Visual evaluation of the store environments: A comparative study on intercultural differences

Ervin GARİP*, Alper ÜNLÜ**
* Istanbul Kultur University, Faculty of Fine Arts, İstanbul, TURKEY
** Istanbul Technical University, Faculty Architecture, İstanbul, TURKEY

Abstract:
Today, the phenomenon of globalization plays an important role on the formation of interior spaces all over the world. Many designs ignore intercultural differences in general, pioneer the forming of similar interior designs in different places throughout the globe associated with globalization and standardization. Contemporary understanding of merchandising also displayed a similar tendency, similar physical environments manifested themselves. In the last two decades, researchers in "Environment and Behavior" field have increasingly shown an interest in the effects of the physical environment on shopping behavior. Besides, various studies on the store environments demonstrate that spatial organization and physical layout are important in the understanding of merchandising. The sudy presented in this paper aims to put forth the descriptive characteristics of different store layouts and tries to compare the visual preferences of the shoppers. 100 participants were selected from different countries that have different cultural characteristics; from NC State University (USA) and Istanbul Kultur University (Turkey). Additionally, in the scope of this study, it is suggested that different descriptive words can be used to categorize different store layouts. "Causal Comparative Case Study Methodology" was used in order to determine the similarities and differences in the evaluation of the participants and to compare the environmental characteristics of different layouts in the selected electronics stores. Photographs were used to simulate selected shopping environments, and nine descriptive adjectives were chosen to find out the perceptive characteristics of the settings. Data was collected through a questionnaire; statistically analysed by means of semantic differential scales and T tests. In contrast with the hypothesis that the intercultural differences should be effectiveon the evaluation of the store settings and the shopping behavior; the results showed clearly that both groups had similar visual preferences. Nevertheless, the participants gave different responses on choosing the settings as "like" or "dislike".

Keywords: *Store environments, store layouts, environmental perception, visual preference, culture.*

1. Introduction
Today, the phenomenon of globalization plays an important role on the formation of interior spaces all over the world. Many designs ignore

intercultural differences in general, pioneer the forming of similar interior designs in different places throughout the globe associated with globalization and standardization. Contemporary understanding of merchandising also displayed a similar tendency, similar physical environments manifested themselves. This tendency can be interpreted in two different ways; first, consumption phenomenon is a culture per se, therefore it can ignore current cultural structures; secondly, major stores carry their own physical environments to all the corners in the world in the understanding of chain store, for this reason, mentioning location in those physical environments makes no sense. The sudy presented in this paper aims to put forth the descriptive and perceptive characteristics of different store layouts and tries to compare the visual preferences of the shoppers.

In the last two decades, researchers in "Environment and Behavior" field have increasingly shown an interest in the effects of the physical environment on shopping behavior. Besides, various studies on the store environments demonstrate that spatial organization and physical layout are important in the understanding of merchandising; theories and research reported in the marketing and retailing literature examine consumer spatial behavior in retail areas. O'Neill and Jasper (1992) suggests that studies and research on consumer behavior have significant potential to understand "man-environment" interaction.

According to Brislin (1980), cross-cultural studies within the Environment-Behavior Research are necessary for the complete developement of theories since no culture contains all environmental conditions that can affect human behavior. In the broadest, and operational sense, cross-cultural studies in the behavioral/social sciences refer to "the empirical study of members of various culture groups who have had identifiable experiences that lead to predictable and significant differences as well as similarities in behavior (Brislin, 1980). Rapoport (1980) underlines that the surrounding environment with similar physical devices may indicate different things, environmental quality components may vary, and if similar, may be ranked differently due to the rules of any given culture.

This study concentrates on different layouts of electronics stores and tries to put forward their perceptive characteristics. Besides, the conducted study questions attitudes of different cultures about the same physical layouts and researches the effects of international design languages emerged accompanying globalization in distinct cultures.Research questions of the study are collated as below:
- Do perceptive characteristics of physical locations in experimental groups possessing distinct cultures exhibit a difference in spatial evaluations and visual preferences of shoppers?
- Can we categorize the physical layouts of electronics stores due to their evaluated characteristics?

2. The physical organization of the store environments
Spatialization of shopping action coincides with periods before organized shopping sites of the Early Roman and Greek civilizations. In the 13th century, people, who gathered for exchange of goods in certain periods, started to meet in weekly markets accompanied by the growth of settlements and population and the increase of distances (Doubman and Whitaker, 1927). In these periods, market places were defined as open places, where

local products were sold, and that were situated in the centre of settlements (Davis, 1966) (Figure 1a). Davis (1966) claims that historical development of market places shaped the modern shopping place in 19th century (Figure 1b).

