

Aesthetic Symbols as Emotional Cues

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Introduction

This chapter draws a connection between aesthetic symbols in organizations and emotions of organizational participants. Perhaps because both these notions maintain an unclear link to productivity and efficiency they have not been center - stage issues in organizational research. Yet both are clearly recognized as essential elements of organization (cf. Cacioppo & Gardner, 1999; Fineman, 1996; Gagliardi, 1990; Strati, 1992). We believe that the two notions are tightly related. We wish to assert and illustrate in this essay that aesthetic symbols can and do generate a predictable pattern of emotional scripts. We begin with a brief review of pertinent research and then describe an empirical study that integrated qualitative and quantitative data to illustrate our thesis.

Aesthetic symbols

The concept “aesthetic” originates from the Greek notion *aisthtikos*, is sometimes used to describe a sense of the pleasant or the beautiful, but in actuality is broader, and connotes any sensual perceptions (Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary). Both natural or artistically created stimuli can elicit aesthetic reactions (Carritt, 1931), and any sensual experience is an aesthetic experience.

Organizational scholars have recently begun to recognize the importance of aesthetics or an aesthetic point of view to organizations and organizational studies (Strati, 1992, 1996; Ramirez, 1996; Dean, Ramirez & Ottensmeyer, 1997; Gagliardi, 1990; Ottenmeyer, 1996; White, 1996; Kuhn, 1996; Schmitt & Simonson, 1997). The message in such recent work is that aesthetics is important to organizational research because it lies in all and it has an enormous - though potentially unnoticeable - influence on the behavior of various organizational constituents (Norberg-Schulz, 1971; Schmitt & Simonson, 1996). As the definition suggests, any and all physical surroundings elicit an aesthetic experience. It is therefore likely that multiple aesthetic experiences exist in any organizational context and that variation among such experiences influences constituents’ emotion and behavior.

Of particular interest to us here is the aesthetics of physical cues or symbols in and of organizations. Given the amount of time that human beings spend in various

physical structures in which organizations operate, questions regarding the impact of these structures are noticeably missing from organizational discourse (Bitner, 1992; Davis, 1984). Indeed, organizations are becoming more interested in, and invest more resources in layout design. But scholarly research is still lacking about such expenditures. How should they be channeled? What is their impact? We propose an initial framework to answer such questions.

Aesthetic symbols and participant emotions

Some research has documented the meanings, ergonomic implications, and behavioral effects of environmental symbols (Gibson, 1979; Canter, 1997; Davis, 1984; Ornstein, 1986, 1989, 1992; Trice & Beyer, 1984; Knez, 1995; Evans, Lepore and Schroeder, 1996). Scholars have specifically dealt with philosophical aspects of aesthetics (White, 1996), and a few have focused on the physical layout of service organizations (Bitner, 1986, 1990, 1992)¹. But only limited attention has been given to the link between emotions and aesthetics in organizations (for some exceptions see Strati, 1992, 1996; White, 1996; Kuhn, 1996).

Of specific interest to us is the relationship between emotions and aesthetics in service organization. In this context Bitner (1992) and Mehrabian and Russell (1974) offer broad theoretical frameworks, upon which we rely in this analysis.

Bitner (1992) suggests a concept that she labeled the “servicescape” of service organizations, and a framework for analysis which comprises a mapping of environmental dimensions, participant mediating responses (cognitive, emotional and physiological) and participant (employee and customer) behaviors. Bitner’s (1992) analysis considers emotions as varying on a single dimension of positive to negative. As Zeithaml & Bitner (1996) recently recognized, this treatment ignores the complexity of emotional responses as documented by Mehrabian & Russell (1974).

Mehrabian & Russell’s (1974) analysis presents a more complex view of emotions. They propose a three-dimensional view of emotion, in which three dimensions -- pleasantness, arousal and power – are cardinal to the understanding of any emotion. The framework argues that these three dimensions can map *any* emotional responses to any environment (see also Babin & Darden, 1995; Takahashi, 1996). Yet most of the research on emotional reactions within organizations, (including Bitner, 1992), continues to focus on only one dimension (pleasant –

¹ For a broader mapping of the environmental research, see Saegert & Winkel, (1990).

unpleasant) or on resulting behaviors (such as attitudes of approach or avoidance). For example, Donovan & Rossiter (1982) considered the influence of feelings of pleasantness on behaviors of spending time and money. The goal of our conceptual and empirical analysis is to extend these initial efforts toward establishing the link between environmental cues (or aesthetic stimuli) and the more complex and complete picture of participants' emotions proposed by Mehrabian & Russell (1974).

Aesthetic symbols, emotions and the service environment

The sensual character of aesthetics suggests that the aesthetics of an organization will affect the emotions of all individuals conducting various responsibilities within organizations (managers, employees or clients). In Foucault's spirit (1979)², we view aesthetics as a form of knowledge (see Strati, 1992; Dean et al, 1997), which can be controlled in order to gain power. The combination of our two arguments thus far – that aesthetics influences emotions, and that aesthetics is a form of knowledge - leads to the inevitable conclusion that it is possible to control and manipulate emotions through aesthetics. In other words, an understanding of the different possible meanings of aesthetic aspects of an organization provides a source of power and control over both participants' (clients' and employees') emotions. Organizations trying to evoke certain emotions in participants may therefore be able to do so by manipulating aesthetic symbols (see also Goodsell, 1977).

Control over the aesthetic discourse has a particular importance in service organizations, where survival can depend on successfully presenting an image expected by clients (Schmitt & Simonson, 1997). Such presentations, we propose, rely on eliciting desirable emotions in clients. Hence, our study describes an analysis of the effects of aesthetic symbols on emotional reactions in typical service establishments. We examine this process in the context of bars and restaurants.

