special collections (Dion & Arnould, 2011; Joy et al., 2014; Kapferer, 2014; Lipovetsky, 2013). In advanced forms of artification, collaboration with artists occurs at almost every level of the value chain (Kapferer, 2014). As Kapferer observes, apart from collaborating upstream in the value chain, during the product creation phase, artists also intervene downstream: inspiring retail architecture, shop windows, packaging, merchandising and communication.
- The central figure of the creative director – a highly charismatic individual close to art spheres – imparts his/her magic touch to the store and product offering, and therefore to the customer by contagion (Dion & Arnould, 2011; Kapferer, 2014). Such was the influence of John Galliano on Dior (Dion & Arnould, 2011). Creative directors are considered living myths by their customers, able to guide them into the world of culture and art (Kapferer, 2014).
- Importantly, employees in these stores behave as museum curators. They offer soft guidance to customers, without any pressure to buy. They provide them with knowledge and skills to assist in their art appreciation. In this way, they play an educational role. These elements create a 'museum-like experience', as Joy et al. (2014, p. 355) put it.

The second law of magic that confers the properties of art on the store – via the presence of artistic elements in the retail staging – is the contiguity with the art world effect, as observed by Dion and Arnould (2011). This effect has been explained by Mauss and Hubert (2004) as the phenomenon where elements once in contact may continue to effect one another across time and space even after contact is severed. This means that the properties of art continue to reside in commercial products even after the customer's visit to the store. The impact on the image of the brand and its products is lasting.

### ***Artistic elements in the shopping experience conceal the store's commercial function***

As found by Badot (2005) in his doctoral empirical investigation, the magical function of the store is composed of three dimensions: re-enchantment, religiosity and regression. Here we demonstrate how the incorporation of artistic elements serves store's magical function, with the effect of hiding its commercial function.

How does art re-enchant the shopping experience? Against the rationalist approach of satisfying customer needs, re-enchantment in shopping means offering symbolical escapes and imaginary projections, as Badot (2005) has evidenced from his study of the West Edmonton Mall. In our case, re-enchantment is due to art (Ritzer, 2005) and is based on specific techniques – as seen in the previous section. Artistic elements in the store make it

escape the commercial realm, giving it a cultural appeal. Indeed, displaying artworks in the store and store windows, having a dedicated space for an art gallery – a ‘third space’ (Bingham, 2005) – and hosting cultural events equals to dedicating commercial surface to non-commercial activity (Kapferer, 2014; Nobbs et al., 2012). The new Chanel store in Ginza, Japan, has an entire floor dedicated to art exhibitions and events. That floor does not generate any sales. Precisely, as Dion and Arnould (2011) observe, such absence of utility is a condition for artification. Art has non-commercial connotations, its purpose not being direct monetary gain, since its value is independent of function (Joy, 1993; Kapferer, 2014; Rodner & Kerrigan, 2014). Indeed, contrary to the traditional customer-oriented marketing approach, i.e. anticipating and satisfying customer needs and wants, art creation is inspired more by product orientation (Fillis, 2011; Harrison, 2009). As Hirschman (1983) points out, the artist’s creativity is either self oriented or peer oriented and doesn’t seek commercial approval. The artist makes an artwork for personal satisfaction or to gain recognition and acclaim from peers and industry professionals. The only ‘customer’ to satisfy is the artist. Eventually, the artist presents the work to an audience, i.e. a public of potential buyers. What is more, commercial success and commercialised creativity may be even viewed negatively in the art world, according to Hirschman (1983). Therefore, the presence of artistic elements makes the store appear similarly non-commercial (Dion & Arnould, 2011). As Lipovetsky (2013) argues, through the association with contemporary art, a ‘symbolical transmutation’ occurs and brands are perceived as generous donors, offering culture free of charge. They are therefore viewed as less mercantile. Indeed, analysing the Burning Man music festival, Kozinets (2002) observes that art is used to mark a ‘dialectical opposition’ with business logic, governed by profit and functionality of designs. In the luxury sector, the association with art allows brands to symbolically escape the commercial realm (Passebois-Ducros, Trinquocoste, & Pichon, 2015). It echoes Rodner and Kerrigan’s (2014) analysis, using Bourdieu’s theory, that by communicating disinterestedness and denied interest in monetary gain, brands that associate with art gain symbolic capital. As re-enchantment turns retailing into retailment (Badot, 2005), we suggest that art can turn retailing into ‘art-retailment’: an experience with cultural appeal inside a store.