Accompanying enlargement of settlements, the use of bottom sections of dwellings for trade function in regions, where moved away from market places in the centre, led to the birth of the "store" concept (Doubman and Whitaker, 1927).

When Ottoman architecture is examined, bazaars formed arcades and passages on structure types creating an architectonic impact. Ottoman-era commercial structures, which had strong architectural character and spatial diversity, had an essential place in city life. Architectural forms that pertain to commercial places, which came into prominence as religious structures, were an important part of urban pattern with their passages that they formed and meeting points (Figure 2).

Transportation and production technology that underwent a change with industry revolution in 19th century brought about the emergence of places, where a great number of goods were simultaneously sold in quite different regions of cities. Departmentalized trade sites that increased after 1850s gained quality by their huge scales and consisting of different departments within themselves (Doubman and Whitaker, 1927). With presentation of a great deal of products under one roof, trade action became more complicated in those times. 'Department stores', which concentrated on food in 20th century, were defined as "supermarket" and the supermarket concept originated in the USA also emerged along with the concept of 'department store' that came on the scene in Europe (Bowlby, 1997). The most striking

a

b

Figure 1. a. Medieval London-City market place (Davis, 1966), b. Medieval Baker and its customers (Davis, 1966)

Figure 2 The Grand Bazaar in Istanbul (Url1)

Table 1. Increase of Wal-Mart type of markets over the years in America (Christensen, 2008)

Year	Number of Outlets	Supercenter	Sam's Club	Neighbor-hood Markets	Markets Abroad	Wal-Mart	Rate of Increase
1975	104					104	
1980	276					276	265%
1985	745		11			756	273%
1990	1402		123			1525	202%
1995	1990	143	428		346	2561	168%
2000	1801	721	463		1004	3989	156%
2006	1209	1980	567	100	2285	5289	132%

example of such markets in the USA, as seen in Table 1, is 'Wal-Mart' supermarkets, whose numbers have been rapidly increasing since 1975 until today.

Categorization of plan layouts in stores is dealt with two distinct approaches; the first approach handles plan layout as an "organizational layout form" (Bearchell, 1975; Lucas et al., 1994) and the second one deals with and classifies plan layout as the "determiner of consumer traffic" (Berman and Evans, 1979; Saucier 2001). Setting off from similar findings of both approaches, different plan layouts and characteristics in stores are categorized as follows:

- Grid Layout (Figure 3a): Kent and Omar (2003) also denominate such placements as "plain layout". It is the layout, in which products and corridors in-between are placed perpendicularly to each other (Bearchell, 1975). Grid layout, which is also called traditional system, is generally employed in supermarkets and 'outlet' stores (Lucas et al., 1994).
- Free-flow Layout (Figure 3b): It is the layout, in which product groups and corridors are in different measurement and forms and shaped with respect to common necessity (Bearchell, 1975). Consumer traffic is realized more independently in this layout used in some 'outlet' stores and garment stores in general (Berman and Evans, 1979).
- Boutique Layout (Figure 4a): The notion of "stores within stores" is evoked in this layout, which is also named as circle layout (Lucas et al., 1994). Subsections within the store incorporate products with different characteristics. This layout, which is used in large scale sites in general, anticipates creating more personal sub-sites.
- Racetrack Layout (Figure 4b): According to Arslan and Baycu (2006), this type of layout is the layout, in which pedestrian circulation determines pedestrian movement and steers it by limiting movement. Albeit racetrack layout resembles free-flow layout, customer is directed to a certain walking and circulation route. Thus, whole store is ensured to be circulated by following a specific corridor.
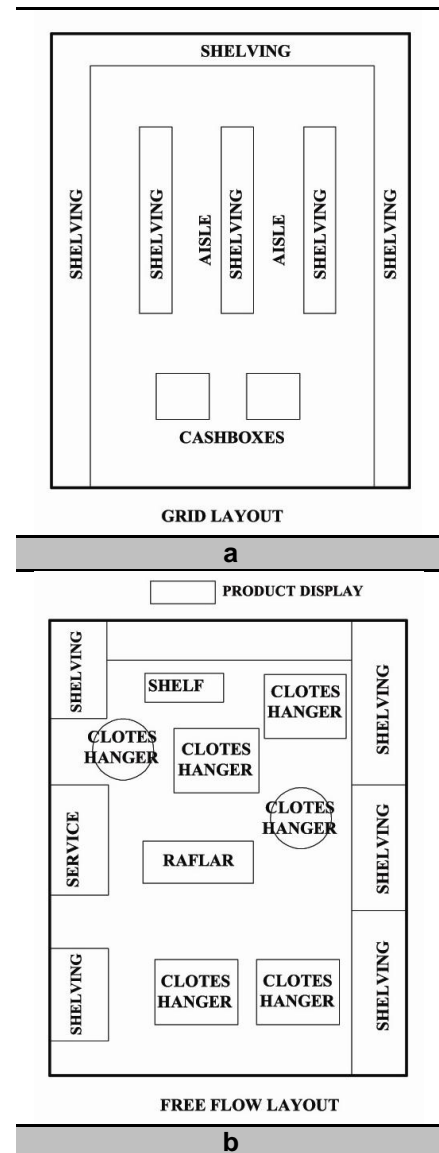