We chose to focus on restaurants and bars because of their practical importance in fulfilling a variety of human needs, yet their significant variation in aesthetic appearance. This variation is partly a reflection of organizational attempts to control clients emotions (as implied by Foucault's theory), and partly a result of the

² Foucault suggested that any kind of knowledge is power, which is enforced by the people who possess it and which connote the "right" discourses for a given area. Knowledge and control over the discourse becomes a power resource. Social relations in a given area become controlled by "specialists" in the area, since these function as agents of power and knowledge.

consumerism trend in which restaurants and bars are commodities that, like any other commodity, consider atmosphere and design as a key part of their sell. In this sense, restaurants are not only places that supply clients with food and nutrition. Restaurants are also used to satisfy other needs. For example, restaurants may be used as a “stage” for clients to “show off” or to both establish and reinforce social status (Goffman, 1959). The appearance of a restaurant or a bar may therefore be no less important than the food or drink that they sell.

It is specifically the design or style of a restaurant or bar that determines the kind of “stage” presented by a particular restaurant. This design (or aesthetic cues) can have a significant influence on the type of clientele visiting in the restaurant, their behavior and their emotions. Individuals may choose to visit a restaurant according to what they think it represents. In entering the restaurant, they buy not only the food itself, but also the social image for the restaurant projects. Even before stepping into the restaurant, people examine to what extent they find its design (or aesthetic symbols) fits their self-image.

Cherulnik (1991) offers one of the most extensive studies on restaurants. He demonstrated that people maintain vast cognitive attributions concerning price, service conditions, food quality, customers’ occupations and other adjectives related to a restaurant. This chapter is an attempt to broaden Cherulnik’s (1991) research beyond the cognitive schemes, by considering the emotional elements of responses to restaurants. Thus, our first goal in the chapter is to document that three dimensions of affect (pleasantness, arousal and power) can be discerned in subjects’ evaluation of aesthetic symbols of restaurants. Following Takahashi (1996) we specifically expect to find the three dimensions of affect to underlay associations with physical appearance of restaurants³. Hence, our first, overarching proposition of study is:

P1: Emotional responses to physical surroundings of service organizations contain the three basic dimensions of pleasantness, arousal, and power.

Aesthetic design: Monomorphic or eclectic

Our second goal is to further enhance our understanding of aesthetic symbols in organizations. Toward this goal we seek to identify the influence of particular aesthetic designs on the three dimensions of emotion. Only scant literature is available

on conceptualizations of different aesthetic styles (Canter, 1997). Building on what we could find we posit that a key issue for such conceptualization is the legibility of the design (Nasar, 1987; Pederson, 1986). Legibility of aesthetic design can bear at least two values: Monomorphic and eclectic. A design that is *monomorphic* is *clearly legible and can be easily labeled and identified*. Monomorphic designs contain aesthetic elements that represent *only one consistent style*. The monomorphic design may be “Baroque”, “modern,” “Chinese,” or “efficient”, but in all these and similar cases it is clearly identifiable.

In contrast, a design can be *eclectic*, in which case it is not clearly identifiable. The eclectic design style is a style that has *no one clear direction* and *contains a blend or amalgam of styles* (Nasar, 1987). For example, the coffee shop frequented by the American TV show “Seinfeld” characters, or any other coffee shop that cannot be succinctly described by a single descriptor is likely to bear an eclectic design. The categorization of monomorphic versus eclectic can be applied to any aesthetic dimension. For example, if we focus on the distinction between an old versus modern style, then clearly old or clearly modern styles would be labeled “monomorphic”. In contrast, a style characterized by a blend of old-style elements and modern-style elements would be labeled “eclectic”.

Our conceptual analysis of the emotional impact of eclectic designs suggested that such designs *would not evoke extreme emotions (either positive or negative) among participants*. This expectation draws from the following logic: The eclectic style allows for a larger number and more varied elements. Such variety increases the probability that there will be elements that any participant may find attractive. Eclectic designs can be expected to provide more space for imaginative fantasies. Even if the match to one’s taste is not exact, an eclectic style offers some probability that certain aspects will be appealing. Therefore, this style can be expected to evoke less antagonism and less extreme emotions in participants. Consequently this style can be expected to yield mildly positive reactions of pleasantness among most people.

In contrast, we expect the monomorphic design to be more emotionally committing, yielding either highly positive or highly negative emotions. Such styles are clearer, and likely to create distinct associations that can be expected to provoke

³ We also extend Takahashi’s (1996) analysis, which was of abstract pictures, to more complex but also more familiar stimuli, namely pictures of real organizations.

more antagonism as well as greater enthusiasm among participants. Hence our second broad hypothesis was as follows:

P2: Monomorphic designs (i.e., non-eclectic designs) will evoke more extreme emotions than eclectic designs. Eclectic designs will evoke fewer extreme positive or negative emotions and will produce mild positive reactions among a majority of people.

Empirical Study

We examined these two propositions in an empirical study that combined both qualitative and quantitative data. In a pilot study we first used expertise (opinions of architects and frequent customers) to identify the salient dimensions that separate monomorphic from eclectic designs in restaurants. We then applied these dimensions in an inductive (qualitative) study of emotional reactions to aesthetic design of similarly priced restaurants. To broaden the representation of the dimensions identified in the pilot study we expanded the set of stimuli to include bars as well. In a deductive (quantitative) study we analyzed the nature of emotions elicited by different types of aesthetic environments.

Method

Pilot study: Classifying aesthetics

Our first goal was to construct a conceptual structure that would allow us to distinguish between different design styles of restaurants. Toward this end we collected pictures of a variety of similarly priced restaurants (see below). We showed the pictures to 20 experts (architects, interior designers and people who regularly frequent restaurants) and asked them how they would classify the pictures. We also asked these experts about relevant dimensions for drawing distinctions between the physical (aesthetic) appearance of different restaurants.

