an architecture story
--engaging design through storytelling

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By

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abstract

There are many historic pieces of architecture that are centuries old, but still somehow maintain the same level of magnificence and delight as they had when they were first completed. Despite their age, they still understand and connect with people because they still tell stories of progress, society, and life.

In comparison, many examples of modern architecture are plagued with irrelevance to its users. It often projects the ego of the architect, a soul-less level of economy, or a trendy aesthetic. As a result, there are many buildings that do not understand its users. A space that a human cannot relate to is an unpleasant space to be in.

In today’s economy and due to societal values, architecture is mainly profit driven. The human element is often glossed over because, at a glance, designing for programmatic efficiency or an ego is more immediately profitable and valuable than designing for a human experience.

This research project investigates how to bring human relevance back into architecture via storytelling. Brand Strategy will be tested as a design tool to achieve this, because it has a proven application of storytelling in the marketing field and in commercial architecture. Case studies have been conducted on various examples of commercial architecture in order to establish how architecture benefits from branding and storytelling.

The goal is to develop a new marketable design process that focuses on telling a story, rather than giving physicality to an idea. Once a new design process has been established by this, it is applied to three different architectural typologies through design charrettes; an urban master plan, a residential complex, and an educational institution. This is to demonstrate that the design process is versatile, and may be applied to any project scale or any type of architecture.
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preface

Architecture was once created for people. It told stories about life and humanity in their respective time periods. Some examples that immediately come to mind are the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the heart of Westminster borough in London, and Piazza del Campo in Siena. All of these examples have a certain characteristic, an identity and a story, that people can experience and relate with.

Today, people are willing to pay large sums of money to visit and experience these places because they remain engaging. People still find their stories intriguing.
introduction | the problem

A common challenge in many pieces of architecture today is how they are often profit driven. A lot of attention is placed into economic sustainability, efficiency in space usage, and visual aesthetics. While these are basic things to consider when designing architecture, they risk lacking depth to remain relevant and interesting to the occupant.

When people do not appreciate the space they are in, they are unlikely to enjoy it and would most likely not want to be there. This is because the building lacks an identity and sense of place. The priority in the building’s design was to maximize profit and minimize costs, rather than to satisfy the human needs of that particular space.

As a result, these spaces are ironically inefficient, and offer a lower quality of life for the occupants. No one wants to do work, learn, live, or rest in a space that does not properly understand or support their needs.
introduction | a solution with a problem

Initially, the solution appears simple and obvious: add the storytelling element back into design. Instead of giving physicality to seemingly arbitrary demands, develop a story that intrigues both the client and the users.

The problem with this solution is that it is not marketable. A client is asking for an architect to design a building, and instead, the architect presents the client a story. The layman does not understand the relationship between a piece of architecture and a story, because a layman typically understands architecture as an object, rather than as a space. A building is typically understood as a “thing” that people walk into.

In order to give marketability to this solution, another solution must be combined with it to remedy the problem.
introduction | a solution to the solution’s problem

Brands have a proven application of storytelling when marketing products and services. It demonstrates to the consumer that the company and its products or services know how to meet their needs in ways that are relevant or intriguing.

There are parallels between marketing a business and architecture:

--A company needs to make profits to survive, in the same way that an architectural development needs to be profitable in order for it to be a worthwhile investment.

--Consumers will typically give their business to the company that is best able to meet their needs, in the same way that building occupants prefer to occupy a space that meets their needs.

Theoretically, branding can market a story for architecture in the same way that it can market a business.
doctorate statement

--People, stories, and brand
The ultimate goal is to create a design process yielding architecture that engages people. Architecture that makes a gesture at being engaging can potentially improve the quality of life for the people experiencing the space. The challenge is to do this in a way that is marketable.

In theory, this can be done by combining storytelling and branding. Storytelling is the heart of the process. It tells a story of people’s lives and how they interact with the architecture. Telling a story establishes a relevance to people. The story then becomes the framework for every piece of architectural design; everything that is drawn or modeled will contribute to telling the story.

The challenge is convincing a client that they actually want a story instead of a sculpture. However, it would be much less of a challenge to convince the client if they get a branded piece of architecture in the end. This is because the layman typically does not understand the full extent of what a brand is, but only knows of its power to add value to an asset.

The story and the architecture are inseparable, and the problem lies in the layman not understanding this concept. As mentioned previously, architecture is commonly perceived as a “thing” rather than as a space. When a client hires an architect, they expect the architect to take the client’s ideas and create “things” with it.

Branding solves the problem of presenting to the client a story, when they asked for a building to be designed. It is the bridge that spans between complex architectural concepts, and the tangible elements that represent the concepts. The brand is simply the identity of the story, and the layman has a much easier time placing value in a brand than in a story.

In short, the idea is to use branding to sell a story that directly influences the architecture.
branding

With user relevance and marketability as primary goals, **branding is the key** to creating a solution through storytelling.

In order to utilize branding as a way to market a story in architecture, **branding must first be thoroughly understood** in its traditional context in marketing. (please also refer to appendix A and appendix B for further information on branding)
branding | definitions

Brand is a vehicle that emotionally connects people to an inanimate object.\(^1\) It is the power that drives people to spend large amounts of money to own a leather wallet made by Gucci, rather than a leather wallet distributed by Walmart.

This is the powerful connection that people should have with the architectural spaces that they interact with on a daily basis.

Brand positioning is the expression of key elements which make a brand unique.\(^2\) This is how the brand compares to other brands or other relevant context.

---for example:
Apple | minimalism, creativity, leisure
Microsoft | business, professional, corporate

Brand identity is the visual perception of a brand.\(^3\) Traditionally speaking, this is the culmination of all the brand elements, which are mostly perceived visually. But in an architectural application, all sensorial perceptions make an important impression on the brand.

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1  Kim-Johnson, Ma Ry, interview by Howard Shek. 2014. (February 28).
2  Wilks, Tony, interview by Howard Shek. 2014. (December 17).
branding | what branding is, and what branding is not

There are a few common misconceptions about branding that must be addressed. This project is not about simply giving a name and a logo to a piece of architecture. A previous D. Arch research paper about Branding in Architecture states that “The foundation of brand is trust.”¹ Trust is not gained from fancy logos or names, it is gained by positive experiences through the stories that are told by the brand.

Furthermore, a brand is not determined by the brand holder, it is determined by the user. It is a person’s feelings towards the product, service, or the company. In the case of this project, it is a person’s experience in an architectural space. “Branding is the process of connecting good strategy with good creativity.”²

“This Branding is the identification of a client with their vision and mission statement. Branding is not just about a logo, a product, or one specific single entity, it is the unit as a whole expressing a continuity of the client’s brand.”³

---

branding | who is affected?

Everyone who has a preference for a particular brand of product is affected by branding. Some people are more directly affected than others by certain brands. This all depends on how a brand connects to people at an emotional level.¹

Branding has a tendency to sway people’s decisions on what they eat, the clothing they wear, the things they buy, and even how they live their lives, among many other things. It has a powerful influence on people’s preferences.

**branding | what does it do?**

People are more likely to remember and connect to things that **resonate with them on an emotional level. This is what branding does** for an inanimate object that would otherwise fail to connect with people in this manner.

Branding typically invokes positive emotions upon the end user; emotions such as happiness, feelings of inclusivity, feeling special and unique, and feelings of making the right choice.
branding | how does it relate to architecture?