Figure 3. a. Grid layout, b. Free flow layout (modified from Arslan, and Bayçu, 2006)

Although there are some descriptive studies that define the advantages and disadvantages of the store layouts (Table 2), these studies do not present any statistical data that compare the layouts.

3. Previous studies done on the store environments

Studies within the literature display that spatial organization and physical layout are important in the understanding of merchandising. By setting off from cognitive maps of customers, Sommer and Aitkens (1982) put forward that areas of the store, which have different plan layout, are remembered differently. On the other hand, Sommer et al. (1981) propounded that free-flow and low height plan layout in traditional markets exhibits a more
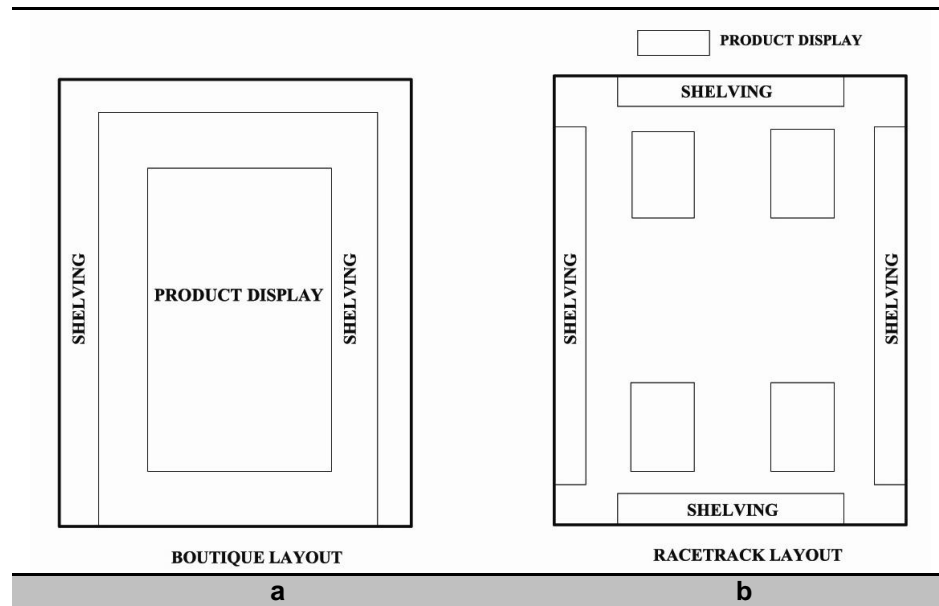
Figure 4. *a. Boutique layout b. Racetrack layout (modified from Arslan, and Bayçu, 2006).*