These interviews suggested two key categories of our stimuli: an ethnic dimension and a warm-cold dimension. The first dimension – ethnicity – contrasted, for example, French designs with Chinese or Middle-Eastern styles. This dimension has been recognized in previous theoretical works (for example, Baraban & Durocher, 1988). The second dimension – warm or cold - is less familiar in theoretical literature,

but is frequent in architects' discourse and the majority⁴ (19 of the 20) of the experts we interviewed agreed that this is an essential dimension for distinguishing among restaurants.

Once these dimensions were recognized, our conceptualization suggests that each of the restaurants in our sample could be categorized as either monomorphic or eclectic on both of these dimensions. Hence, a restaurant can theoretically be classified as monomorphic (when clearly cold or clearly warm), or as eclectic (when neither clearly cold nor clearly warm). We therefore asked our 'experts' to classify the pictures on these two dimensions. Experts had no problem in classifying the restaurants on either dimension. However, these classifications revealed that none of the restaurants were perceived as clearly (monomorphically) cold. This occurred although our subjects were the ones who originally suggested the warm-cold dimension for classifying the pictures.

It could be that cold restaurants used to exist and could theoretically exist, but are no longer in vogue and therefore were not a part of our initial set of stimuli. To obtain complete representation of the warm-cold dimension of design we searched for additional food service locations in which the cold-warm dimension will be more completely represented. We found it in bars (a similar service industry), and hence added pictures of 35 bars to our set of potential stimuli. The experts were then contacted again and asked to classify the complete set of pictures of restaurants and bars. This time the classification yielded six categories of pictures, which represented both monomorphic and eclectic designs, as follows:

	Monomorphically designed establishment	Eclectically designed establishment	Monomorphically designed establishment
Ethnic Dimension	Restaurant with mostly European elements	Restaurant with both European and Middle-Eastern elements	Restaurant with mostly Middle-Eastern elements
Warm-Cold dimension	Bar with mostly cold elements	Bar with both cold and warm elements	Bar with mostly warm elements

⁴ for the discrepancy between the theoretical language and the architects' practice, see Canter 1997

Pictures of equally priced bars represented the warm-cold dimension, while pictures of equally priced restaurants represented the ethnic dimension. A satisfactory level of agreement was apparent among the experts regarding the classification of all pictures. Experts were then asked to select one picture that would prototypically represent each of the categories. Thus, they had to choose six pictures to represent each of the six categories in the table. The modal choices were the stimuli used in the following study.

Study: Emotional Reactions to Aesthetic Cues

Stimuli

As noted above, from an initial pool of 85 photographs of restaurants and bars six were selected. Two photographs represented monomorphic values on the ethnic dimension: One represented a European style design (Figure 1), and one a Middle-Eastern style (Figure 3). A third picture represented an Eclectic (combined or indistinct) style, which is neither European nor Middle Eastern, and may contain elements of both styles (Figure 2).

Insert Figure 1, 2 and 3 here

In addition, three photographs were chosen to represent the cold-warm dimension. One represented the monomorphic-cold design (Figure 4), another represented the monomorphic-warm design (Figure 6), and a third represented an eclectic design, which contains both warm and cold elements (Figure 5). Thus this set of stimuli provided a comparison of two monomorphic styles dimensions: Ethnicity and warm or cold.

Insert Figure 4, 5 and 6 here

Subjects

Israeli subjects (n=200, 105 business-school students and 95 non-students) of different ages participated in a study that was described to them as an attempt to explore the influence of design on emotions. Half the subjects (51%) were men.

Students participated in the study for experimental credit; non-students participated as a gesture of good will to the first author.

Procedure

Each subject was asked to write an imaginary story regarding a plausible visit to each of the establishments in the pictures. Subjects had no problem with this task. Three examples of stories written by three different subjects are included in the Appendix.

Two judges then coded all the stories collected with regards to the emotions that they embodied. This coding process provided data regarding the emotions that each story contained. The coding allowed for quantitative analyses to bolster the qualitative analyses of the narratives. Judges specifically coded the following aspects of the stories: the category of each emotion, the direction of each emotion, and the intensity of each emotion.

1. Category of each emotion: Each emotion was coded regarding the salient category it represented from the three categories identified by Mehrabian & Russell (1974). A **pleasantness** code was assigned when a story contained terms such as appraisal, enjoyment or unpleasantness. An **arousal** code was assigned when stories contained terms such as overload, activity or relaxation. A **power** code was assigned when stories contained terms such as dominance, control, submission or threat. The codes were not mutually exclusive, so that each story could be coded as containing any or all of these categories.

The coding process was as follows: Judges first identified all emotional terms in each story, and then classified each term into one out of the three emotional categories. Judges were instructed to classify emotions on the basis of the most salient feature of each emotion. Thus, this classification identifies the most salient dimension of each emotion, although according to Mehrabian & Russell's (1974) dimensional view all three dimensions characterize each and any emotion.

2. The direction of emotion: Next, judges were asked to determine the direction of each emotion. For example, an emotion coded as 'pleasantness' could be coded as negative (e.g., ugliness) or as positive (e.g., beauty). Similarly, an emotion coded as arousal could be coded as low (e.g., boredom or relaxation) or as high (e.g., excitement). In the power dimension weakness is an example of low power whereas

control is an example of high power. The direction of the evoked emotions was used both as input for a qualitative analysis (see results section) and as an input to the next measure.