Although brand strategy is a marketing concept, it can also be applied in architecture. Coincidently, business and architecture are conducted on very similar models of practice in terms of client interaction. ¹ (refer to table 1)

---table 1. architecture vs marketing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>common objectives</th>
<th>architecture</th>
<th>marketing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting client needs</td>
<td>-- designs are based on client's needs, and are also influenced by site context</td>
<td>-- products are based on end user's needs, and are also influenced by firm and market factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a product</td>
<td>-- buildings</td>
<td>-- goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- spaces</td>
<td>-- services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis (Customer Journey)</td>
<td>-- <strong>Opportunities</strong></td>
<td>-- Strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- Constraints</td>
<td>-- Weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- Goals</td>
<td>-- <strong>Opportunities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- Values</td>
<td>-- Threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- External Influences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- Driver</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design for...</td>
<td>-- place</td>
<td>-- <strong>end user</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- <strong>user</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both business and architecture thrive on selling products that a client needs or desires. Businesses develop a product by isolating their client's needs while conforming to the conditions of the market and the firm. Market and firm factors are the context in which businesses operate.²

---

¹ Kim-Johnson, Ma Ry, interview by Howard Shek. 2014. (February 28).
Wills, James, interview by Howard Shek. 2014. (February 28).
² Hartmann, Nathaniel, interview by Howard Shek. 2014. (April 25).
On the other hand, Architecture has a very different kind of context to consider. When designing architecture, the client’s needs must be satisfied in a way such that it would not negatively impact the surrounding design context. “Design context” can be defined as many things: people, culture, existing development, site conditions, location, and anything else that the architecture directly affects.

In marketing, branding serves as a way to sell a story: the company’s motivations and goals, the lifestyle that a product or service satisfies, and the relationship between the end user and the company.

The similarities between business marketing and architecture creates a strong case for applying a business strategy to architectural design.
branding | why storytelling and branding?

“Modern society is information-rich and time-poor.”¹ While this is a statement made in reference to brand development, this is also highly relevant to architectural development. Not many people will take the time to understand an architectural space. If it does not immediately speak to them, then it is not engaging.

If architecture told a story of the user’s experience, there would be no conscious effort needed by the user to understand the space. The act of occupying and moving within the space automatically tells the story. While the experience itself should be memorable, it needs to be further reinforced with an identity.

This is where branding is helpful. Branding is a marketing strategy, and its purpose is to promote a company’s image and reputation to many people. If this works well for a business, it should work well for promoting a story/experience.

---

observational research | introduction

These are observations made on commercial architecture that can be found on the island of Oahu in the state of Hawai’i. The observations are made based on the three levels of branding, as mentioned in the case study of Nike Town (refer to appendix B). The purpose of these observations is to personally experience and analyze branded architecture.

--level 1 | obvious
How the brand gathers attention

--level 2 | sensorial
How people experience the brand

--level 3 | subliminal
How people remember the brand subconsciously
observational research | Apple Store

--brand interpretation

Apple is unique in that the brand does not specifically push to sell its products. But rather, it focuses on selling a lifestyle. Every product they have created has reinvented ways of using technology that already exist. Apple sells a life style of quality, minimalism, and simplicity. Everything associated with Apple will echo these values.
level 1 | obvious

Apple’s storefront is the brightest in the area, this is immediately eye catching.

The design promotes transparency; nothing in the store is obscured, as seen in the photo below. This promotes a sense of honesty, showing that there is nothing to hide.

With the crowds of customers in plain sight from the outside of the store, this stirs up curiosity for people to investigate. “Why are there so many people there? Maybe there is something interesting.”

Everything about the store front is “shiny.” Generally speaking, people are attracted to shiny things.

In comparison, the Microsoft Store is not as successful in the same regard because it only mimics the aesthetics and misses the underlying ideas that drives the design of Apple’s storefront.
level 2 | sensorial

Apple is all about simplicity and minimalism, and this idea is reflected in every design element of the store.

No visual clutter is created with the merchandise. All the stock is hidden in the back of house. This is more pleasing to the eyes.

There is a consistency between the design of the store and the design of the products.

Customers are constantly bombarded with visuals of the Apple lifestyle through large color photos of their products.

Every material used to design the store is smooth in texture, so as to remain consistent with their products. As a result, everything appears clean and attractive.

Where the Apple Store orientates their display for user experience, the Microsoft Store orientates their display for (too much) information.

Apple iPad display
--minimalism encourages exploring features, rather than reading about them

Microsoft Surface Pro display
--products sit on pedestals, technical specs are the point of focus
The entire store is evenly lit by soft lighting and, to some degree, emulates diffused sunlight. This automatically makes occupying the store feel more lively.

The lighting yields soft shadows and promotes relaxed ambiance.

There is possibly a white noise looping in the store. Music is never played, but the store never appears to be quiet, even when it is empty.

The store has a very noticeable “new” smell. The product line is not updated frequently enough for all display products to maintain the new smell naturally, which leads to the speculation that the aroma is artificial. People like the smell of new things.

In comparison, it is clear that the Microsoft Store is also mimicking the aesthetics of the interior, but does not place as much attention to the details that affect the user experience.
At the entrance is a translucent light marquee that sits behind the large store front windows. This display alternates between all colors of the visible light spectrum, and emits a soft glow against the brushed aluminum finishes of the store front. Incidentally, the screen saver known as “flurry” on the Macintosh computers creates a very similar effect. This may induce feelings of familiarity to returning customers. Familiarity is comforting.

The store physically has the same materiality as all of the Apple products on display. In essence, the Apple store is an Apple product. Apple products are well trusted by many customers, and the architecture of the store echoes the product’s design to invoke the same feelings of trust and confidence.

The customer’s senses are constantly bombarded with what is understood as “new.” Everything in the store smells, looks, and feels new. Everything in the store is communicated as being trendy and relevant.

Apple products are known for being simple and easy to use. The store layout reflects this by being easy to navigate and very transparent, further reinforcing the “what you see is what you get” concept.
observational research | Starbucks

--brand interpretation

Similar to Apple, Starbucks focuses on selling a lifestyle, rather than just coffee. They have sold a daily routine to thousands of people living in urban areas.

For example: Every morning before work, John or Jane stops by Starbucks to pick up a bagel and coffee, where he or she sits down at a table to read the news on their iPads. Incidentally their iPads are connected to a free WiFi network provided by Starbucks.

Everything offered by Starbucks further fuels this type of routine.
level 1 | obvious

There is a combination of a several visual details that are strongly associated with Starbucks; the green umbrellas and/or the canopy with the tinted glass storefront.

There is a sense of exclusivity communicated by the inability to clearly see inside, especially while there is a large amount of foot traffic moving in and out of the coffee shop.

The familiar Starbucks color palette establishes its presence (dark green, shades of brown, black and white accents.)

In comparison, The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf has a less effective approach because their brand is diluted by the Foodland brand. While harming its brand identity, this is to show that The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf is a subsidiary of Foodland.
level 2 | sensorial

Upon entering Starbucks, the distinct smell of slightly burned coffee is the first thing that most people would notice.

The mood is calm, reinforced by the dim ambient lighting with focused task lighting where needed. This is also supported by the material and color choice of wood and earthy color tones.

The small tables promote a sense of ownership.

The focused tasks lighting at every table provides a sense of importance for the work that the customer arrived to do.

Starbucks has a very careful selection of music that it chooses to play, ranging from jazzy to pop. The type of music that is played is always smooth, rhythmic, and is never loud.

Black and white photos, and monochromatic graphics showing the history of Starbucks, enforces an image of establishment and culture.

In comparison, The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf does very little in controlling their lighting and as a result, the space lacks an atmosphere that Starbucks succeeds in achieving.

VS.

Starbucks
--controlled atmosphere via lighting and materials selection

The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf
--evenly lit, choice in materials are not deliberate, lack of atmosphere
level 3 | subliminal

The space is designed towards welcoming lone individuals or pairs of people. All of the tables are small and would not comfortably accommodate more than two people, though it is not a problem to move multiple tables together to accommodate more. The latter is clearly not the focus of the original design intent.

The slightly burnt smell in the coffee may be intentional, so as to make it distinct from other coffee aromas. This smell would automatically trigger the thought of Starbucks.

The lighting and material around the cashier counter is significantly brighter than everything else in the room. This draws focus to the one part of the shop where people go to buy more coffee.

All displayed artwork has a particularly loose style, which conforms to the relaxed atmosphere that the architecture promotes.

In comparison, the space in The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf lacks a design purpose. It seems that tables and chairs are set just so people do not have to stand to drink their beverage. These tables are neither working spaces, study spaces, nor socializing spaces.

VS.