Table 2. *Advantages and disadvantages of different types of layouts.*

TYPES OF LAYOUT	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	TRAFFIC FLOW
GRID (GRIDIRON)	Easy for wayfinding (Bearchel, 1975) Purchase standard fixtures and and counters (Bearchel, 1975) Easy to display a greater amount of merchandise in each space (Bearchel, 1975) Customers can shop quickly (Berman and Evans, 1979) Develope a routine pattern through the store (Berman and Evans, 1979) All available space is utilized (Berman and Evans, 1979) Control and security is simplified (Berman and Evans, 1979) Self-Service is possible (Berman and Evans, 1979) Reduce labor costs (Berman and Evans, 1979)	It has cold atmosphere (Berman and Evans, 1979) It provides limited browsing and rushued shopping behavior (Berman and Evans, 1979)	Straight Traffic Flow, Turbulance
FREE FLOW (CURVED PATTERN)	Separate more positively the various departments (Bearchel, 1975) Provide more flexibility of desplays and layout (Bearchel, 1975; Hartley, 1980) It develops a friendly atmosphere (Berman and Evans, 1979, Saucier, 2001) Shoppers do not feel rushed and will browse around (Berman and Evans, 1979) Provide more flexible pattern and direction (Berman and Evans, 1979, Saucier, 2001) Support inpulse and unplanned purchase (Berman and Evans, 1979, Saucier, 2001)	Ecouragement of loitering (Berman and Evans, 1979) Confusion of customers (Berman and Evans, 1979; Saucier, 2001) Wasted floor space (Berman and Evans, 1979, Saucier, 2001) Difficulties in inventory control and security (Berman and Evans, 1979; Saucier, 2001) High labor-intensivenoress (Berman and Evans, 1979; Saucier, 2001)	Curving Traffic Flow
BOUTIQUE (LOOP)	Give the feeling of purcasing from the smaller and more personalized operation (Bearchel, 1975, Hartley, 1980)		Loop Flow
RACETRACK	Easy store navigation (Saucier, 2001)		Racetrack Flow

"sociopedal" characteristic in comparison with monotonous plan layout pertaining to supermarkets. In his theoretical approach related to service scape, Bitner (1992) defines plan layout in the following way in sites, which present a specific service: "Plan layout is the scale, form and placement of furnitures, equipments and machines giving the service and the spatial relationship among them." He described two different circumstances, in which plan layout's importance has risen, in terms of customers and employees as follows (Bitner, 1992):

- Plan layout especially gains significance in "self-service" places, where customer acts on his/her own and does not get help from employees,
- Significance of plan layout increases in circumstances, in which time factor is effective.

Each store has distinct plan layout due to its own needs, objectives and properties of the environment, in which it is situated (Bearchell, 1975). Inaccurately designed plan layout leads to tangling of consumer traffic in stores, formation of defunct and useless sections (Bearchell, 1975), uncontrolled crowd and the failure to ensure the store safety (Saucier, 2001).

The majority of the research conducted on in-store environment involves different techniques such as interviews (Harrel et al., 1980; Milliman, 1982; Iyer, 1989; Park et al., 1989, Titus and Everett, 1996), open-ended questionnaires (Iyer, 1989; Park et al., 1989), direct observation on actual shoppers (Milliman, 1982; Sommer et al., 1981; Sommer and Sommer, 1989; Sommer et al., 1992;), observation on research shoppers that are performing simulated shopping tasks (Titus and Everett, 1996), semantic differential scale (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982; Eroglu and Machleit, 1990; Sommer et al., 1981) and mental mapping (Sommer and Aitkens, 1982). These research methods try to explain different characteristics of in-store environment (such as colour, music, crowds, layout etc.) and their effects on shopper. Recently, Penn (2005) tried to understand the configurational features of the store layouts by using the "Space Syntax" method developed by Hillier et al. (1993). Research done by Eroglu and Machleit (1990) used a laboratory experimentation task using colour slides to understand the effect of crowding on consumer behaviour.

4. Case selection
The emergence of electronics stores in Turkey corresponds to the early years of 1980's (Figure 5). It can be clearly observed that they have similar interiors with the examples of the electronics stores that are located in America (Figure 6). Small-scale stores opened in this era are sites, where technology-related products are intensively sold and denominated as "computer market" as well. Increasing product range associated with the development of technology led to the spatial growth of stores and the increase in the number of stores with the increase of competition. Space sizes of places, which started to be called "technology hyper-store", exceeded thousand square meters and a retail store, which has opened in Adana recently, was described as an enormous market with its 2600 m^2 space.

Vatan Bilgisayar   *TeknoSA*

Bimeks   *Electro World*

Figure 5. *Examples of electronics stores located in Turkey.*

Bestbuy-Raleigh   *Bestbuy-Cary*

Bestbuy-Eastwest   *Bestbuy-Raleigh*

Figure 6. *Examples of electronics stores located in America.*

The case study was carried out in three different electronics stores that were located in North Carolina State, America (Tiger Direct-Raleigh; Best Buy-Raleigh; and Best Buy-Cary). The main criteria for the selection was the variety of layouts that they included.