The second dimension of store’s magical function refers to aspects of religiosity: a form of syncretism, i.e. mix of an animism and a transcendence is observed (Badot, 2005). In our case, both regular items for sale ‘contaminated’ by store’s artistic aura, and special collections created in collaboration with artists, result in items for sale becoming non-commercial artworks (Dion & Arnould, 2011). It is the ‘decommodification strategy’ of Louis Vuitton launching artist-designed collections (Joy et al., 2014; Riot et al., 2013). Following a successful start with Japanese artist Murakami in 2004, the brand has pursued this strategy more recently with artists Stephen Sprouse, Richard Prince and Yayoi Kusama. Other brands’ collaborations with artists include collections made by Yamamoto for Comme des Garçons and Keith Haring for Vivienne Westwood (Passebois-Ducros et al., 2015). Following Frazer (1890/1959), ‘contagious magic’ is a mechanism of transfer of properties happening between two entities in physical contact. It results in the perception that some or all of their properties have been transferred to the other entity. In our case, the physical contact is between the artist-designed product and the artist, and/or between the product and the artified store; such contact resulting in a transfer of artistic qualities onto the product – i.e. artification of the object (Passebois-Ducros et al., 2015). Similar to the work of Andy Warhol, which was about taking the

commodity out of its consumer context, the result is that the commodity acquires artistic value (Rodner & Kerrigan, 2014). Through their association with the art world, brands transform non-art into art (Kapferer, 2014). These artist-designed products, such as Murakami's accessories collection for Louis Vuitton, are perceived as limited edition 'works of art', thereby becoming cultural artefacts (Hollenbeck et al., 2008; Joy et al., 2014). They can therefore be considered fetishised products, echoing Belk's (2001) analysis of fetishes having 'magical power'. Such products constitute here the material support for animism – i.e. the celebration of the world of the objects and the 'infra-ordinary' (Badot, 2005). Indeed, in the context of an artified store, animism resides in the cult of art-infused items (Kapferer, 2012). It echoes Frazer's (1890/1959) analysis of magical thinking – i.e. the attribution of meaningful connections to correlated actions/events and/or object. Indeed, as demonstrated by Fernandez and Lastovicka (2011), magical thinking – in a commercial realm – transforms mass-produced replicas into fetishes. Fetishes therefore are consumer products that become 'magical objects' of extraordinary empowerment for their possessor, and thus of high value. Such use of magical thinking by consumers allows to consider some aspects of the marketing practice as a 'modern system of magic' (Miles, 2013, p. 2002). For instance, the limited number handbag collection created by artist Jeff Koons for the H&M fashion retailer in 2014, sold exclusively in a few H&M stores worldwide, evokes a fetishisation of products made art, referring to an animistic cult of objects; such collaboration benefiting in turn H&M in terms of brand image. Products transformed into artistic objects further reinforce the 'magical cult' and iconic status of the brand (Kapferer, 2012, 2014).

Additionally, we connect animism with transcendence, whose logics are opposite but together create the dimension of religiosity (Badot, 2005). Within the store, transcendence – because of the place itself or the founder, for instance – refers to the separation of the sacred and profane, inspired by traditional religions, as observed by Badot. Store artification indeed obeys sacralisation mechanisms, as found by Dion and Borraz (2015) in the case of heritage stores. Namely, the staging of myths about the founder's connections with art – such as Coco Chanel and Christian Dior – combined with spectacular architectural features further sacralise artified flagship stores, making them resemble 'modern cathedrals' and reinforcing brand's symbolic authority (Kapferer, 2012, p. 460).

