Malls and the Orchestration of the Shopping Experience in a Historical Perspective
Fabian Faurholt Csaba, Bilkent University
Søren Askegaard, Odense University

ABSTRACT
This paper discusses the founding principles and the historical development of the American mall, with a particular emphasis on the designs and writings of Victor Gruen, architect of the first mall. It does so in order to shed light upon the importance of the orchestration of shopping experiences, which traditionally has been neglected in consumer research. Our focus on the orchestration also illuminates a discussion between postmodern theorists in consumer research accused by some critics for lack of empirical foundation. The traditional suggestion is to engage in consumer ethnographies to examine the alleged postmodern reality of consumers. We, however, suggest that an ethnography of the orchestration efforts are of equal importance for an understanding of the present shopping and consumer environment. We conclude by advocating more emphasis on macro-level institutional aspects of the production-consumption interaction in interpretive consumer research.

INTRODUCTION
A decade and a half after the introduction of the concept of experiential consumption in the field of consumer research (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982), consumer researchers as well as sociologists and anthropologists are making headway in elucidating the experiential aspects of shopping (e.g., Falk and Campbell 1997). The predominant cognitivist approach prevented consumer researchers from considering shopping activity as other than buying behavior.

Today, however, the shopping experience is central to more and more consumer studies. It has been shown that there is a complex array of feelings involved in the variety of shopping experiences accessible for today’s consumers, ranging from laborous and chore-like activities (Prus and Dawson 1991) to the theatrical spectacle of the mall (Belk and Bryce, 1993) and from pleasure of spending to status anxiety (Miller 1997). Shopping behavior contains at least as many dimensions as those suggested by Holt (1995) for consumption activities: experience, integration, classification and play.

Most studies of malls and the shopping experience in current consumer theory are related to postmodernism and tend to stress its theatrical and hyperreal character (e.g., Brown, 1995; Firat and Venkatesh 1993, 1995). Malls are “not only centers of buying but highly organized social spaces for entertainment, interaction, and other types of consumer excitement” (Firat and Venkatesh 1993, p. 233). The ‘postmodern’ consumer theorists generally adopt a theoretically inspired and characteristically speculative approach. This has lead to a lack of empirical focus. Campbell (1995) has argued that the theorists, for whom the mall is the “very embodiment of the postmodern condition” (op cit. p. 105) tend to exclude empirical evidence based on the viewpoints of the shoppers themselves. And Morris (1988, p. 207) suggests that “one is obliged to consider how it works in concrete social circumstances that inflect, in turn, its workings—and one is obliged to learn from that place, make discoveries, change the drift of one’s analysis, rather than use it as a site of theoretical self-justification”. Hence the necessity to relate the theoretically derived concepts to the terms of the field.

The voices critical of postmodernism in consumer research generally propose a stronger empirical focus, based on ethnographic approaches to the shopping experience. As justified as this critique is, a focus on consumer activities tends to ignore the orchestration of consumer and shopping experiences, so prominent in the mall context. Thus, it may overlook the image-making and placemaking efforts and their bearings upon research conditions. By clinging to a too narrow conception of field and field reality, this approach may lend itself to a naturalist fallacy. The researcher should understand the interplay between the frontstage and the backstage of the mall in order to fully comprehend the organization of the consumer and shopping experience. Our aim is to reframe discussions of malls and consumer animation by examining terms and ideologies of the “producers” of mall shopping scenarios (developers, designers, retailers, ..), without denying, of course, the continued relevance of the shoppers’ responses to these efforts.

In a tradition of Hollander (1986) and Kumcu (1987) this paper aims to deepen our understanding of consumer contexts and marketing processes through a historical analysis. In an effort to recover the significance and the meaning of place in marketing and consumer theory in general and the experience of malls in particular, the designs and writings of Victor Gruen are of utmost importance. Gruen designed the first fully enclosed regional shopping center, Southdale Shopping Center, in 1956, and his contributions to the development and dissemination of the mall format earned him the title ‘father of the mall’ (Gruen, 1973). Nevertheless, references to his work are scant in the consumer research literature. This, in spite of the fact that he made the distinction between buying and shopping long before the field of consumer research. We have therefore decided to examine the relevance of Gruen’s analysis and legacy for understanding different strategies of mall design and current mall developments. Through this historical approach it becomes possible to discern the changing efforts to stage and organize shopping experiences and present day consumer contexts. As Lefebvre has pointed out:

We may be sure that representations of space have a practical impact, that they intervene in and modify spatial textures which are informed by effective knowledge and ideology. Representations of space must therefore have a substantial role and a specific influence in the production of space. (Lefebvre, 1991, p.42)

In a consumer context, the production of (marketing) space can be related to the orchestration of the shopping experience. Our work then relates to discussions of the phenomenology of marketing places (Sherry 1995) and of customer animation and the role of place in the retailer-consumer interaction as in Sherry (1998) or the forthcoming work of Peñalosa on Nike Town.