Starbucks
--this is perfectly acceptable usage of a table by one person

The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf
--awkward shared seating, not meant to be used by one person for a prolonged period of time
--brand interpretation

The Disney Aulani resort separates itself from other resorts in Hawai‘i by telling a story to their visitors. This story is their brand. Every possible path that a visitor can take has been carefully engineered by Disney’s Imagineers. As a result, every path is rich in positive and memorable experiences.
level 1 | obvious

At a glance, there is clearly a Hawaiian theme throughout the development.

All colors and materials are very nature inspired (browns and greens; wood and rope).

All tourist have a stereotypical preconception of what Hawai’i is like, and the Aulani satisfies this preconception well.

Although the Aulani resort is branded as “Disney Aulani”, this is not the typical Disney themed resort. Rather than expressing the Disney branding, the architecture expresses the image of Hawai’i.

There are a lot of native plants and running water on site.

There are clear traditional architectural influences (building forms influenced by ancient Hawaiian shelters).

In comparison, the Hyatt Regency Waikiki expresses Hawai’i in a less genuine manner by simply adding palm trees and water features to a monolithic complex.
Upon closer inspection, a lot of the architecture was designed to appear as if it were built with traditional methods (e.g., Thatched roofing, lashings, choice of materials).

While most of the materials are fake (fake lashings, fake rock walls, etc), there is a high attention to detail which makes it appear convincing and authentic.

The textures of the materials are consistent with the real materials, making the fake materials extremely convincing.

Water-reflected sunlight partially fills in the lobby.

The atmosphere is very laid back.

In comparison, The Hyatt Regency places very little attention to details. They create a spatial experience through scale and large forms rather than through intimate details.
Most tourist attractions have a certain aroma that is associated with tourism (i.e., Almost everything in Waikiki), the Aulani resort lacks this particular aroma.

The entire resort smells like nature.

The sound of running water can be heard in all common areas.

Constant Hawaiian language music plays throughout all the common areas.

The landscaping is arranged in a manner that emulates a forest.

In summary, Aulani orchestrates a journey with the five senses. This journey is noticeably missing at The Hyatt Regency.
level 3 | subliminal

Disney branding is subtle and not forced; the Disney branding only exists at a subliminal level.

At a glance, the entire resort is focused on Hawai‘i and its traditions, rather than on Disney.

The entire resort strives to educate tourists about Hawai‘i. This is subtly done through signs and the rules of the resort.

Different parts of the resort have different aromas.

There is a consistency throughout all sensorial triggers (i.e., Water can be heard in all common areas, textures and materials are repeated throughout the entire resort.
The journey between the guest rooms and the beach is possibly represented as an Ahupua‘a.

Everything is carefully designed to reinforce the calm, gentle atmosphere. Notably, the gates have dampened automatic closers installed to prevent slamming from occurring.

The water features are clearly a Disney creation, which are extremely elaborate.

The layout of the resort invokes a sense of discovery upon the guests. Although the resort is intuitive to navigate, all destinations are hidden out of plain sight. There is no vantage point that would allow for a person to see the entire layout of the resort.

Like with all other Disney developments, there’s an unexplainable sense of “magic” that is orchestrated by the architecture.

For comparison, The Hyatt Regency is completely missing the subliminal level of design. Visitors would have a difficult time remembering the space.
observational research | conclusion

These three examples are all successful in branding commercial architecture, and there is a common link between them that contributes to their success: Brand Consistency. Every brand has ideas and values that connects with the customers/users, and the architecture is the medium that the brand tells its story through. Every experience that the customer/user has in the architecture is a constant reinforcement of the brand.

The examples also demonstrated the effectiveness in the three levels of branding: obvious, sensorial, and subliminal.

In a sea of buildings and store fronts, it is important to immediately catch the attention of a passerby —This is the “obvious level.”

Once the passerby’s attention has been drawn, there must be an element that holds their attention and connects with them. This is what people experience through their five senses as they walk through the architecture —This is the “sensorial level.”

After people have thoroughly experienced the brand and architecture, they will need a reason to return; an element that makes the space worth revisiting. These are all the little subtleties that keep people curious, most likely at a subconscious level —This is the “subliminal level.”

All three examples have very different customer/user bases and are of different business types. This provokes the idea that regardless of building typology, a design process can be developed through a story that is supported by a brand, which is then told through the experiences of the architectural space.
Branding and storytelling in architecture is nothing new. It has largely proven its effectiveness in the commercial industry, in which the goal is to satisfy needs, and to gain the trust and loyalty of customers in order to prosper as a business.

It is now apparent that the brand, story and architecture cannot be separated from each other. For example, if the brand and story were separated from commercial architecture, the result would be spaces that a person occupies for the sake of utility. A store would be nothing more than a room full of merchandise, and a hotel would be nothing more than a space to sleep when guests return from their day of sightseeing.

If brand strategy and storytelling can yield the following results in commercial architecture:

--Spaces that are more engaging for its occupants.
--Additional monetary value to the development.

then any type of architecture should be able to apply the same principles to achieve the same results.
Based on the research, the following are the larger ideas of branding and storytelling that will be applied to the design work in this project.

--A good brand has a unique story.

--Establish why the brand and story matters.

--Stories are most effectively communicated by experiences.

--Identify and understand the end user in order to determine their needs.

--Brand consistency is key to maintaining a strong identity.
design process | overview

This section will detail each step of the new design framework.

This framework should yield elements that compose the identity of the story, and influence the design. These are elements that the brand represents.

--the name
--vision (revised)
--core values
--logo
--user journeys
--mood
--color palette
--texture palette
--sense of place
design process | 1-- research

Learn about the purpose of the development in relation to the intended users.

--what are people doing here?
--how often do they visit?
--what do people need this space to be?

--analysis parameters to consider
  opportunities | existing elements that may help
  constraints | existing elements that may restrict
  goals | desired end results
  values | elements that are important or have priority in the project
  external influences | elements that may indirectly affect the project
  driver | the motivation of the project
**design process | 2-- story development**

Tell stories about the users’ journeys throughout their day.

-- how does the story begin? (where do people enter?)
-- what do people experience?
-- how do people transition from one part of the story to another? (spatial transition)

**--importance of a narrative**
Life happens through a sequence of experiences, and are often communicated as stories. In order for a space to satisfy the needs of the user, it must contain a narrative that reflects the daily life of the user in the space.

*A narrative for an ice age museum will be developed as an example.*
**Design Process** | 3-- Define Core Values

Define the core values of the story being told.

--what ideas are the story trying to convey?
--what is the design vision statement?

**Core Values** = existing vision statement* + user journey study + design goal

*if one already exists

**Example:** Ice Age Museum

A | B | C

History | Scientific Discovery | Education
design process | 4-- give the story a name

Develop a brand positioning for each story.

--this highlights the uniqueness of the story
--it helps people remember the story being told
--explain how the brand is experienced
--the idea is to sell the story rather than an arbitrary design concept

--importance of nomenclature
When creating new spatial experiences, it is important to avoid using names that possess existing stigmas. For example, “museum” automatically places a stigmatized image of dusty old exhibits into people’s minds. On the other hand “mammoth” is more likely to draw a blank in people’s minds. This eliminates prejudice and dilution of the story being told.

example: ice age museum

mammoth
ice age museum
design process | 5-- place making

Develop spatial experiences that support the story.

--this is where the story’s mood is portrayed
--this is the beginning of design work (conceptual design)
--expressed as a mood board

--what is a mood board?
A mood board is a series of images that are composed together, in order to express the intended mood of the space. The mood is determined by factors such as colors, textures, and the subject.

example: ice age museum

entry → journey → destination
Design the physical forms that enable the aforementioned spatial experiences.

--all physical forms should reinforce the story and brand
design process | 7-- identity

At the end of the process, there will be a clearly defined set of brand elements. Together, these elements compose the identity of the story:

--the name
--vision (revised)
--core values
--logo
--user journeys
--mood
--color palette
--texture palette
--sense of place
This design process is not linear. Going back and forth with the client, and playing guessing games with what they are looking for is rather inefficient. This cyclical process eliminates guesswork by first establishing the overarching idea of the design (the story part) before creating physical forms.