Finally, re-enchanting the shopping experience by incorporating artistic elements, with the effect of making the store and its offering appear uncommercial by association, resembles magical techniques of illusionism (Badot, 2005). Art hides the store's transactional purpose and therefore disturbs customer's rational benchmarks. As found by Badot, such formal regression – i.e. temporary loss of logical structures of thought – leads to affective states that favour infantile impulses (decisional hierarchy type 'affective-conative-cognitive') and therefore also operates a temporal regression.

### **The risk of combining shopping experience and artistic elements: store museumification**

While promising more hedonic gratification for consumers and a renewed experience of magic in a retail space, incorporating artistic elements into the store also comes with a risk. Consumers may visit the store as if it were a museum, without buying anything. The cost could turn out to be excessive compared to benefits. An ongoing debate in the

literature opposes two approaches when it comes to measuring the commercial and marketing performance of the shopping experience with artistic elements.

### ***The risk of reclassifying the store as a non-business place***

Why might the strategy of incorporating artistic elements into the shopping experience lead to a store's functional reclassification?

We should point out that some experiential strategies have failed. The reasons for this were a mismatch between the experiential theme and brand positioning or excessive costs compared to benefits (Kozinets et al., 2002; Roederer, 2013). Risk is indeed present at different levels for the shopping experience with artistic elements. Initial investments for designing the experiential environment are usually high and so are the store's subsequent operating costs. A large and skilful sales team is necessary for the communicative staging of the store, i.e. interpreting the proposed experience for customers and helping them appropriate it (Kozinets, 2002; Roederer, 2013). In particular, the artified store needs employees behaving as museum curators, assisting customers in their appreciation of artistic elements (Joy et al., 2014): this constitutes an additional economic and human-factor risk. What is more, competition between retailers in designing experiential shopping experiences has intensified, leading to overstatement in theatricalisation according to Roederer (2013). As she observes, consumers today are less easily surprised when visiting a store, which explains the current trend of the rising cost of re-enchantment. Assessing the cost-effectiveness of store atmospherics incorporating artistic elements is therefore essential, i.e. understanding the atmospherics-behaviour relationship (McGoldrick & Pieros, 1998). Indeed, the contribution to store profitability is not certain, given the contradictory nature of art and commercial offerings (Kozinets, 2002; Lipovetsky, 2013). What is more, the space occupied by artistic elements in the store, whether for the display of artworks or dedicated space such as an art exhibition space, is non-productive space for the company's commercial offerings (Joy et al., 2014; Nobbs et al., 2012). The purpose of this 'wasted space' is indeed restricted to communicating the notions of exclusivity and luxury (Joy et al., 2014), referring to Veblen's theory (1899/1970) of conspicuous consumption. Here we reactualise Veblen's theory, with art replacing aristocratic symbols as the support for demonstrating distinction.

Shopping experiences that include artistic elements should therefore be examined in the light of the competitive commercial advantage they bring to the firm (Roederer, 2013). Following Trinquencoste (1999), the competitive commercial advantage is a delicate balance, at a given moment, between competitors' offerings, the company's offering and customers' needs. McGoldrick and Pieros (1998) have proven atmospherics to be a tool for image differentiation of retailers. If store atmospherics help the retailer differentiate from the competition, the customer perceives its offering as delivering higher value, and therefore is willing to pay a price premium (Porter, 1987; Turley & Chebat, 2002). On the contrary, if the shopping experience becomes the main element of the offering, the risk is that customers will visit the store without purchasing anything (Filser, 2002). A good illustration is the London Harrods department store: having become an iconic store and therefore a tourism attraction in itself (Dennis et al., 2013) – even more so since it has a permanent art exhibition space – it generates a large number of visitors. However traffic is to be distinguished from the actual conversion rate (percentage of visitors buying). This is the risk of museumification: the store is visited for the contemplation of its artistic elements, like a museum. As

demonstrated previously, in order to make sales, the commercial purpose is hidden through the magic trick of using art. But this can lead to functional reclassification (art gallery vs. store).