5. Methodology

A questionnaire was designed to understand the shoppers' visual preferences, therefore, a "Visual Preference Test", which included photographs of different layouts, was used within the questionnaire. These kinds of visual representation methods are appropriate for seeking reactions to visual spatial information, and help us to categorize the visual cues of the environment (Sanoff, 1974; Sanoff, 2006). "Causal Comparative Case Study Methodology" was used in order to determine the similarities and differences in the evaluation of the participants and to compare the environmental characteristics of different layouts in the selected electronics stores. Data was statisticaly analysed through semantic differential scales and T tests.

54 photographs were taken in total and categorized due to their similarities and differences. Six of them were chosen for the study as they had different characteristics. Photographs were used to simulate the selected shopping environments. To eliminate prejudice, six photos were taken in the same scale, brightness and colour (black and white).

Two experimental groups were selected randomly from graduated design students. Totaly 100 students were conducted for the case study. 50 students were chosen from NC State University-America; and the other 50 students were chosen from Istanbul Kultur University-Turkey. All the participants were in the ages between 20 and 30. In this research, the students were chosen as the subjects because of the fact that the people who are at the underlined stage of their lives are more interested in the electronics products and more familiar with technological improvement.

"Semantic rating scale" technique was used in order to understand the visual preference of the two groups. Semantic rating scales generally are used to obtain an impression of a group's reaction toward some aspect of the physical environment (Sanoff, 1974; Sanoff, 2006). In "Environmental Psychology", architects have adopted this approach for the purposes of determining the images people have about specific physical environments and buildings.

Nine descriptive adjectives (Table 3) were chosen to find out the perceptive characteristics of the settings. Some of these adjectives were used in the earlier studies that were done by Sommer et al. (1981), Danovan and Rossiter (1982), and Sanoff (1991; 2006). This technique gives us opportunity to understand how each of the settings is perceived and if there are any similarities in characteristics of the settings that can be categorized.

Table 3. Descriptive adjectives chosen for semantic differential.

ATTRACTIVE	UNATTRACTIVE
NOVEL	COMMON
MONOTONY	VARIETY
CHEAPLY	COSTLY
PLEASANT	UNPLEASANT
FORMAL	INFORMAL
SIMPLE	COMPLEX
BORING	INTERESTING
LIKE	DISLIKE

6. Research findings and results

In this study, it is hypothesised that the intercultural differences should be effective on the evaluation of the store settings and the shopping behavior. Additionally, it is suggested that different descriptive words can be used to categorize different store layouts.

Semantic rating scale technique helped us to understand which words were mainly used to **(1)** describe each setting and **(2)** find out what were the environmental cues that effect the participants to choose settings as "like" or "dislike". The comparison of the data gathered from two different groups which had different cultural characteristics, gave us also opportunity to **(3)** evaluate the visual preferences of these groups. Two different techiques were used to understand if there were some differences and similarities between the evaluations of the groups. Firstly adjective ratings of the participants were superposed graphically (Figure 7). This analysis gave us subjective information about the characteristics of each setting. Secondly, the "Independent samples test (T test)" was applied to express the statistically significant differences between the descriptions of two groups (Table 4).

Evaluation of the data gathered from 100 participants (Figure 7) indicates that; Setting 1, 4 and 5 were mostly disliked (mean 3.99, mean 3.38, mean 3.32) while Setting 3 and 6 were mostly liked (mean 2.20, mean 2.00). The overall values in semantic differantial scale also indicate that some of the descriptive adjectives can be used to characterize each setting. Setting 1 was described as "common" (mean average 4.17) and "boring" (mean average 1,96), Setting 2 was described as "costly looking" (mean average 3.52) and "simple" (mean average 2.46), Setting 3 was described as "costly looking" (mean average 4.07) and "pleasant" (mean average 2.15). Setting 4 and Setting 5 were defined as "common" (mean average 3.98\3.59) and "boring" (mean average 2.35\2.36). Finally, Setting 6 was defined as "costly looking" (mean average 3.33) and "interesting" (mean average 3.58).

The "Semantic Profile Chart" given in Figure 7 introduces that Setting 1, 4, 5 and Setting 2, 3, 6 have almost the same characteristics. While Setting 1,4 and 5 were described as "common, unpleasant and boring", Setting 2, 3 and 6 were described as "costly looking and pleasant". Findings point out that more detailed studies should be done to understand the visual characteristics of "Grid" and "Free-flow" layouts.