Each cycle perpetuates more overall progress
Each cycle also builds on top of the previous cycle

The process will go in circles a few times, in no particular order
design process  |  overall framework

1-- research

the process will go in circles a few times, in no particular order

4-- brand positioning

2-- story development

3-- core values

5-- place making

6-- architecture

7-- identity | brand elements
--the name
--vision
--core values
--logo
--user journey
--mood
--color palette
--texture palette
--sense of place

the story
investigation & design | overview

--investigation
This project will analyze architecture at three varying typologies: education, residential, and urban master plan. All three of these examples currently lack a story or a clear identity, and they all share the common problem of being disconnected from the intended users and their needs. The investigation will explore and analyze the issues.

urban master plan | Honolulu Waterfront

residential | Lakeside Manor

education | Shidler College of Business

--design
The new design framework will be used to address the investigated issues, but will focus on Shidler College of Business for the following reasons:
--Shidler possesses the most typical design problems encountered in the real world.
--the solution to these problems are scalable to other applications, such as with the Honolulu Waterfront and Lakeside Manor.

Additionally, the parameters of this design process can aid in quickly developing conceptual ideas. This is demonstrated in the application of the Honolulu Waterfront and Lakeside Manor.
Honolulu Waterfront | investigation

The Honolulu waterfront (from Kaka’ako to Ala Moana) is currently in an identity crisis. The waterfront has no clear vision of what it wants to be. The result is a tourism zone that is randomly broken apart by industrial zones, or vice versa. A typical journey from one end of this waterfront to the other would involve crossing between warehouses in order to get to a surf spot (Kaka’ako Waterfront park). The waterfront needs a focus for planning and development.

--analysis
Due to the potentially large scale of the study, this analysis will focus on the three largest contributors to the problem: **functional interference, poor use of land, no sense of place.**
--functional interference
Currently, there is an interweaving of very different zoning types. Residential, industrial, and commercial usages are all intermixed with one another with no organization or planning for how they may impact each other.

The industrial activities negatively impact tourism activities (noise, unsightliness), tourism activities negatively impact residential activities (traffic, reduced privacy, noise), and residential activities negatively impact industrial activities (residential demands on the waterfront raises the land value, potentially increasing rent and operational costs).
--poor use of land
Looking at a map of the area, most of the development consists of 2-story warehouses or low-rise developments, both of which include surface parking lots that are at least one-third of their property footprint. Historically, it was convenient for an industrial area to occupy majority of the waterfront property, due to a higher reliance on shipping docks. With the new technology and infrastructure of modern day, there are better uses for waterfront properties.

In comparison with larger and denser cities, such as Manhattan, the amount of space in this area could easily handle a larger occupational density with little negative impact.

--industrial properties in the Kaka‘ako portion of the waterfront.
--no sense of place

With the identity crisis that the Honolulu waterfront is experiencing, there is no sense of place or sense of belonging when occupying the area. Ala Moana Shopping Center and Ward Center have established their own identity and sense of place, but otherwise have zero connection to the community.

This is most apparent at Ward Center, where all the stores located along Ala Moana Blvd are only accessible from the opposite side of the block. The moment an individual steps foot outside of either of those shopping malls, they return to a faceless neighborhood again.
--design parameters | opportunities

There is somewhat of a blank canvas for developing a brand identity.

The waterfront is under-utilized.

Most of the waterfront area is occupied by single-story and two-story corrugated steel warehouses, which are much simpler to relocate than most other developments.
--design parameters | constraints

Budget.

Not all the affected property owners may buy into a major redevelopment.

--Blaisdell Center context study by ULI
design parameters | goals

Give the Honolulu waterfront a unique identity that both locals and travelers can relate and engage with.

---

—a view of the Waikiki skyline, commonly shared between tourists and locals
--design parameters | values

Coexistence of tourism and local life.

Local economy.

Ala Moana Center
---the mall seems to be built on similar values
- design parameters | external influences

Mainland investors (Mainly Howard Hughes).

Major land owners (Kamehameha Schools Land Assets Division and Office of Hawaiian Affairs).
--design parameters | drivers

Creating a stepping stone to address the future sea level rise.

Introducing the waterfront as an element that people interact with, rather than for admiring from a distance.

Creating spaces that work for both locals and tourists alike.
Honolulu Waterfront | design

The developing rail system will serve as the main design driver for the waterfront. Transit Oriented Development (TOD) has the potential to fix old problems, while at the same time, integrates the areas with their respective new rail stations.

The planning of the waterfront will be split between Kaka‘ako and Ala Moana. The idea is to have a very sharp contrast between the two areas that sit just adjacent to each other, by embracing what both areas want to become based on developmental trends.

--what does Kaka‘ako want to be?
Kaka‘ako is an emerging art district full of old warehouses that are given new life through adaptive reuse. Most of these places become bars, cafe and food establishments.

The area wants to become something similar to that of Soho in New York or Camden in London. Both of which are art districts full of galleries, non-franchised food establishments, bars, and markets.

For Kaka‘ako, it would be the portion of the waterfront that more caters to the locals, but would also be welcoming of tourists. The area should embrace the “urban-industrial” atmosphere associated with the adaptive reuse of old warehouses.

--what does Ala Moana want to be?
On the opposite end of the spectrum, Ala Moana wants to be the posh area of the waterfront, as it currently is. Whereas Kaka‘ako has a waterfront that does not widely promote access into the water, Ala Moana has a waterfront that embraces a beach park where people are welcomed and encouraged to enjoy the water.

The area will cater more to tourist but will still be welcoming of locals. The atmosphere will be associated with cleanliness and high upkeep.
--premise of story
The Honolulu Waterfront is shared by two areas with very different atmospheres; Kaka’ako catering more to locals, and Ala Moana catering more to tourists. The idea is to maintain a significance between the two areas, so that both places have different stories to tell. To clarify, this is not to segregate the locals and the tourists. Quite the contrary, locals would find intrigue in Ala Moana and likewise, tourist would find intrigue in Kaka’ako, which ultimately brings a mix of both into either areas. People have a tendency to “listen” if there is a story being told.
main points in story | Kaka’ako

--industry
(warehouses, specialty shops, car dealers)

--art
(local contemporary art, local wood shows)

--food
(eat the street, gastro pubs, local breweries)

--local urban life
(a unique mix of being formal and casual at the same time)

--waterfront / boardwalk
(type of waterfront that is enjoyed outside of the water)
main points in story | Ala Moana

--designer brands
(high end shop fronts)

--paradise
(connection with the beach, green areas)

--food
(restaurants, bar lounges, beach front food establishments)
Lakeside Manor is the condominium in which the author of this research lives. The property has a well-established record of vehicular thefts and break-ins over the past 20 years. The building does little to give the residents an experience of safety and security.

--analysis
There is an obvious security problem here. This condo is a place where people call home; therefore, it should be a place where people feel safe and secure. Here are the problems that were discovered after an analysis of the property.
While every other condominium in the area has security fences, Lakeside Manor has nothing. In combination with a wide open parking lot, the public often will take a shortcut through the property. Some people are just passing by, while others are possibly looking for their next target. Furthermore, the easy access and visibly open space between the front and rear entry points are essentially design elements of public spaces such as plazas and parks. This is a piece of private property that was inherently designed as a public space.
--public visibility
A passerby can stand on Ala Ilima St. and see all the way to Likini St. through the property. A potential thief does not need to trespass in order to work out an entry and escape route. They are also able to pick out potential vehicles to break into from outside the property. While some public visibility is good, too much of it leaves an experience of vulnerability for the residents.
--poor lighting
The parking lot is decently lit for the most part; however, the two entrances are not lit. A person or vehicle entering the property is not immediately visible until they reach the inner parts of the parking lot or near the lobby. This is not a particularly welcoming experience for a resident.
--design parameters | opportunities

Existing under-utilized landscaping around parking lot.
---design parameters | constraints

Budget is limited, lowest bidder wins.

Number of parking spaces cannot be reduced.
--design parameters | goals

Increase the security of the property with architectural design.

Create a secure, but pleasant experience for the residents.
--design parameters | values

The sense of “home.”

Security and safety of the residents.