### ***Revisiting the performance measurement of shopping experiences that include artistic elements***

Measuring the performance of such experiential strategies is even more necessary in the current context of the growing need to justify marketing expenses (Petersen et al., 2009; Roederer, 2013). Turley and Chebat (2002) consider store atmospherics as a strategic variable for retailers; however, the strategic impact of artistic elements in store atmospherics has to be proven.

For some authors, the ROI criterion is therefore central (Petersen et al., 2009; Roederer, 2013; Ryski, 2011). The store has to be profitable and its main function is to sell goods. Specifically, this transaction-focused approach refers to three kinds of store performance indicator to be monitored: traffic/attraction (number of visitors); conversion (percentage of visitors who buy something); and sales (total and average per basket) (Ryski, 2011). Ryan (2013) demonstrated that bringing art to Las Vegas made the city an 'art-tourism destination' (2013, p. 291), attracting more visitors. Bringing art to the store similarly adds an additional – cultural and artistic – appeal for shoppers. Additionally, store atmospherics offering retailment – in our case art-retailment – influence shoppers to undertake browsing behaviour, i.e. staying longer in a store and exploring what it has to offer (Turley & Chebat, 2002). And both browsing behaviour (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998), and emotional activation (Weinberg & Gottwald, 1982) – here due to artistic elements have been found to directly influence impulse purchasing, thus generating more sales.

This approach therefore considers the shopping experience with artistic elements as a direct source of competitive advantage for the firm (Roederer, 2013). A contribution to the store's commercial performance is essential. In Turley and Chebat's (2002) view, a unique atmosphere is a source of competitive advantage for the retailer because it brings them differentiation and therefore a superior or unique aspect for need satisfaction in the marketplace. In that perspective, integrating artistic elements may constitute a powerful differentiation factor since artworks are by nature unique creations, and in the case of performing arts (i.e. music concerts, exhibitions, etc.) are ephemeral and renewed events. Interestingly, Petkus Jr. (2004) supports this vision by extending Pine and Gilmore's (1998) experiential framework to arts experiences. The experience with artistic elements should result in a memorable experience for the customer, thus adding perceived value to the commercial offering and hence translating into more sales.

### ***The shopping experience with artistic elements contributes rather indirectly to store performance via the impact on brand and store image***

Kotler (1973) demonstrated that, additionally to the impact on emotional states, store atmospherics create a retail image in customer's minds. The atmosphere is a 'psychological attribute' of store image (Turley & Chebat, 2002, p. 132). And literature shows that the association with art has an impact on brand image (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008a, 2008b; Schroeder & Borgerson, 2002; Ramsey White et al., 2009). The art infusion

theory has proven the 'spillover effect' of art on consumer evaluations of products: the brand gains attributes traditionally associated with art, i.e. those of culture, luxury and prestige (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008a, 2008b). Regardless of the specific content of the artwork, these attributes associated with art affect consumer perceptions. Following Bourdieu's (1984) analysis, art refers to cultural capital and thus demonstrates 'distinction' and sophistication (Ryan, 2013). It ennobles the brand and even confers a sense of eternity, as the brand joins an eternal time – that of creation and beauty (Lipovetsky, 2013). Art is therefore a powerful tool for enhancing brand and store image (Joy, 1993; Lipovetsky, 2013; Schroeder & Borgerson, 2002). The association with art also affects the perceived value and customer price sensitivity to the store's offerings. Artification has the ability to transform non-art into art, as Kapferer (2014) observes. The integration of Murakami's universe in Louis Vuitton stores, i.e. blending the worlds of art and of luxury, makes the co-branded products appear unique, while raising the switching cost for customers (Riot et al., 2013). Associating the brand with art also creates a barrier to entry for competitors, particularly young creative brands (Kapferer, 2014).