The statistical comparison indicates that participants from the two different countries used the same adjectives by a majority to describe each setting (Table 4). The T test analysis shows that the distinctive difference was found in the participants' selection of the adjectives "like" and "dislike" (0.006; 0.00; 0.017; 0.013; 0.00<0.05).
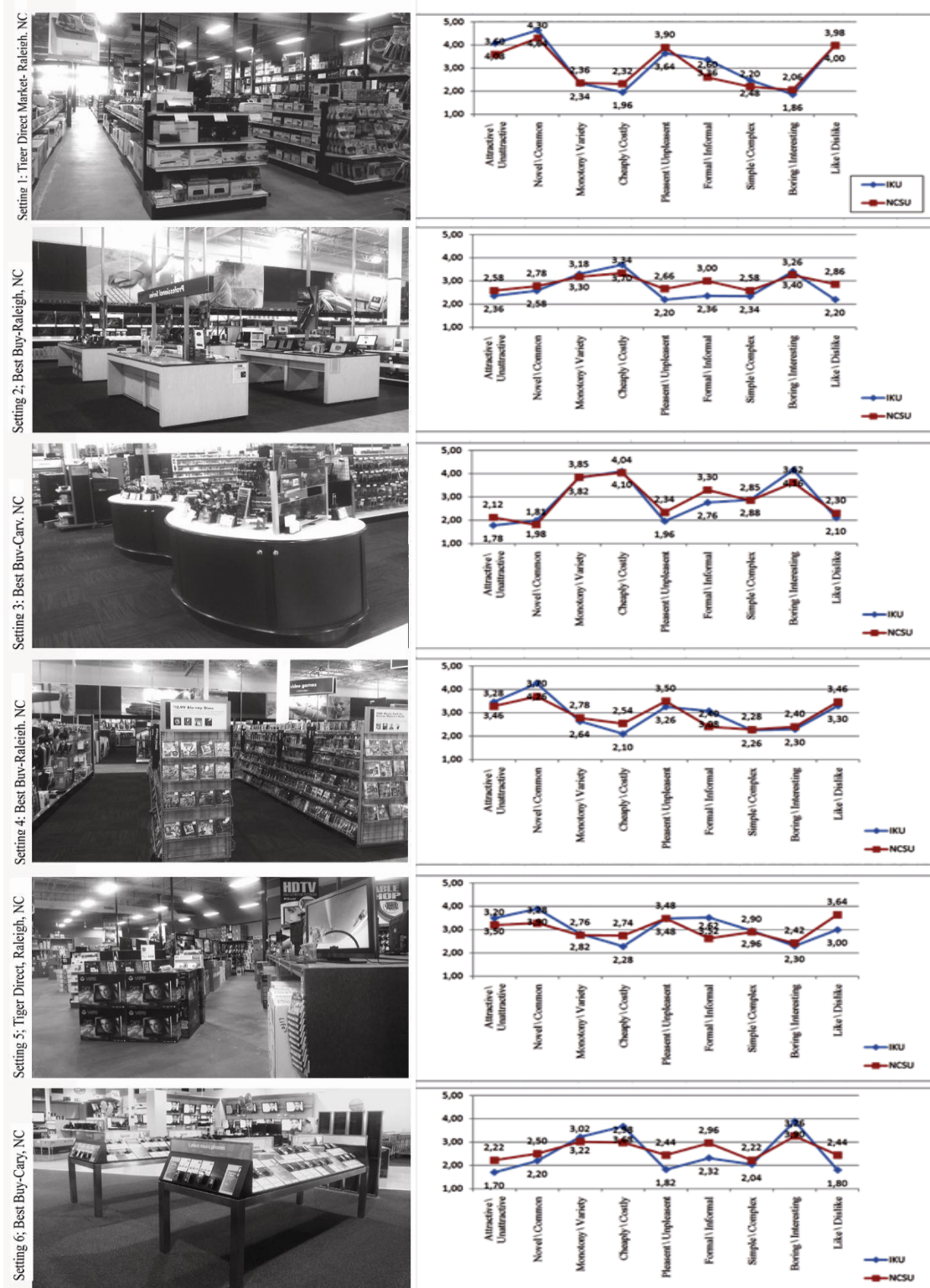
Figure 7. Combined semantic profiles showing the visual preference of two groups (IKU, NCSU).