GRUEN’S VISION AND DESIGNS FOR THE SHOPPING CENTER
Austrian-born architect Victor Gruen came to America in 1938 seeking refuge from the Nazis. In the United States he established himself as the central figure in the creation and diffusion of the suburban shopping mall and later as champion of urban revitalization. Gruen’s masterstroke as an architect was the implementation of two basic principles in shopping center design at the Southdale Shopping Center. The first was to introduce two (rather than one) anchor department stores and connect them with a pedestrian mall. It was found that consumers who came with the
intention of shopping in one of the anchor stores would usually take
a stroll down the new type of main street to the other, and on their
way would use the occasion to shop or look around in the specialty
stores. The second principle was the full enclosure of the pedestrian
area, permitting total control of the climate. However, it soon
became clear that climate control was not the only rationale for
enclosure. Tenants and management quickly discovered the mar-
keting benefits derived of having a "captive audience". In the
sheltered and pleasant environment people were put at ease and
could enjoy the place itself. They were inclined to stay longer and
move about, and regard shopping as a leisure-time activity. Entertain-
ment, exhibitions and events were added as attractions to
reinforce the leisurely aspects of going to the mall and induce
participation and customer loyalty (Bednar, 1989, p.26). The de-
sign principles of Southdale became the blueprint for shopping
centers across America and beyond, and 'mall' has come to stand
for the fully enclosed regional shopping center.

Gruen's innovative building designs were not his only contribu-
tion to the development of the shopping center. His writings on
the promise, principles and problems of mall planning and design
were of equal importance. He is one of the few designers to have
dwell at length and published his reflections on the architecture of
retail realms. The main tenets and design principles of this project
are articulated in his two main statements Shopping Towns, U.S.A.

RETAIL URBANISM FOR SUBURBAN AMERICA

Shopping Towns, U.S.A. was regarded as a "handbook or
'bible' for the planning, economics, architectural treatment and
operation of the regional shopping center" (Gruen, 1973, p.x), and
was highly influential in codifying procedures of development and
management and in shaping the institutions of the incipient mall
industry. The book is prefaced by a kind of architectural manifesto,
a visionary statement of the rationale for the planned shopping
center. The text offers insight into the founding concept of the
mall, Gruen's sources of inspiration and his endeavor to validate a
new design for suburban retailing and social life.

The effort to formulate the rationale for the new American
'shopping town' bespeaks the need for a clearly stated common
vision for the organization and design of shopping centers. Only
with a sense of common purpose would it be possible to reconcile
the varied interests of the coalition of participants in a mall project.
Echoing the cornerstone 'customer orientation' of modern market-
ing theory, Gruen and Smith defined the mall's aim and source of
legitimacy as the fulfillment of the needs and desires of suburban
shoppers. According to Gruen, the "basic need" of suburbanites
was a conveniently accessible, amply stocked shopping area with
plentiful, free parking. The other fundamental need was a "perhaps
subconscious but nonetheless urgent need" for the amenities of
urban living (Gruen 1960, p. 23). The shopping center would
succeed over other suburban retailing realms by offering shoppers
the 'additional attraction' of a place and an opportunity to partici-
pate in modern community life (ibid., p.24). At Southdale, the
central Garden Court—a spacious sky lit plaza with decorative
greenery, a cafe area and a specially commissioned sculpture—
epitomized and concretized Gruen's 'additional attraction'. Gruen
and Smith invoked the ancient Greek agora, the mediaeval city
market place and American town square as the antecedents of
Southdale and its Garden Court. In the authors' opinion, the agora
was in the past what shopping mall promised to become in our day,
the center of city life, a "colorful, lively, dynamic environment" in
which "commerce had its share." (ibid., p.18) In modern suburban
America, the shopping mall would provide a new public space
where the social vitality of the agora and other organic, pedestrian-
scale urban environments would be recreated.