3. The intensity of emotions: Two indices of intensity of emotion were developed. First, we assumed that designs that evoke extreme emotions are likely to yield disagreements among the viewers of the photographs. That is, we assumed that clear (monomorphic) styles evoke extreme emotions, but that they will be extreme in one direction for some subjects and in the other direction for others. Thus, intensity of emotion was assessed by the distribution of the direction of emotions between subjects. When responses were more or less evenly split between low and high values we assumed they were extreme. When responses were clustered in one location, we assumed they were not extreme. Second, we asked judges directly to code the intensity of emotions in a story. Judges were specifically asked to identify both narratives that revealed strong emotions of the writer and narratives that evoked strong emotions in the reader. These two indicators of intensity were used to test our second proposition. Reliability of judges' coding was verified, though minor discrepancies between the judges were excluded from all analyses.

Results

Table 1 presents the frequency of stories that contained at least one emotional term in each of the three dimensions. As evident in Table 1, all three emotional dimensions were found in the narratives. The dimension of pleasantness is the most prominent dimension, but both the arousal dimension and the power dimension are also evident. These findings are consistent with our first hypothesis, confirming that subjects' reactions to aesthetic stimuli can be mapped using Russell's emotional map.

Insert Table 1 About Here

Table 2 summarizes the direction and intensity of the emotions categorized in Table 1. As shown in Table 2, and as expected in our second proposition, monomorphic styles (European and Middle-Eastern, cold or warm) yielded an even split in the pleasantness dimension. That is, whereas eclectic designs largely evoked pleasant emotions, monomorphic design styles evoked emotions that were, more or

less, equally divided between high and low pleasantness (half expressed dislike and half enjoyment while only about 20% did not express clear emotions of pleasantness).

Eclectic designs: Moderate yet pleasant experiences

The narratives (stories) generated by subjects in reaction to the eclectic designs further confirmed that the experience of visiting such locations is typically associated with pleasant yet moderate (*not extreme*) emotions. This sentiment was evident in narratives such as:

“This is a very regular place, there is nothing special about it.”

The moderate (non-extreme) emotions generated by these locations were reflected in texts such as:

“I didn’t feel anything special, it was OK, not more, not less.”

“There is nothing special about the bar, it’s nice, but similar to other bars.”

Behaviors and relationships embedded in stories associated with the eclectic design revealed a similar pattern. They comprised references to ‘average’ (‘nothing special’) relationships. For example:

“I would come to this place with people, who are not very close to me but also not strangers.”

Topics of conversation, or service received in such (eclectic) establishments were also more mundane. To illustrate:

“We talked about daily affairs: gossip, politics, problems at work and general things. Nothing special.”

Finally, the quality of service received seemed to be moderate, not excellent but not awful either:

“The waitress was nice, but she made a lot of mistakes.”

“The service wasn’t 100%, but the atmosphere didn’t leave us enough time to consider the food”

”Service was a little bit slow, but no one was angry when food arrived 25 minutes late.”

A prominent element of narratives generated by the eclectic designs was the frequent reference to blind dates⁵. This is insightful because it may help unravel the unique merit of eclectic designs. Some subjects noted that such places would be appropriate

for blind dates because they enable them “to impress women”. Others noted that the eclectic places could please many (different) people and are therefore appropriate for blind dates. For example:

“It’s a mixture of many styles, and therefore, it suits everybody”.

Consistently, respondents indicated that they were not likely to be regular customers of the eclectic institution. And most subjects suggested that the eclectic institutions provide anonymity. One subject explicitly noted:

“There is no regular clientele in this place, only passers-by”.

The greater anonymity of eclectic designs may reduce the face cost in case of a failure of a blind date, which, as we discuss later, may be why eclectic styles are judged more suitable for blind dates.

Monomorphic designs: Extreme experiences

In contrast to the eclectic styles, narratives evoked by the monomorphic designs contained unusual events and extreme emotions. These effects were evident in all monomorphic stimuli. In both qualitative and quantitative analyses, the monomorphic designs evoked strong positive reactions among some respondents and strong negative reactions among others. Importantly, each design elicited a different set of associations, but all associations were extreme.

Our analyses further revealed that subjects made similar associations to the restaurants classified as monorphic-European and those bars classified as monomorphic-cold: both places were noted as “civilized places.” Similar associations were also made to places classified as warm and those classified as Middle-Eastern; both of these were noted in stories as representing ‘primal instincts’. Below we therefore first describe subjects’ reactions to the cold and European designs and then describe subjects’ reactions to warm and Middle-Eastern designs.

Monomorphic cold and European designs: Distant and cool emotions

Narratives concerning cold and European design styles evoked distant and extreme emotions. As summarized by one subject:

“[As I walked in] a feeling of chilliness engulfed me.”

⁵ This may be argued to be due to the young ages of approximately half our subjects, however we did not find a relationship between the age of subjects and the mention of blind dates.

Attributions of “correctness and coolness” prevailed in these stories. Such attributions were evident both with respect to service representatives and with respect to clients.

For example:

“Our behavior in the bar was restrained; the other clients looked sophisticated.”

“The waitress’s manner was very correct.”

Subjects also identified the cold design as being sophisticated, civilized and snobby⁶.

These sentiments were often translated into places being noted as fashionable and popular among ‘up and coming’ crowds. Terms such as ‘in’ and ‘yuppies’ were popular in these narratives. And, as may be expected in presumably ‘sophisticated’ places, conversations focused on weighty affairs rather than daily affairs. For example:

“We talked about philosophy.”

“We had a deep conversation about life and its meaning.”

“We talked about mergers of companies.”

Consistent with the prestige association, the cold and European design seemed to be associated with greater expenses. This is particularly interesting since all pictures were intentionally selected to represent locations that are equally priced. Status symbols such as fancy or delicate china and furnishings were often mentioned (Fussel, 1983). These symbols were sometimes translated into feeling of intimidation and concern both of the actor and of other customers:

“[I was worried.] Would I behave properly as expected from me?”

“Everybody was busy showing they belonged to the place. I wasn’t sure”

“I arrived with a few architect friends, who were dressed properly and I wasn’t. I didn’t fit in.”