With increased security, the property must remain comfortable and welcoming to residents (as opposed to making it feel like a maximum security prison).

surveillance screen capture

--thieves drove onto the property in this white pickup truck
--they loaded the motorcycle into the bed and drove off in under a minute
--this demonstrates how residents may experience vulnerability
While the Board of Directors will make the final decision on what to do, the Association of Apartment Owners (AOAO) can potentially sway the final decision.
**design parameters | drivers**

Must appear cozy and welcoming to residents.

Security.

Landscaping opportunities.
Lakeside Manor | design

--premise of story
Based on the investigation analysis, the unique driving force for this story is the paradox of incorporating higher levels of security while still maintaining a welcoming sense of home. The idea is for the complex to only appear welcoming to residents, but appear well guarded to the public.

main points in story

--perimeter
(exploit landscaping create a perimeter boundary between public and private space)

--entry
(invites everyone to enter, but only allows those with keys to do so)

--gathering space
(private indoor and outdoor gathering spaces near entrances of the building enables security in numbers)

--garden
(this property was not allowed to remove any greenscape, due to the lack of it in the surrounding properties. this will be celebrated in the design)
The Business Administration Building on the UH campus has suffered many problems through the years. Some new design elements have been introduced more recently to mitigate some of these problems, such as the revitalization of the courtyard. But many problems still remain. Additionally, the “Shidler” name on the building has an enormous potential to be the brand of the school with a few unifying ideas.

--analysis
One of the biggest problems with the building is its age; it was built to suit the needs and values for the users in the 1970’s, a lot of which have become irrelevant today. The building has adapted poorly to the needs and values of the current users. This analysis will focus on the individual elements of the building.

define-- brutalist architecture

Brutalism is generally characterized by their massive appearance, ruggedness, and heavy usage of concrete. It is especially popular in governmental and institutional buildings, because it projects a sense of authority and power with its fortress-like appearance.
--unintuitive wayfinding

The first challenge that the Business Administration Building (BUSAD) imposes on a first time visitor is finding an entrance. All of the building entrances are narrow corridors that appear to be arbitrarily placed throughout the building. These entrances are not marked in any way and are not immediately apparent to new users.

Additionally, navigating the building can be a real challenge for a person who is not familiar with the space. The building is divided by five towers: A, B, C, D, and E. The towers are only labeled on the exterior facades facing the courtyard. There are no clear indications notifying a person that they have crossed between towers while traversing the upper floors and lower corridors.

Lastly, every floor layout differs from each other, and the walls of every corridor are visually identical. This essentially turns the entire BUSAD building into a maze. A person could accidentally walk to the wrong tower without ever realizing so.

entry experience
--find dark narrow corridor
--walk through it
--intimidating spaces

While the Brutalist architecture of the BUSAD building is intimidating in its own right, the spatial layout within the building is also intimidating. There is a noticeable difference in the level of welcome as a person ascends each floor.

The lower floors are easily accessible, contains a lot of activity, and offers ample shaded seating. On the upper levels, there is a very noticeable difference in atmosphere; it is dead silent, there are no places to sit, and access generally seems out of the way and hidden. The upper floors are mostly for administration and faculty offices.

This hierarchy of space leads to a problem where students would rather not visit their professors during their office hours for help, unless it was an absolute last resort. The journey from the bottom floor to the faculty offices negatively builds a level of suspense and an unwelcoming feeling.
--disconnection between the inside and outside
The lack of clearly defined entry and exit points highlights a relevant problem. There is a complete disconnect between the spaces considered to be the inside of the building, and the spaces immediately outside of the building.

The outside spaces are completely ignored and are not embraced by the building. This means that the experience of entering and exiting the building is not a pleasant one. In combination with the Brutalist architecture, the lack of thought placed in the adjacent spaces results in an entry experience similar to that of entering a maximum security prison.

forgotten spaces
--these are spaces just outside of two main entrances
---the traditional classroom
The classrooms have slowly been undergoing renovations. One of the greatest improvements that resulted from the renovations is the reversal of the space. Originally, the classroom entry would be at the front of the room. Back in the 1970’s, when the building had just been completed, this was not a problem. Students arrived on time to class and did not stand up to leave in the middle of a lecture. These were the values of the 1970’s, and they differ greatly from the more current values.

Today, students can be expected to arrive late and utilize their freedom to leave class in the middle of a lecture. With the door being at the front of the classroom, this causes major disruptions for the lecturer. The renovations flipped the classrooms around; what used to be the back is now the front. With the entrance at the back of the classroom, lectures are no longer disrupted by students entering or leaving the room.

This is a good example of how a space can be designed to fit the needs of a user. Taking this a little further, Professor Jim Wills, from Shidler College of Business, has noted that the classrooms still lack the support for students to work in groups. The current solution is for him bring his students into the courtyard for them to use the seating in groups. While this works, it is a far walk from the classroom and hinders productivity.
what it does well

The courtyard has a powerful theme established that can potentially be applied throughout the rest of the building. There are three elements that make the courtyard extremely successful as a space that understands its users.

shaded seating | This makes the courtyard a usable space. Students can study here, meet in groups, have coffee, and hang out before their classes start; the shaded seating directly fits the student lifestyle.

plants | The BUSAD building is very monolithic and enormous in proportions, both of which are typical characteristics of a brutalist building. With the lack of design components that are human scaled, the users are little people in a giant’s world. The abundance of plants in the courtyard helps soften the hardscape. It adds a human proportion to the space, which as a result, makes for a more welcoming space.

landscaping and hardscaping | The mix of landscaping and hardscaping is the transitional element between the plants and the concrete. Without it, the plants would look incredibly out of place. This is the element that ties everything together and makes the space fluid.
--design parameters | opportunities

The Shidler name has potential to be a more influential brand.

In regards to existing renovations, there are many good ideas that simply need more thorough application and guidance.

The school is well funded.
design parameters | constraints

Some problems require major renovation of infrastructure (drainage problem, security problem, high energy usage).

BUSAD holds general education classes in addition to business classes.
**design parameters | goals**

Create a school that is more functional for the current generation of students.

Redesign the common areas to be more intuitive and welcoming.

*wayfinding*

--this is a good start in reducing the confusion imposed by the complex building layout
--design parameters | values

Elements that contribute to the student’s learning.

Elements that contribute to helping educators teach.

The school’s image.
The building was constructed in the 1970’s, when the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines did not exist and building codes were very different. A lot of design elements may have been “grandfathered” into allowance, and any renovations may require an update to meet new guidelines.
--design parameters | drivers

Improve way-finding.

Create spaces that support various learning/teaching methods.

Reflect the school’s values through architecture.

“the heart”
--this is the location of highest activity
--students come here for coffee
--bulletin boards with information on business clubs
Shidler College of Business | design

--review of design process
1-- research
2-- story development
3-- core values
4-- brand positioning (give the story a name)
5-- place making
6-- architecture
7-- identity

1-- research
Quoted from Shidler's missions statement:
“Academic Community -- We are a community of scholars, learners, and practitioners. We value each other, our different cultures, our interactions, the knowledge we exchange, and the sense of belonging and mutual commitment. We create knowledge that informs our teaching and improves practice.”¹

Shidler is a business school that places emphasis on collaboration and the exchange of knowledge. The main users of this space are those who teach, and those who learn.

A-- passage | B-- café | C-- collab | D-- commerce | E-- serendipity | T-- transition

A-- passage | The role of a teacher is typically met by a professor at the Shidler College of Business. Every day, they enter the campus through one of the many welcoming entrances.

B-- café | This is where a teacher gets their morning dose of caffeine.

C-- collab | A teacher’s primary destination; this is their home base. This is where they prepare for lectures and conduct research.
Teacher's journey (cont’d)

D-- commerce | Teachers hold their classes here, this is where they impart their knowledge on learners.

E-- serendipity | After hours of teaching and researching, this is where a teacher goes to rest or to meet with fellow colleagues over a coffee.

T-- transition | For a teacher, transition points between spaces are important for initiating social interactions. Social interactions enable discussions for possible breakthrough ideas, networking opportunities, and outreach for students.
2-- story development | Learner’s journey

A-- passage | B-- café | C-- collab | D-- commerce 
E-- serendipity | F-- study

A-- passage | The role of a learner is typically met by a Shidler business student. Everyday, they enter the campus through one of the many easily identifiable entrances. Wayfinding is an important theme in this entire campus.