The principles of the planned shopping center would create
new public sites for pedestrian-based quotidian sociality, that had
been disappearing in the forms of modern urbanism that arose in
conjunction with the rise of everyman's automotive traffic. A
fitting term for Gruen's scheme to synthesize retailing and urban
development would seem to be the somewhat paradoxical concept
'retal urbanism'.

SHOPPING TOWNS OR MACHINES FOR
SELLING?

During the sixties, Gruen's interests turned from structuring
the suburb through 'shopping centering' to saving the urban core by
applying the lessons from suburban malls to decaying downtown
areas. By the time Centers for the Urban Environment (1973) was
published, he had been characterized as the father of both the
suburban shopping center and the downtown mall and reporters
referred to the revitalizing of city cores as 'Gruenizing' (ibid.).
Before tending to issues of urban renewal in the book, Gruen
reviews the experience of two decades of regional shopping center
development. Whereas his earlier work is concerned with establish-
guidelines and expounding the promise of the new design, his
1973 review of developments reflect a far more polemical stance
and is critical of the application of his shopping center principles.
Gruen avoids an outright repudiation of his brainchild, but points to
a number of misunderstandings that have brought the development
of the mall on the wrong track. His critical review gives rise to
elaborations of his earlier analyses and amendments to the project.
A shift is detectable in Gruen's mindset. The ethic of planning that
undergirded the early principles for 'retail urbanism' gives way to
a vision of (aesthetic) design. The laws of beauty replace (or are
distinguished from) the laws of order in Gruen's project. In this
context Gruen introduces the notion of orchestrating the mall.
Gruen compares the task of the developer to that of a composer and
conductor and even includes illustrations of musical scores and
adaptations of musical notations to the visual representations of
the organization of the mall development and management process.

One of the cornerstones of Gruen's critical analysis is the dis-
inction between 'unifunctional' and 'multifunctional'.
Multifunctionality refers to the successful combination of multiple
urban functions within one cohesive and concentrated physical
framework, but also contains a sociological dimension. If a center
is composed of more than one function, but is "planned and placed
in such a manner as to exclusively serve only a specific sociologi-
cal, economic, or ethnic group", it promotes compartmentalization
and segregation, and should as such be regarded as sociologically
unfunctional (ibid., p.99). The trend towards unfunctionalism was
not restricted to regional shopping centers, but Gruen believed its
success encouraged the development of other types of specialized
centers: industrial centers, civic centers, office and financial
centers, cultural centers, educational centers, old age centers, and
church centers. The result of unfunctionalism leads to increased
urban fragmentation, further differentiation of social spheres and
ultimately the "downfall of urbanism" (ibid., pp.86-87).

The discrimination between unfunctional and multifunc-
tional is the basis for Gruen's analysis of two competing approaches
to shopping center design. The first approach aims to construct
scientifically designed "machines for selling", that eliminate any
function which is not directly connected to the activity of selling
and buying or may distract the shopper. The "shopping towns" approach is a rearticulation of Gruen's 1960 principles. The central
premise is that "the merchant has always been and will always be
most successful where his activity is integrated with the widest possible palette of human experiences and urban expressions" (ibid., p. 22), that is, in a multifunctional, urbane environment.

Gruen’s discussions of shopping towns and machines for selling are related to a distinction he makes between shopping and buying. According to Gruen’s definitions, buying is a result of a predetermined and exactly defined aim, while shopping is usually approached with a generous supply of free time, a flexible amount of funds and a certain aimlessness (ibid., p.69). Shopping involves the comparing of price, style, and quality, and while shoppers may have a shopping list, they welcome inspiration for unplanned purchases, occurring from reminders of articles one had not thought of while compiling the list or from emotional involvement in an article, not really needed. The transfer from a task-oriented buying to less focused shopping experience is known in the mall industry as the “Gruen effect”. It refers to inducing a dreamlike state in which consumers lose track of time and place (Crawford 1992, Mack 1997). Gruen justifies shopping as an important factor in the dynamics of the affluent society. In the affluent society, he argues, applying economist John Kenneth Galbraith’s term of the late 1950s, people have abundant time for shopping. The pursuit of shopping activities results in the “widening of horizons, sharpening of judgment, and elevation of taste of consumers” (Gruen, 1973, p.69). A new kind of competent shopper emerges, a “professional” shopper or "shopperess", whose sharpened taste and high requirements forces the merchant to make demands on his suppliers for improved products. For Gruen, this process is clearly in the interest of the public and society as it leads to a steady and continuous raise in the quality, novelty and value of goods.