“I was impressed by the friendly attitude of the waitress towards the regular clients. But towards strangers like me, her attitude was just polite.”

Subjects who reported a sense of belonging to such places reported a sentiment of pleasure in the cold and high status place. To illustrate:

“I felt like a princess in a palace. I was dressed properly, and I ordered the best dish as the waiter recommended.”

⁶ This association between ‘European’ and prestige may represent values in the Israeli context where anything European is considered more prestigious than anything Middle Eastern, and Jews of European (Ashkenazy) origin are often considered snobby as compared to Jews of Middle-Eastern (Sephardic) origin (Eisenstadt, Lissak, and Nahon, 1993). These values have been sharply criticized, but may still prevail.

“I felt I was floating in a wonderful dream, cut off from reality...food was magnificent!!!”.

Monomorphic warm or Middle-Eastern designs: Sensual and impulsive

As opposed to the “high-brow” atmosphere at cold and European locations, the warm and Middle-Eastern locations elicited passionate and sexual attributions. This was evident in descriptions of clients, employees, and topics of conversation. Subjects noted that the “warm” bar was more appropriate for men or that few women would feel comfortable there. This attribution of masculinity was tightly associated with sexuality:

“It’s a place of passion and impulses [sexual excitement and desire].”

“It was a hall of sex...waitresses dressed provocatively.”

“The smell, the atmosphere, everything called for sex.”

“After a few minutes, a woman sat near me. I immediately understood her intentions.”

Attributing masculinity to the bar was at times felt as threatening, especially to female subjects. At the same time, it was reported as free and liberating:

“The atmosphere here is more liberated.”

“The bar is designed in such a way that it gives a feeling of freedom, which is important to most men.”

In the case of the Middle Eastern design, the feeling of freedom was one of “social freedom” regarding who could frequent the place and how they could behave. Narratives suggested a lack of tightly imposed norms to be complied with. For example:

“We sat together, laughed and spoke freely, because the place was so disordered, that we could feel comfortable”

“In this restaurant you can wear any clothes you want”

Such feeling of freedom were accompanied with high degree of sensual arousal involving multiple senses:

“The restaurant was noisy, it was hot and the flies came onto my plate.”

“There was an acrid smell of fish in the air.”

“Tables were sticky...”

“The floor was dirty...”

These high degrees of arousal were also evident in the quantitative analyses, as can be seen in Table 2.

In sum, both the qualitative and quantitative results confirm, as we predicted (P2) that monomorphic designs (non-eclectic) evoke extreme emotions that may be either positive or negative. In contrast, eclectic-design styles are preferred by more subjects, but do not evoke distinct feelings.

Discussion

This effort is part of a stream of research on the relationship between environmental cues and the emotions experienced by organizational members (<http://iew3.technion.ac.il:8080/~anatr/main.html>). Drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data we illustrated a link between the appearance of organizations and the emotions felt by potential participants. Our results pertain to imaginary rather than actual experiences, but they do confirm our (albeit broad) propositions. First, the results show clear evidence for all three emotional dimensions of emotion in stories evoked by aesthetic. Second, the results document that affective reactions can, to some extent, be predicted with a systematic analysis of the aesthetics of environmental cues. Our analyses contribute to theoretical understanding of both aesthetics and emotions in organizations in multiple ways: They help explain previously unaccounted preferences for eclectic over monomorphic designs, they reveal the importance of considering power in analyses of emotion, and they help position two dominant social science frameworks as pertinent to the study of aesthetics and designs. We discuss each of these implications separately.

People prefer eclectic over monomorphic designs

Our conceptual analysis of the difference between the two designs extends Pederson's (1986) contention that subjects prefer eclectic designs by offering an (albeit tentative) explanation for such preferences. The eclectic design comprises a combination of multiple and varied elements. Such variety can be expected to increase the probability that any and all people will find some elements of the design attractive. In contrast, monomorphic designs are more likely to create distinct associations that can be expected to provoke either more antagonism or greater enthusiasm. The implication is that when a select target audience can be identified, and a specific design that will appeal to this audience can be planned, a monomorphic design of that nature may be managerially powerful. In contrast, when the target

audience comprises multiple and potentially varied individuals an eclectic design may be more effective.

Future research is essential however regarding the concepts of eclectic versus monomorphic designs. First, the constructs themselves deserve further inquiry. Such research may focus not only on eclecticism in aesthetics, but also and not only in eclecticism and monomorphism of restaurants and bars. We believe the constructs deserve further attention in the broader context of exploring the impact of physical cues on individual emotion and behavior (Pratt and Rafaeli, 1999; Rafaeli and Worline, in press). Such research may gain by looking into research on eclecticism in other domains, such as Psychotherapy, organizational consulting, or social work.

Second, additional empirical documentation is essential regarding individuals' preferences for eclectic design. It is plausible that both individual and context differences may moderate this effect. For example, individual differences in goal directed behavior (action orientation versus state orientation) were found by Kluger, Rafaeli, and Greenfeld (1999) to moderate the influence of service environments on participants' emotions and behaviors. In this study customers who are action oriented (who can be expected to maintain a rational and planned decision making and shopping process) did not react positively to shops eliciting a high level of arousal.

Power as a central tenant in the study of emotion

Our somewhat unconventional methods -- of coding of qualitative narratives (rather than reliance on structured measures) may be of merit above and beyond the theoretical findings. Previous research -- which relied on structured, quantitative measures -- could not confirm the power dimension. Consequently, researchers tended to neglect the issue of power in affect research (see for example Russell & Barrett, 1999). Our data position such neglect as not justified suggesting that power should be integrated into studies of emotions in organizations. Even within our data fewer associations are made to power than to pleasantness (see Table 1). But many narratives did include references to power, suggesting that totally ignoring it is inappropriate. Considering power in analyses of emotion is consistent with the importance of power to organizational members (see for example Pfeffer, 1981, 1992). It is specifically important in the context of relating aesthetics to emotion, given the important role attributed to power in messages communicated by aesthetic symbols (cf. Molloy, 1975; Rafaeli, Dutton, Harquail, and Mackie-Lewis, 1997).