Table 4. *"T test" evaluation and levels of significance between two groups.*

Adjectives	Setting 1	Setting 2	Setting 3	Setting 4	Setting 5	Setting 6
Atractive / Unattractive	0,056	0,244	**0,029***	0,155	0,102	**0,005***
Novel / Common	**0,003***	0,623	0,967	**0,029***	0,068	**0**
Monotony / Variety	0,234	**0,047***	0,771	0,939	0,302	**0,007***
Cheaply / Costly	0,173	0,43	0,095	0,072	0,72	0,109
Pleasent / Unpleasent	0,094	**0,011**	0,165	**0,004***	0,825	**0***
Formal / Informal	0,778	0,399	0,63	0,65	**0,001***	0,084
Simple / Complex	0,223	0,167	0,264	**0,023***	0,263	0,23
Boring Interesting	0,13	0,637	0,219	**0,032***	0,965	0,283
Like / Dislike	**0,006***	**0***	**0,017***	**0,013***	0,915	**0***

(: p<0,05 statistically significant)*

7. Conclusions

Shopping action is a complex behavior with numerous inputs comprising both product perception and space perception. Today, electronics stores that have been increasing in number rapidly, attract thousands of people not only in our country but in the globe. The environment that surrounds the retail shopper is never neutral, and can be defined as a bundle of cues, messages, and suggestions which communicate to shoppers (Markin et al., 1976). Tauber (1972), hypothesizes that peoples' motives for shopping are a function of many variables, some of which are unrelated to the actual buying of products. It is maintained that an understanding of shopping motives requires the consideration of satisfactions which shopping activities provide, as well as the utility obtained from the merchandise that may be purchased. Kaplan and Kaplan (1982), define the "motivation" in environmental context that shoppers have as:

1. basic physiological need for physical safety, comfort, and sensory stimulation,
2. social need for social interaction and affiliation, and
3. cognitive need for information and legibility in our environment.

The study presented in this article puts forward the characteristics of different physical layouts and compares these characteristics in two distinct experimental groups (American and Turkish). Albeit there exists different descriptive studies pertaining to different physical layouts in interior spaces of stores, the said studies are not empirical and do not contain numerical data. The study presented above can be summarized with outcomes below as a result of examination and comparison of the data:

- All 6 settings and their layouts, can be categorized related with their different caracteristics,
- Data gathered from 100 participants proves that "grid" layouts and "free-flow" layouts have different characteristics according to the participants' selection of adjectives,
- Participants from Turkey and participants from America, used the same adjectives by a majority to describe each setting.

Particularly the third result was essential for the study. In contrast with the hypothesis that the intercultural differences should be effective on the evaluation of the store settings and the shopping behavior; the results showed clearly that both groups had similar visual preferences. This outcome can be interpreted in two different ways: first, consumption culture,

which created its own culture, rejects differences related to individual, place and globalization in our day creates similar inclinations and desires in distinct societies. The second inference is that if globalization is denied, clearer distinctions and differentiations can be detected by performing area studies on more extreme examples (for instance, the USA-India and China-South Africa). Focus on similarities or marketing universals rather than the differences has led international marketers to search for market segments of people with similar lifestyles and values across countries that are called global communities or global tribes (De Mooij, 2004). The influence of globalization, cultural variables such as age and gender, and the occupation of the groups are determinant while analysing the effects of intercultural differences. The assumptions are that 18-year-olds in Paris have more in common with 18-year-olds in New York than with their own parents; business travelers and teenagers are most often cited as examples of such homogeneous groups (De Mooij, 2004).

Despite the two different groups described the settings with similar adjectives, they gave different responses on choosing the settings as "like" or "dislike". Any further studies should give weight to open ended questions that research the users' emotions and attributes in conjunction with the perceptive characteristics of the store environments. The presented study did not made a comparision between men and women. The effects of gender and the cultural characteristics on visual preference should be researched and appear in further studies as well.