Gruen reiterates his belief from Shopping Towns that shopping is also influenced by the desire for sociability and a wish for fulfilling human experiences and entertainment. Elaborating on the civic and social practices the shopping center format at its best would encourage and revive, Gruen suggests:

“Old habits which many thought were extinct experience a revival. The activities of walking, promenading, ambling, strolling, which imply leisurely propulsion, interrupted by stopping to view shop windows, to strike up acquaintances or renew old ones, having a social chat, sitting for a few minutes or in a sidewalk cafe for a long time in order to watch others walking by are characteristic of this newly rediscovered mode of living.” (Gruen, 1973, p.83)

In order for a center to attract and hold shoppers, developers should recognize these dimensions of shopping in mall design and cater for other social needs and desires than those directly related to making sales. By adding facilities that enabled the shopper to combine shopping activities with important tasks, such as visiting a doctor or going to the post office etc., the shopping center would gain good-will and appreciation. Shopping center principles, devised for suburban malls but also applicable to retrofitted urban zones, would create new public sites for pedestrian-based quotidian sociality, that had been disappearing in the forms of modern urbanism that arose in conjunction with the rise of everyman’s automotive traffic.

In Gruen’s opinion, then, too many suburban shopping centers were being developed as unfunctional ‘selling centers’ or ‘machines for selling’. ‘Machines for selling’ were produced by the dubious motives of myopic entrepreneurs, whom Gruen defined as ‘promoters’ against ‘developers’ who took a long-term view on mall projects. The term ‘promoter’ indicates individuals or groups who focus on short-term speculative gain and in this respect resembles “any other seller of shoddy merchandise, inclined to emphasize superficialities like promotion and packaging” (ibid. p.48). The developer in contrast is motivated by long-term “enlightened” self-interest to plan, construct and operate a superior center and to harmonize private with public interests. In Gruen’s view, the average developer (or rather promoter) placed too high an emphasis on reducing capital investment and failed to realize when methods of cost-cutting interfered with long-range income potentials of shopping centers. He diagnosed the symptoms of cost-cutting on mall design, in terms of Vitruvius’ classical dictum that architecture is the art of providing “firmness, commodity and delight”. While ‘firmness’ (solidity of structure) was normally assured by building legislation, and tenant demands secured ‘commodity’ (functional- ity and convenience) at least for leasable areas of the shopping center, cost-cutting usually hit the third component ‘delight’ (aesthetics) hard. Gruen argued that, “inasmuch as the attraction of a shopping center and therefore its financial success depend on its acceptance by the shopping public, it is obvious that providing ‘commodity’ and ‘delight’, especially in public areas, are key factors” (ibid., p.48)

The lack of knowledge of the price of cost savings were just one of the factors that were having deteriorating effects on shopping center design. What the pioneers created in the early years had since been followed by “an army of shopping center ‘specialists’ leaning heavily on pseudoscientific literature and masses of statistics and superficial rules” (ibid., p.73). Gruen blamed narrow-mindedness and inflexibility of “technological bureaucracies” in client organizations (large developers, investors and retailers) and government agencies for standing in the way of quality shopping center developments. Despite advances in climatization, building techniques and building economics, the overwhelming picture confirmed the dictum that “imitation falls short of the original” (ibid.). Without a change of attitude, Gruen warned, the design and planning standards which were the underlying reason for the worldwide success of the mall would be brought “into discredit with the shoppers and merchants and thus promote the downfall of the entire shopping center concept.” (ibid.)

GRUEN’S DISENCHANTMENT

The main permutations and refinements of the shopping center concept after Southdale (though not the majority of shopping centers built) have to a large degree observed Gruen’s ideas concerning multifunctional centers and shopping-related urban revitalization projects (Bednar, 1989). However, the fastest growing incarnation of the shopping mall in the past decade surely represents the ultimate repudiation of the civic and urban spirit in Gruen’s ‘shopping towns’-project. Outlet malls and other value oriented retail developments sell off-price merchandise in low-cost, austere premises often located in desolate ex-urban settings or in derelict urban industrial zones where land is cheap and access is adequate. They appear as anti-urban, unfunctional “machines for selling”, where a narrow economic focus takes precedence over any concerns regarding architectural delight or shopping experience.