B-- café | This is where a learner buys breakfast and coffee before class.

E-- serendipity | A learner’s primary destination; this is where they spend most of her time between classes. They often run into their friends here. This is a place where they can eat, study, and socialize.
Learner's journey (cont’d)

C-- collab | This is where a learner goes for help on their studies, and to discuss ideas with a professor.

D-- commerce | Learners attend their business courses here, this is where they learn about business.

F-- study | This is where a learner can hold meetings with their project group, or for general studying when serendipity is a little too festive. This is a private space, whereas serendipity is a public space.
2-- story development | comparison

Teacher’s journey

--teacher-centric
--primary destination: “collab”
--transitional spaces need to enable random social activity, and are potential destination points in the journey map

Learner’s journey

--learner-centric
--primary destination: “serendipity”
--transitional spaces need to be efficient and easy to navigate
--dedicated space for coordinating group work is needed

A-- passage | B-- café | C-- collab | D-- commerce | E-- serendipity | F-- study | T-- transition

→→→→ circulation path   ● node   ● unique to learner   ● entry/exit
3-- core values

community | sense of belonging, cultural diversity

knowledge exchange | learning, teaching

collaboration | cooperation, networking

These core values were derived from the aforementioned formula:

\[
\text{core values} = \text{existing vision statement}^* + \text{user journey study} + \text{design goal}
\]

*if one already exists

--existing vision statement

“Academic Community -- We are a community of scholars, learners, and practitioners. We value each other, our different cultures, our interactions, the knowledge we exchange, and the sense of belonging and mutual commitment. We create knowledge that informs our teaching and improves practice.”

--design vision statement

Improving the learning and teaching experience of Shidler via a storytelling process that focuses on community, knowledge exchange, and collaboration.

---

4-- give the story a name | brand positioning

The Shidler name will be retained due to the potential it holds.

Shidler holds a unique position due to the geographical location of the campus. People from varying cultural backgrounds come together and collaborate in order to exchange knowledge. This potentially leads to new knowledge that cannot be synthesized anywhere else in the world.
6-- give the story a name | brand experience

new questions arise after digesting new knowledge

seeking business knowledge

engage | the entry, intended to give the impression of professionalism and approachability.

sustain | food and beverages to fuel learning, teaching, and discussions.

digest | newly acquired knowledge continues to digest in learner’s minds after leaving campus.

exchange | the learning and teaching experience

resources that support teachers and learners in research, collaboration, discussion, and socialization.

101
5-- place making

A | passage-- The primary entrance and exit space.
welcoming, inviting, the first/last impression

B | café-- A space for food, caffeine, and socializing.
casual, food/refreshments, meetings

C | collab-- Teacher’s homebase for research and discussion.
accessible assistance, welcoming, outreach
D | commerce-- A space for learning.
engaging, transfer of knowledge, idea exchange

E | serendipity -- Public courtyard space.
socialize, rest, tranquility

F | study-- A space for students to work in.
study, collaboration, quiet
6-- architecture

placemaking-programmatic study

This diagram indicates the location of spaces on the campus.

A-- passage | B-- café | C-- collab | D-- commerce | E-- serendipity | F-- study

primary destinations  nodes  unique to learner  entry/exit
6-- architecture | design

A | passage-- The primary entrance and exit space.

intrigue | The entrance space is perceptively compressed, and opens into a large open courtyard. This builds intrigue and excitement upon entering the building.

contrast | Simple and geometric in shape, the entrance structure differentiates from the complex geometry found in the Brutalist architecture of the existing building. This will help the entrance stand out.

light touch | To avoid being imposing, the entrance is made of glass to appear perceptively light and transparent. The sharp contrast of glass against the existing concrete will also help direct attention to the entrance.

intrigue + contrast + light touch | The Shidler brand seeks to welcome people and create a positive first impression. A simple glass entryway is a welcoming sight when juxtaposed against a visually imposing building. The compressed entryway opens to a large open public space, which adds a sense of sophistication. This is an architectural handshake; the building embraces the user before beginning the story, similar to how people shake hands before speaking to one another.
B | café-- A space for food, caffeine, and socializing.

Amenity | To differentiate from the rest of the courtyard space, the seating area will be slightly elevated.

Source | The kiosk will be an independent structure in the middle of the courtyard space, adjacent to the aforementioned seating.

Atmosphere | The atmosphere would be similar to the ambiance of a Starbucks--casual and relaxed. This is achieved with an earth toned palette, soft music, and a coffee aroma.

Amenity + Source + Atmosphere | Across many cultures, food is known to bring people together. The cafe is the heart of the public courtyard for the same reason. It offers food, refreshments, and gathering space for a community. This reinforces the Shidler brand by enabling social interactions between people, which can possibly lead to discussions, collaboration, and networking. Furthermore, the casual and relaxed atmosphere reinforces the approachability of Shidler.
C | collab-- Teacher’s homebase for research and discussion.

lounge | A lounge inspired working area is an alternative working space to a desk. This also serves as a space where teachers can meet with students for discussions.

personal | A shared open office will have areas with a heightened sense of privacy, for phone calls and handling sensitive information.

second home | This is a home away from home for teachers. Many hours will be spent working here, and therefore, the space should feel like a home.

lounge + personal + second home | Further reinforcing the approachability and community characteristics of Shidler’s brand, the previous faculty offices are replaced with spaces inspired by book store lounges. Solid un-inviting walls are replaced with translucent screens for spaces requiring privacy, while also allowing natural light into the room. The open lounge is meant to bring faculty members within speaking distance while they do work. It also makes the space much more approachable for students seeking assistance from faculty.
D | commerce-- A space for learning.

listen | A learning space for basic lectures, the curved layout of the desks embraces the speaker at the podium.

interact | A learning space for classes that are heavily group oriented. Projector screens occupy every angle of the room to allow for group centric seating.

group | A learning space for group oriented lectures. Groups are seated together in an otherwise standard auditorium style seating arrangement.

listen + interact + group | Together, the three types of learning spaces mentioned above supports a variety of learning and teaching styles. There is an emphasis for supporting group collaboration and knowledge exchange.
cover | Standard shaded table seating dispersed throughout the courtyard space. Existing large plant life is maintained around seating areas.

bench | Plant life and hardscape combine to form bench seating and gathering areas.

heart | A public courtyard space needs a focal point. In this case, the focal point is an interactive sculpture.

cover + bench + heart | Serendipity is the heart of the campus. It supports the Shidler community as a social hub, with a large variety of seating and gathering areas formed by the three elements mentioned above.
individual | Availability of individual seating for learners who want to study alone.

lounge | Lounge style seating for group meetings and discussions. These areas are acoustically separated from the other spaces so group discussions do not disturb other learners.

booth | Booth seating for groups that prefer a desk height table.

individual + lounge + booth | Study is a space that supports the learner community. The seating options available make it easy to work in groups outside of class.
7-- identity | brand elements

the name | Shidler College of Business

vision (revised) | improving the learning and teaching experience of Shidler through community, knowledge exchange, and collaboration

core values | community, knowledge, collaboration

logo | existing Shidler logo

user journey | focus on learners and teachers

mood | welcoming, professional, and calm

color palette | greens, blues, and earth tones

texture palette | smooth and soft contrasting with the existing rough and rugged

sense of place | best understood visually, refer to page 89 and 90
Shidler College of Business | overview

1-- research
--business school
--for teachers
--for learners

2-- story development

3-- core values
--community
--knowledge exchange
--collaboration

4-- brand positioning

5-- place making

6-- architecture

7-- identity | brand elements
(refer to previous page)
--the name
--vision
--core values
--logo
--user journey
--mood
--color palette
--texture palette
--sense of place

142
---intent
The intent of this literature exploration is to seek a general understanding of branding application in business, and to establish the feasibility of applying brand strategy to storytelling and architecture.