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Mağaza iç çevrelerinde görsel değerlendirme:
Kültürlerarası farklılıklar üzerine bir alan çalışması

Günümüzde, globalleşme ile birlikte özellikle tüketim ve eğlence gibi büyük kitlelere hitap eden fonksiyonları barındıran mekanlar standartlaşmakta; dünyanın farklı yerlerinde birbirine benzer iç mekanların sayısı her geçen gün artmakta ve bu mekanların organizasyonunda kültürlerarası farklılıklar genellikle dikkate alınmamaktadır. Mağazacılık anlayışı da benzer bir eğilim sergilemekte, farklı ülkelerde benzer fiziksel çevreler ile karşılaşılmaktadır. 13. yüzyıl öncesi mekansallaşmaya başlayan alışveriş eylemi, o günlerden günümüze gelen süreçte değişmiş ve evrimleşmiş, son yıllarda ise farklı bir boyutta gelişerek tüketiciye sunulan standartlaşmış ürünler ile birlikte iç çevreler de standartlaşmıştır.

"Tüketici Davranışları" literatüründe yer alan "tüketici-tüketim mekanı" ilişkisi günümüzde "Çevresel Davranış Çalışmaları" içerisinde de yer bulmuştur. Sunulan makale, mağaza iç çevrelerinin plan düzenleri üzerinde yoğunlaşmakta, farklı plan karakteristiklerini tanımlamayı ve ortaya koymayı amaçlamakta, kültürlerarası farklılıkların görsel değerlendirme ve tüketim davranışı üzerindeki etkilerini araştırmaktadır. Literatürde, mağaza plan tiplerinin özelliklerini, avantajlarını ve dezavantajlarını ortaya koyan tanımlayıcı çalışmalar bulunmaktadır. Bu makalede ele alınan çalışma, farklı plan tiplerine ait karakteristik ve algısal özellikleri ortaya koymakta, istatistiksel verilere dayanarak deneklerin farklı planlara karşı gösterdikleri değerlendirmeleri karşılaştırmaktadır. Bu bağlamda seçilen farklı teknomarketlerde gerçekleştirilen alan çalışması, farklı kültürlere ait denek gruplarının mağaza iç düzenlerine karşı eğilimlerini ve değerlendirmelerini karşılaştırmakta; istatistiksel sonuçlar ortaya koyarak değerlendirmelerdeki anlamlı farklılıkları ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Buna bağlı olarak bu çalışma kapsamında iki araştırma sorusu irdelenmektedir. Bunlar aşağıdaki gibi sıralanabilir;

- Farklı toplumların teknomarket mekanlarında görsel tercihleri anlamlı bir farklılık göstermekte midir?
- Teknomarketlerde farklı plan kurgularının karakteristiklerine bağlı olarak farklı plan kategorizasyonları tanımlanabilir mi?

Alan çalışması, 50 Amerikalı (North Carolina State University) ve 50 Türk (İstanbul Kültür Üniversitesi) olmak üzere toplamda 100 lisans öğrencisini içeren bir denek grubu ile yürütülmüştür. North Carolina, Amerika'da bulunan üç farklı teknomarkette çekilen 54 fotoğraf içerisinde benzer olanlar gruplandırılarak, 6 yerleşime ait fotoğraflar aynı ölçek, renk ve boyutta olacak şekilde denek grubuna sunulmuştur. Deneklerden, söz konusu plan düzenlerini belirlenen 9 adet sıfat çiftini kullanarak beşli derecelendirme sistemi ile tanımlamaları istenmiştir. Verilerin istatistiksel değerlendirilmesi aşağıdaki sonuçları ortaya koymuştur;

- Ele alınan 6 farklı plan yerleşimi sahip oldukları karakteristiklere göre farklı sıfatlarla tanımlanabilir.
- Seçilen sıfatlar doğrultusunda grid düzen (grid layout) ile serbest düzenin (free-flow layout) değerlendirilmesi farklılıklar göstermektedir.
- Türk ve Amerikalı denekler, farklı kültürlere sahip olmalarına rağmen, plan yerleşimlerini tanımlamak için benzer sıfat tanımlamalarını kullanmışlardır.

Buna ek olarak iki farklı grubun mekan beğenileri ile ilgili tanımlamalarında istatistiksel olarak farklılık ortaya çıkmıştır.

Çalışma sonucunda iki farklı denek grubunun yerleşim planlarını benzer şekilde değerlendirmeleri, iki şekilde yorumlanmıştır; birincisi tüketim olgusu kendi başına bir "kültür"dür, bu nedenle tüketim kültürü mevcut kültürel yapıları gözardı edebilmektedir. İkincisi ise, zincirleme mağazacılık anlayışında büyük mağazalar dünyanın her yerine kendi fiziksel çevrelerini taşımakta, bu nedenle bu fiziksel çevrelerde "yer" ve "yer"e ait özellikler ikincil hale gelebilmektedir.