Finally, the debate on the function and profitability of the flagship store, i.e. the retail form best suited to introducing artistic elements, offers an alternative approach to ROI as the ultimate criterion for performance measuring. Some scholars argue that the flagship store, as a particular distribution channel for the firm's offerings, should be an exception to such measurements. It is a specific retail form whose purpose is strategic: to be a brand ambassador (Godey et al., 2009; Kozinets et al., 2002; Manlow & Nobbs, 2013; Moore et al., 2010). The flagship store is a powerful communication vector for the brand, expressing its value while relating to customers in an effective way. There are three reasons for this, according to Filser (2001): it can initiate important informal and formal communication, has a strong visitor attraction potential and a potential image transfer from the flagship store to the retailer can happen. Therefore the flagship store does not obey the ROI criterion directly. Rather, it contributes to the overall profitability of the brand (Moore et al., 2010), in combination with the other retail channels within new 'brick-and-click' strategies (Filser, 2001; Kozinets et al., 2002; Mosca & Re, 2014). The presence of artistic elements creates buzz and arouses interest in visiting the store (Hollenbeck et al., 2008; Kozinets et al., 2002; Moore et al., 2010). This second approach to measuring store performance therefore advocates going beyond the transactional and short-term perspective of monitoring immediate store-level metrics (such as traffic or sales). Instead it recommends adopting a long-term customer relationship and brand loyalty building strategy, to be pursued interdependently in all channels (brick-and-mortar store, e-commerce and other digital channels) (Badot & Lemoine, 2013; Lemoine, 2003). This is why Kapferer (2014, p. 376) speaks of 'return on art investment' when it comes to measuring the effects of artified retail strategies. He admits however that the contribution of artification to value creation is hard to measure. The retailer has to find a way to combine the strategy of incorporating artistic elements into the store with other, for-profit strategies (Joy et al., 2014).

### Future research issues

Most of the published research on the ongoing 'aesthetic transformation of retailing' (Joy et al., 2014, p. 349) has adopted a consumer, rather than managerial perspective, to demonstrate the effects of such retail environments on customer perceptions. Our aim

was to theoretically investigate this recent and promising strategy of incorporating artistic elements into the shopping experience from the retailer's perspective.

Indeed, deciding to give the store an artistic orientation is as promising as it is risky for the retailer. Art can re-enchante customers in an innovative and audacious way, making them feel unexpected emotions for a retail place (Lipovetsky, 2013). This is magic in a new form, arousing interest in visiting the store and adding perceived value to the items for sale, while making customers forget they are still in a commercial scenario.

However, as observed in this article, the effect of such aesthetic retail strategies on retailers' objectives – be they immediate commercial performance or longer term brand image building – is hard to predict. The inherent subjectivity and importance of personal taste in art makes the selection of artistic elements to be incorporated into the store challenging. The reaction to an aesthetic stimulus varies immensely across individuals (Charters, 2006; Nuttavuthisit, 2014; Venkatesh & Meamber, 2008). Finding the right fit between the brand image and the range of individual tastes (found in a firm's customer base) and cultural and symbolic capital may seem an impossible mission. This is not to mention the complexity of the aesthetic subject: consumers' motivations and levels of involvement in aesthetic experiences vary greatly, as shown by Venkatesh and Meamber (2008).

Therefore, a key managerial and strategic issue that needs to be addressed in future research is the quantitative test of the effects of artistic elements, i.e. a fourth dimension of store atmospherics, on store performance. Namely, future empirical research should assess the metrics – of both commercial and marketing performance – most impacted by the presence of artistic elements in the store. The managerial stake being to inform practitioners who are already designing such hybrid retail environments – or considering the option about their cost-effectiveness, thus the eventual trade-offs to be considered.

Another managerially relevant issue for future research is extending the field of application to non-luxury stores. Indeed, most of previous research on the issue has considered artification only for luxury brands' stores. This article discussed the benefits of store artification without limiting the analysis to the luxury sector. Therefore empirical evidence is needed about the relevance of incorporating artistic elements into non-luxury retail stores.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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