Understanding the elements that make a brand successful is key to developing an architectural design process that sells a story via brand strategy.
--Brand Identity
The business world is a dynamic playing field where businesses have to constantly adapt. Over time, people's values change, and it is up to businesses to continuously promote themselves as something that people value. This is where brand identity comes into play. For example, Coca-Cola, being an enormous corporation, is known worldwide and is seen literally everywhere. As a large corporation, it is very easy to be perceived as an entity that does not relate to anyone at a personal level. To stay relevant, Coca-Cola re-branded itself as the drink for the people. What followed were all the “feel good” commercials of people being united by the soft drink. Here, they connect to people at an emotional level.¹ This is their new identity and this demonstrates just how powerful branding can be.

--Commercial Architecture
Branded commercial architecture is an extension of a company’s existing brand. Architecture expresses the company’s identity through spatial experiences. This is mainly achieved through spatial layout, way-finding, surface finishes, furniture fixtures, materials, color, texture palettes, integrated graphics, and signage.² This seems to be the typical medium for expressing a brand in architecture.

--Parallels with the Marketing World
According to The Science of Art and Branding, brands that are personified appeal more to people’s imaginations. Through the concepts of identity, personality, charisma, relationship, trust, integrity, birth, death, soul, awareness, karma, and reincarnation, a brand can become more alive. When people talk about a brand, they don’t talk about the brand itself, they talk about the personality because that is what people remember.³ In terms of architectural application, a building that has been branded correctly will always be more relatable and memorable to its users.

--Retail Architecture Branding
A brand is not just a name. It is an identity. According to Gensler, “great brands build on a framework of strategic insight. With this frame work in place [they] develop names, identities, and brand platforms that connect with people, so they listen, buy and believe.”  
This means that a lot of client research is involved in order to tailor the brand identity and architecture to the target users. According to a blog entry by MA Architects, “People associate places and spaces with memories and feelings of the past. From this, quality, trust, integrity, value and comfort become emotional connectors from the space to the individual. This has an impact on how individuals feel about an environment, which directly ties to the company’s standing in the mind of the consumer.”

While this is a statement about branding in retail architecture, it can be true for all non-retail architecture as well. Instead of the “company’s standing,” it is the building’s identity, and instead of “the mind of the consumer,” it is the mind of the building users.

--Re-branding
Branding has the power to change perception. Not so long ago, General Motors (GM) was in danger of going bankrupt and relied heavily on a government bailout to stay afloat. As a result, the GM brand has been tainted with a new nickname – Government Motors. It is incredibly harmful for the company to have such a negative stigma surrounding their own name. GM owns several nameplate brands including Chevrolet, Buick, GMC and Cadillac. If the GM brand is associated with any of these nameplates, sales figures may be harmed due to the negative stigma. GM’s solution here was to re-brand each nameplate without any association with GM, with each nameplate having their own identity. This mainly works because “the individual brands appeal to very different clientele.”  
Disassociating a brand from a negative image is equally as important as associating a brand with a positive image.

--The Science and Art of Branding
In the year 2000, Boeing adopted a branding strategy. Prior to that, the CEO saw no importance of having a brand to their company. But now, Boeing is just one of the few aircraft manufacturers that are commonly known by the public.¹ This case study demonstrates how something that is usually faceless to the general public can be given an identity by branding. This is relevant because many pieces of architecture are also faceless to the general public.

--Can everything be branded?
“A brand is something that resides in the minds of consumers.”² Developing a brand for a product is a way to communicate the identity of the product. If successful, the users would be able to pick out this particular product against its competitors. In some cases, commodities such as sugar, salt, coffee, etc., have been successfully established with brand identities.³ If something as basic as a commodity can be branded, there is certainly potential for architecture to be branded.

--Branding in Architecture: Image and Spatial Communication
A previous doctorate project established the “…understanding of the role and process of branding in architecture”⁴ and reinforces that branding is not just a logo. This project focuses on branding architecture in small “mom and pop” type of shops.⁵ This research explores how a brand is expressed through product, customer interaction, and physical space.

The Brand Gap
A brand is not a logo, it is not a corporate identity, and it is not a product. “A brand is a person’s gut feeling about a product, service, or company.” This statement is common in other various pieces of literature about branding. Branding is the perception of the user base and is not determined by the brand holder. The Brand Gap refers to brand in terms of function and form. In any given product, there exists the function, the utility, the specifications, the product’s intuitiveness, visual appearance, and emotional triggers. There is a missed connection between function and form, which is explained as a “gap.” Branding is the bridge which connects the two together. Coincidentally, architecture also bridges function and form.

“The Brand Gap” particularly explains what makes a brand successful. A brand is successful if: it is built on trust reinforced with experiences that meet or exceed consumer expectations, it is symbolic, memorable and succinct, it knows what the company values, it has a charisma which convinces consumers that there is no substitute, it is distinctive, and it must be established by a community (people of many disciplines).

--conclusion
Most information on branding is relevant to business and marketing. There is no shortage of information on how to successfully establish a brand for a product, service or company, and there are many case studies to illustrate the reasons for both success and failure. Information on architectural branding is significantly limited in comparison. Most information on this topic originates from commercial architecture, and it does not appear to be an extensively documented topic.

The research conducted in this project will expand applications of brand strategy in storytelling and architecture in non-commercial applications. Generally, the purpose of branding is to gain the loyalty of end users in order to expand a company’s reputation and ultimately secure long term business. This research challenges the typical application of branding by applying it to a market that is not traditionally product based (architecture).
appendix B | case studies

--Kent County Council Schools case study

problem
Being the largest county in the United Kingdom, Kent County contains 150 school facilities. In 2002, "research showed that 46 percent of Kent’s 100,000-plus secondary school students were failing to achieve recognized standards of educational attainment."¹ The problem was attributed to the Kent County Council having strict control of everything relating to budget, school curriculum, and campus development. To mitigate this problem, a complete transformation was planned for the county’s schools.

¹ Nayer, Jean. 2007. “building the future.” contract magazine, July: 75
analysis
Initially, Kent County council --one single entity, had absolute control over 150 school facilities. Phase one of the transformation involved the decentralization of power. The council’s power was divided “…into 23 clusters corresponding to local geography.”¹ Due to the extreme diversity of Kent County, it was impossible for one single entity to make the best decisions for the entire demographic of the county.

Phase two focused on changing the curriculum. Research showed that there are many approaches to teaching and learning. “The idea is to provide Individualized education programs that support different types of learners with a range of traditional academic approaches as well as vocational learning pathways.”² With the implementation of this new curriculum structure, schools had to be rebuilt to support the new teaching models.

An analysis of the schools, as they were, had revealed that facilities were “...ill-equipped to serve modern teaching techniques and learning methods...”³ and also “…their design often promotes anti-social behavior such as smoking in bathrooms or bullying in corridors.”⁴ In order to move away from these problems, Gensler’s London office was brought in to rethink the spaces. According to Gensler’s director of project, “In order to get people to see schools in a new way, we started by banning obsolete terminology associated with traditional schools, such as classrooms, assembly halls, and corridors.”⁵ “Unless you start talking about educational facilities with new language, you’ll just build new old schools.”⁶

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¹ Nayer, Jean. 2007. “building the future.” contract magazine, July: 75
² Nayer, Jean. 2007. “building the future.” contract magazine, July: 77
³ Nayer, Jean. 2007. “building the future.” contract magazine, July: 77
⁴ Nayer, Jean. 2007. “building the future.” contract magazine, July: 77
⁵ Nayer, Jean. 2007. “building the future.” contract magazine, July: 78
⁶ Nayer, Jean. 2007. “building the future.” contract magazine, July: 78
solution
In order to support visual learners while still supporting traditional academic learners, “...designers conceived of a range of flexible spaces that provide more square footage dedicated to learning...”

The more IT-rich learning spaces were given new names: “Small spaces where one or two people might spend time in focused learning are referred to as “caves,” while mid-size spaces capable of multiple configurations and dedicated to small group learning are “campfire” areas. Gathering spaces for informal exchange of ideas are “watering holes,” while large open areas that might house a multitude of functions, such as receptions or exhibitions, is the “heart” of a building.” This provides a multitude of learning spaces that accommodates various learning styles.

“Activities drive the design of spaces and how learning will occur, and adaptability is key in creating spaces that are relevant.”