One proposition that our data suggest is that the power dimension is prominent only in those relatively less frequent situations in which strong emotions are evoked, (see also Kluger and Rafaeli, in press). In our data the narratives solicited in association with the monomorphic design contained more references to power than those elicited by the eclectic designs, and our analysis suggested that monomorphic designs are construed as more extreme than eclectic designs. Thus, power appears to be a dominant element of reactions to design when the design is more, rather than less, provocative.

Our effort demonstrates that the sensation of power is so fundamental in our lives that it may be evoked by physical as well as social stimuli transmitted by aesthetics.

Theoretical (social sciences) lenses for the study of aesthetics and emotions

In the context of a volume such as this one, an additional goal of this chapter is to suggest novel theoretical lens for studying and understanding emotional reactions in organizations. We see our study as suggesting two such lenses. First, we suggest that the preference of eclectic styles over monomorphic styles may be afforded by Levi-Strauss's, (1964) suggestion that the distinction between nature and culture bears core implications for human social construction. Second we suggest a link between aesthetic designs and the psychoanalytic theory advanced by Freud (1940). As we explain below both of these theoretical lenses are pertinent to our unexpected findings wherein monomorphic designs that were warm elicited forbidden sexual desires, while monomorphic cold designs were associated with intellectual attributes.

Aesthetic design as a distinction between nature and culture

A claim maintained by the school of structural anthropology is that the tension between nature and culture is central to human thought and action (Levi-Strauss, 1964). In this school of thought, primitive thought is argued to be a reconstruction of nature while the thought and action of modern cultures involves abstract models constructed to represent the world. Human behavior is argued to be governed by this tension between natural and abstract paradigms. According to Levi-Strauss, (1964) the primitive modes of action (which can be described as wild or untamed) are primary in human mentality, and are what all humans have in common. These modes of action stand in contrast to the civilized (tamed or domesticated) thought patterns, which are central to modern societies. Modern or cultured thought is argued to be

primarily intellectual and rational, while primitive or natural thought is argued to be emotional and instinctive (Geertz, 1990). This framework suggests a potential modification to our conceptualization of different aesthetic designs because it predicts unexpected links in our data.

Specifically, our analyses found that in response to a design that we defined as European and cold subjects made attributions of constrained, civilized, and intellectual behavior. In contrast, in response to designs we labeled monomorphic Middle-Eastern and warm subjects made attributions of impulsive and unconstrained behavior⁷. Thus, the associations elicited by different designs were split on a nature-culture continuum: the cold and European design elicited associations that can be categorized as tamed or cultural, while the warm and Middle-Eastern design elicited associations that can be categorized as ‘natural’.

Applying this conceptual framework to our analysis of different designs suggests a new variable for studying aesthetic cues, namely the extent to which a design reflects cultural manipulation versus mimicking natural compositions. This conceptualization suggests insightful new propositions regarding the pattern of emotions that different designs will yield. Specifically, based on Levi-Strauss’s (1964) analyses we predict that designs that more strongly reflect cultural manipulation will trigger emotions loaded on the power dimension because the cultural manipulation embedded in the design would be a symbol of social power. In contrast, designs that are more natural, or less constrained, are predicted to be more arousing because the natural elements of the design would be symbols of instinctive or unconstrained behavior.

Indeed, a close look at our quantitative findings reveals precisely this pattern. A closer look at Table 2 confirms that the two monomorphic designs (European and Middle-Eastern) elicited very different patterns of both arousal and power. In response to the Middle-Eastern style a proportionately a far greater number of high-arousal stories was generated than in response to the European style (54% versus 7% of stories for the Middle-Eastern design reflected high arousal as compared to 40% versus 17% for the European style). Similarly, the gap in the power felt by subjects was greater in the Middle-Eastern style than in the European style (2% versus 49% of

⁷ This may appear odd given perceptions of Middle-Eastern cultures as conservative and constraining (Schwartz, 1999). It is important to note, however, that these were the perceptions of Israeli subjects of local Middle-Eastern restaurants.

stories for the Middle-Eastern style reflected high power as compared to 43% versus 24% for the European style, see Table 2).

Thus, the European design, which was construed in the narratives as relatively more civilized and socially constraining, was also construed as less arousing but more empowering or domineering. The Middle-Eastern style, which was construed in the narratives as relatively less constraining, was also construed as more arousing. The mechanism underlying these emotional associations may have to do with the materials used in the different monomorphic styles. A closer look at our stimuli reveals that the materials used in the European and the cold designs tended to be cultivated (e.g., concrete, iron and artificially colored wood). In contrast, the materials used in the European and warm styles were natural materials (e.g., stone, untreated dark wood). Thus, when manipulation of nature is evident in a design, attributions of culture and civility are made. When nature is maintained in a design, attributions of impulsiveness are made.

The eclectic design may be also interpreted in this conceptualization. Following Levi-Strauss (1964) eclectic designs may be styles that offer a compromise between the extremes of nature and culture. Eclectic styles maintain a mixture of natural materials and artificial elements. For example, in our stimuli both the eclectic restaurant and the eclectic bar contained both wood and earth colors (natural elements) and metal, steel, plastic, and artificial colors (cultivated elements). This mixture allows for two sets of attributions to emerge (natural or free and cultural or constrained). This hybrid may help make the eclectic design to be liked by more people. Hence, as our data reveal, the eclectic design was associated with a feeling of pleasantness for a large number of people (78% and 67% of subjects respectively saw the eclectic restaurant and bar as pleasant, while only approximately 40% of subjects saw any of the monomorphic designs as pleasant). In short, both aesthetically and emotionally the eclectic design appears to combine nature with culture.

Aesthetic design and emotion as psychoanalytic processes

A second theoretical lens that helps advance our understanding of our data is that of psychoanalytic theory. Sandstrom (1974) advanced an initial implementation of psychoanalytic concepts to the study of aesthetics. Extending Sandstrom's (1974) line of thought, our focus on aesthetic design as emotional cues suggests that conceptually

distinct designs can be associated with distinct psychoanalytic constructs (Freud, 1940). Freud (1940) differentiated between the superego, which represents cultural norms, and the id (or Libido) which represents bare instincts. The ego in Freud's theory contains the adaptation of libidinal impulses to cultural norms. It may therefore be that cold designs are agents of the superego, while warm designs are agents of the id. Along this line of thought the eclectic design represents the ego, as it is a combination of aspects of the id and the superego. Consistently, in our study cold designs were considered relatively more civilized, while warm designs were considered relatively more natural and impulsive.

Freud's (1940) theory further asserted that the id reflects basic human impulses that demand immediate satisfaction, and especially sexual instincts. In contrast, the superego reflects culture and society, both of which restrain human impulses to cultural norms. Indeed, our findings are that warm designs -- that we now suggest are more libidinal -- evoked sexual and impulsive associations. In contrast, cold designs -- which we now suggest to be representations of the super ego -- evoked narratives and emotions that reflect controlled and civilized aspects of social life. In this analysis the eclectic design may be construed to represent the ego: It combines the satisfaction of both basic needs (those of the id) and social needs (those of the superego). The eclectic design is preferred, and judged to be more pleasant by subjects precisely because it offers a response to two basic yet conflicting set of psychoanalytic human needs, the basic drives of the id and the social requirements of culture. Eclectic designs in a sense offer a middle ground between two extremes.

The psychoanalytical lens to the study of design helps explain the pattern of feelings with regards to social threat, which were not predicted by our propositions, but were nonetheless noticeable in our data. The pattern was of social deviance being construed as anxiety provoking in the cold designs and as an opportunity for self-fulfillment in the warm design. Although unexpected, these findings suggest a potentially valuable direction for future research. Specifically, our qualitative findings revealed that on one hand, narratives relating to the cold (European) restaurants contained repeated references to the anxiety associated with social norms. To illustrate, subjects voiced concerns about understanding the menu, being appropriately clothed for the place, or really belonging in the place and with its clientele. In contrast, stories elicited by the warm design contained a subtle but consistent theme of

the opportunity to deviate from social norms, and be ones' self. Subjects saw the warm design as offering an opportunity to be a little different from others, do something different for the first time, or act more naturally.

Complementary to this pattern is the finding that in the eclectic designs subjects fantasized far more about blind dates, and similar social situations which can be viewed as social daring that is within reasonable limits. The eclectic designs elicited narratives that can be argued to be representations of the ego because they reflected a version of guarded freedom: They simultaneously violated certain social boundaries, but did not reach a point of total lack of restraint. For example, in the blind date narrative that we received primarily (yet unexpectedly) in response to the eclectic styles subjects appeared to construct in their minds a version of daring behavior that is within given limits. Emotionally, there is a certain violation of social norms in going for a date with someone you have never met before. But the mere fact that there is an acceptable social term for such behavior suggests that it is socially (albeit marginally) acceptable. Thus, the blind date represents a pattern of behavior that combines social constraints that would be too imposing on their own, with personal instincts which would be inappropriate on their own.

We did not predict this conceptual link at our point of departure, thus these analyses are but post hoc propositions that should be empirically supported in future research. However our data do suggest that, as suggested by Sandstrom (1974) considering the psychoanalytic meanings of aesthetic cues may help us understand the narratives, emotions, and behaviors of participants.

Summary

Building on an empirical study of subjects' reactions to aesthetic cues we illustrated that subjects associate distinct emotions with aesthetic cues, and that designs that are conceptually distinct (eclectic rather than monomorphic, warm rather than cold) are preferred by most subjects. We further offered two conceptual lenses for future research which we found useful for making sense of unexpected patterns in our findings: The nature-culture framework proposed by Levi-Strauss and the psychoanalytic framework proposed by Freud. Clearly, these frameworks provide post-hoc explanations that require further empirical testing. However, they cannot but add to the overarching message of our essay -- that there is managerial power

embedded in the management of aesthetic cues. Unraveling the nuances of the use of such power is an important and fascinating avenue for future research. Such research is essential toward a more complete understanding of emotions in organizations.

An aesthetic understanding of organizational life has been of recent interest (Dean, Ramirez and Ottensmeyer, 1997; Strati, 1992). Our analysis brings forth the emotions that aesthetics evoke as a new form of knowledge of both aesthetics and organizations. Historically, scholarly work in organizational behavior focused on the functional aspects of aesthetics, addressing questions regarding the effects of different colors or designs on productivity. Little attention was placed on how different plans or designs make people feel in organizations. As in many other realms, emotions were historically left out of the discourse regarding organizational aesthetics. We argue these two aspects are not necessarily contradicted. Specifically, understanding the emotional interpretations people place on their surroundings can help organizations design their appearance in a manner that will manage the emotions experienced by both employees and customers. Such management can also improve productivity. In the cases we studied – of restaurants and bars – eliciting particular emotions can lead to better sales, more frequent customer visits, and bigger tips for waiters and waitresses.