1 Nayer, Jean. 2007. “building the future.” contract magazine, July: 77
2 Nayer, Jean. 2007. “building the future.” contract magazine, July: 78
relevance
Gensler had sorted through Kent County's academic problems by giving the schools a new identity that students can relate to. By eliminating the aged idea of what a school should be, students are given spaces that they actually need, rather than what the administration believes they need. This was essentially a large rebranding project of Kent County Schools, except that the branding didn’t manifest as one large identity, but rather, several smaller identities as seen with the newly named spaces (e.g., caves, campfire, watering holes, heart). This is a good example of how architecture reflects a brand that was tailored around the end user.
--*Nike Town case study*

**introduction**

Nike is one of the strongest brands in the world and is recognized internationally as a brand that supports athletic lifestyles. The Nike retail stores further reinforces their brand through architecture, by incorporating three levels of branding: Obvious, Sensorial, and Subliminal.¹

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¹ Kim-Johnson, Ma Ry, interview by Howard Shek. 2014. (February 28).
level 1 | obvious
The first level of branding, Obvious, involves the approach to the store. This is what grabs people’s attention as they traverse through the adjacent areas. These are the elements that they see before setting foot into the Nike store.¹ What people immediately see is the main attraction of the Nike brand; their contrasting color palette, the logo, and the design of the shop front, which is consistent with the quality of design of their product displays that juxtaposes bright colorful products with very neutral colors and textures. One Nike store in particular has even chosen a specific location that places them at the end of a view corridor from a main path of public circulation. The result is that people would see the Nike store as long as they traversed that path.

1 Kim-Johnson, Ma Ry, interview by Howard Shek. 2014. (February 28).
level 2 | sensorial
The second level of branding, Sensorial, involves everything that people experience through the five senses upon entering the store.¹ What people see when they enter the store is a life style centered on sports and personalization. What people smell is the fresh scent of new sneakers and sporting goods. What people feel are the materials of the products. The architecture itself has a strong contrast to the products in terms of materials, so as to bring attention to the products being sold.

¹ Kim-Johnson, Ma Ry, interview by Howard Shek. 2014. (February 28).
The third level of branding, Subliminal, involves elements that people do not notice until they have revisited the store repeatedly. In the case of Nike, there is a particular store that has a carpet with a certain pattern. The purpose of the pattern is not immediately recognizable, but after many repeated visits, people may begin to notice that the carpet pattern is actually a mapped route of one of Nike’s annual marathons. As people traversed the store, they also unknowingly walked the path of the marathon.

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1 Kim-Johnson, Ma Ry, interview by Howard Shek. 2014. (February 28).
relevance
A good brand is a consistent brand, and Nike displays a good example of brand consistency.\(^1\) Every element of architecture carefully orchestrates the actions of the building occupants. These people not only go to the Nike store to buy a new pair of shoes, they also spend every minute in the store conforming to the lifestyle that Nike is selling to its consumers. While this appears manipulative at a glance, this is a very good way to keep people interested in what they do in an architectural space, and is the foundation for brand loyalty.

The three levels of branding can be applied to non-commercial purposes, for example, to a school. The result would be something similar to that of Kent County, as mentioned in a previous case study. While brand loyalty is not of high value in an educational environment, the concept of creating interest and relevance in a space in order to maintain people’s voluntary return to the space, is of high value to any piece of architecture.

\(^{1}\) Kim-Johnson, Ma Ry, interview by Howard Shek. 2014. (February 28).
RadioShack’s recent (i.e., 2013) fourth quarter loss prompted the company to reevaluate its image among consumers. RadioShack’s problem is that it is mainly remembered as being a DIY-er’s go-to electronic shop from the 80’s and 90’s. In the present day, the RadioShack brand struggles to find relevance among consumers, due to a general decrease in “DIY-ers”.

In 2009, there were efforts at a re-branding with a name change to “The Shack”, in hopes to modernize the brand. With little to no change at the core of the brand, the name change was an empty façade which failed to connect to target consumers.

RadioShack is currently in the process of undergoing another re-branding attempt, although it has elected to maintain the “RadioShack” name this time around. “Management also hopes to make stores ‘more relevant,’ and part of that includes attracting a younger audience.”¹ All while trying to maintain connection to its original customer base of DIY-ers. Lastly, RadioShack aims to add an element of “fun and lighthearted spirit” to their reputation.

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relevance
The loss of earnings suffered by RadioShack is almost a quantitative measure of how important the relevance of a brand is to a target consumer. An irrelevant identity harms businesses because people have no interest in their stores or their products. In a similar fashion, an irrelevant identity can harm the efficiency of a piece of architecture because people have no interesting in wanting to be in the space that they are otherwise forced to occupy.
--Las Vegas case study

The city of Las Vegas, from an architectural branding standpoint, is incredibly versatile. In the past several decades, the city had successfully re-branded itself multiple times. Las Vegas began life as a humble metropolitan area. In the 1940s, the city got Hollywood’s attention. The Flamingo Hotel was built by the renowned mobster, Benjamin Siegel. The hotel was incredibly expensive to build and led to massive deficits. Siegel was assassinated, and this scandal attracted more investors to construct on the Las Vegas strip.

Caesar’s Palace, built in the 1960’s, was the first themed hotel. It was designed to imitate the grandeur of Rome. This set off an entire chain reaction of themed hotel development, with each new development constantly trying to out-do previous. Because of these themes, the entire Vegas strip appeared as a sort of theme park with family friendly attractions.  

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In the more recent decades, The Las Vegas Convention and Visitor Authority had shifted the city’s marketing priorities. This sparked the beginning of the adult entertainment industry in the area. Previous family friendly attractions were eliminated in favor of more racy attractions. This began the era of the brand “What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas.”

Currently, Vegas is moving toward another re-branding. All the LEED certified buildings being developed are reinforcing the new “green” image. There is a terrible irony behind this brand. It was once believed that Las Vegas was an enormous dessert oasis, with Las Vegas Springs having a seemingly endless supply of water. Due to overpopulation from European settlers, the water for the Spring had to be supplied by a re-diverted Colorado River. There is a clear shortage of water in the area, yet, Vegas keeps the “oasis” idea alive by flaunting the abuse of water through extravagant man-made fountains. Yet, the “green” brand will still be convincing.

Las Vegas is able to change its identity into whatever it wants to appear to be, and this works because the original Las Vegas brand had zero context association. It started life, essentially, as a large movie set. Its identity was born of imitation.

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relevance
Brand identity can be applied in two very different ways. In the case of Las Vegas, branding is a manipulating force. It changes the city into anything that it needs to be in order to bring in revenue. The brand is not influenced by morals and mainly places value in revenue.

On the opposite end, branding can be applied as a tool for communicating what a development wants to be. What the development wants to be is usually guided by a larger vision that benefits the end users. This doctorate research project does not aim to use branding to tell the end user what they want, but rather, to bring out what the end user wants as a manifestation of architecture.
--Chevrolet case study

There is a particular Chevrolet dealership that utilizes what is called a Customer journey in order to communicate their brand to customers (see diagram below). “The journey reinforces the relationship with the dealer, creating brand loyalty which will bring them back to the Chevrolet dealership in the future.”1 There are a few key stages that are set up along this journey, and every stage has a different function, both in terms of the dealer operations and in terms of brand strategy.

Key stages:

- **ATTRACTION**: the exterior of the showroom, creating a distinctive first impression
- **WELCOME**: the entrance area, welcoming the customer into the store
- **GUIDE & INFORM**: intuitively guiding the customer around the store environment
- **COMPARE & SELECT**: providing customers with experience and information that helps their purchasing decisions
- **TRANSACT**: providing a personal sales experience
- **REASSURE**: after-sales service area which maintains customer contact and give brand continuity, while helping to drive positive return visits

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1 Kim-Johnson, Ma Ry, interview by Howard Shek. 2014. (February 28).
This entire process demonstrates how brand loyalty is established. This ensures that interest in the brand will stand up to the test of time. People best understand brands through experiences. If the experience connects with the people, then they will believe in the brand. This process can be modified and applied to non-commercial architecture in order to create spaces that understand the intended occupants.
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