Yet viewing aesthetics as a tool for the management of participant emotions raises a set of ethical questions. Building on Foucault, (1979), this thesis positions aesthetics as a form of social power, which raises two ethical problems. First, aesthetics may be misused toward dictating the “right” way that people should feel. Hochschild (1983) and Rafaeli and Sutton (1989) noted this problem with respect to the management of emotions of employees. We extend the ethical dilemma to the management of emotions of all participants, making it more acute since customers are less likely to be aware of the emotional manipulation. Perhaps a new concept can be suggested -- “emotion engineering” – as with any other form of engineering, the outcomes need to be monitored to avoid misuse.

Second, our analysis may be interpreted as suggesting that there is one perfect design for any set of clientele. This would leave little space for creative design imagination, as well as no place for heterogeneity in clientele. We caution against both of these outcomes. A controlled world where everything – including aesthetic design and participant emotions -- is known in advance seems scary and alienating.

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Table 1. Percentages of texts containing emotional expression by design and type of emotion

Design	Dimension	Category of Emotion		
		Pleasantness	Arousal	Power
Monomorphic	European	81%	57%	67%
	Middle-Eastern	80%	61%	51%
Eclectic	Nondescript	86%	52%	31%
Monomorphic	Cold	79%	48%	31%
	Warm	82%	77%	36%
Eclectic	Nondescript	82%	70%	16%
	Mean	81.66%	60.83%	38.66%

Table 2. Percentages of texts containing emotional expression by design and direction (negative or positive) of emotion⁸

Design	Dimension	Category of Emotion					
		Pleasantness		Arousal		Power	
		Negative	Positive	Low	High	Low	High
Monomorphic	European	40%	41%	17%	40%	24%	43%
	Middle-Eastern	41%	39%	7%	54%	49%	2%
Eclectic	Nondescript	8%	78%	20%	32%	21%	10%
Monomorphic	Cold	35%	44%	25%	23%	15%	16%
	Warm	41%	41%	10%	67%	4%	32%
Eclectic	Nondescript	15%	67%	49%	21%	5%	11%

⁸ Only stories that included a clearly negative or positive emotion were included in this table. Hence percentages do not add up to 100%.

Figures: Pictures used as study stimuli

Pictures of restaurants: Ethnic dimension



Figure 1
European restaurant
(monomorphic)



Figure 2
Eclectic restaurant



Figure 3
Middle-Eastern restaurant
(monomorphic)

Pictures of bars: cold-warm dimension

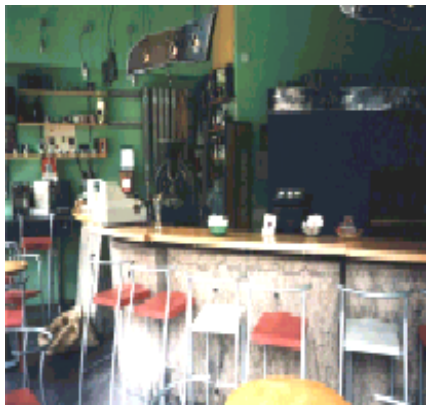


Figure 4
Cold design bar
(monomorphic)

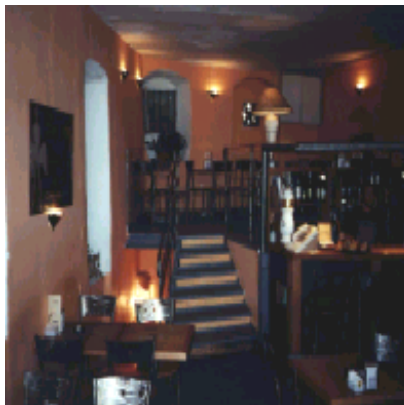


Figure 5
Eclectic bar



Figure 6
Warm design bar
(monomorphic)

Appendix

Examples of stories reported by subjects

1. A story elicited by a picture of a monomorphic (cold design) bar

We went to this place to discuss our students' film, a film with a very poor budget. Everyone was sitting. They seemed very pleased with themselves, feeling disgustingly "In", smoking and talking about the film angles and about philosophical issues. In this post-modern design, with its shocking colors, you can easily find the best coffee in town. But its clients are only famous people, architects, lawyers and other Yuppies. Of course, I didn't fit in, because I wasn't dressed properly with my T-shirt and jeans. Most people knew each other, but I didn't feel good, especially due to the cold correct attitude of the waitresses toward me. They also noticed that I don't belong in this place.

2. A story elicited by a picture of an eclectically designed bar

I set a meeting with a guy, and we were supposed to meet at this place. I felt quiet good at the beginning since the place was intimate enough, and there were all kind of clients. I didn't know anyone there, and it seemed also that nobody else did. I didn't know this place before, and neither did my date. We met at 21:00 o'clock [early] in order to avoid the crowded hours of the pubs. The atmosphere was calm, and we could enjoy the privacy and the nice conversation. The place was full of couples in their twenties and thirties, talking quietly. So we could also feel comfortable. The design of the place is not very unique, but it is romantic (not too much), warm (but not too much), intimate and nice. I won't come back to this place unless I am with people who are not too close to me, because the place is not very beautiful. There is a combination of beautiful and ugly elements. Moreover, the service is OK, but not very good (we waited for 30 minutes for our Greek salad!). On that particular evening I wasn't angry about the slow service. The problems came later after I dated the same guy again...

3. A story elicited by a picture of a monomorphic (warm) designed bar

We were in a huge cavity, a real sex den. The waitresses were dressed provocatively and they caught my eyes. This was good because we didn't get any service. The smell, the atmosphere, everything called for sex. In the corner a couple was enthusiastically

kissing, beside the bar a bunch of scary men – with high levels of Testosterone in their blood – were sitting and smoking. After a while we felt exhausted and went out. This was a very difficult mission since at this stage people were dancing on the tables, and there was not a single free centimeter to be found. Using our elbows, we went out to the fresh cool air, tired, angry, and thirsty and not satisfied at all.