If outlet malls represent a repudiation of Gruen’s principles, another key mall development of the 1980s is more like a travesty. In 1985 the construction of the West Edmonton Mall in Alberta, Canada was completed. This mall surpassed all previous standards for shopping center size, mix and trade area. The fully enclosed ‘super regional center’ included 8 anchors, 800 stores and attracted shoppers and tourists from the whole continent, upsetting existing formula for required local population to mall square footage. Equally stunning was the peculiar reinterpretation of the principles of multifunctionality and mixed-use presented at the complex.
Landlocked in the upper part of North America’s interior prairie country, it presents a fleet of mini-submarines offering deep sea dives in a lagoon featuring a full size replica of the Santa Maria. Gruen’s ‘amenities for urban living’ have become entertainment attractions such as a water park, the Galaxyland amusement park and a large aquarium. Gruen’s allusions to traditional public squares and European 19th Century arcades and galleries, have turned into what he would have seen as kitschy architectural pastiches in the themed sections of Europa Boulevard and New Orleans-inspired Bourbon Street. The integration of shopping and leisure attractions in themed pedestrian environments found in Edmonton has been termed the ‘retail-entertainment complex’ (Crawford 1992).

Gruen was spared from witnessing the emergence of the two latest offsprings of his brainchild. He returned to Europe where he died in Vienna in 1980. Nevertheless Gruen harbored no illusions about the outcome of the experiment, he had initiated;

"It just didn’t work out. Not as we’d hoped. Not as it was intended. The new malls have no community. They are not places for people to bloom and grow and share. The mall has become a monument to consumerism — not a community. Many of them are not even well designed. In a few years, they’ll be worse than the city streets they replaced."

Victor Gruen (quoted in Coady, 1987, p.683)

The failure of Gruen’s vision can be understood in a historical perspective. Social change, cultural drift, economic developments, and commercial dynamics gradually eroded the original basis on which the mall was founded and this had implications for the architectural delight and community factor of malls, two of the pillars of his project. A few examples will illustrate that the ‘shopping town design’ was conceived, realized and realizable under market conditions which were not as permanent as Gruen and Larry Smith presumed. From the 1960s social mores began to change and women entered the work force in increasing numbers. Gruen’s figure of the ‘professional shopper(ess)’ was replaced as the typical mall patron by the woman who was both a professional and a shopper (and in many cases still a housewife and mother). The transition altered the way shopping at the mall was approached as well as the needs and desires of many shoppers. The oil crisis and appearance of stagflation in the 1970s undermined the economic model that had sustained the postwar fashion in continuous, managed growth and stability. The projections of increasing leisure time and disposable income that shaped Gruen’s principles turned out to be mistaken. The ‘flexible amount of funds’ available to the shopper, that Gruen’s designs depended on, did not stretch as far as he imagined.

The ‘professional shopper’ was replaced by a new type of shopper, who was more concerned with the convenience and variety of shopping choices available. The changes have not rendered the mall concept itself obsolete, because a set of enduring urban, demographic, social and commercial trends have sustained favourable conditions for its operation, but they help to explain why the mall project did not work out as Gruen had hoped and intended.

THE RETAIL-ENTERTAINMENT COMPLEX AND THE REENCHANTMENT OF THE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE.

The developers of the West Edmonton Mall, the eccentric Ghermezian brothers, were recruited to build an even larger version of the West Edmonton Mall in Bloomington, Minnesota. Financial troubles resulted in a downsizing of the project and brought influential American developers Melvin and Herbert Simon into the project. They took over as managing developers and realized the Mall of America which opened to the public in August 1992 only a few miles from the birthplace of the enclosed regional mall in Edina, where Gruen had built Southdale three and a half decades before.

Despite ending up slightly smaller than its Canadian next of kin, the Mall of America has been considered a more significant event in the evolution of malls. The credibility of Melvin and Herbert Simon in the retailing and shopping center development circles was a key factor. They entered the mall industry in its infancy and today control the leading mall development and management company, Simon Property Group, Inc. Furthermore, they successfully pioneered innovations in the industry, such as the addition of food courts and cinemas to the shopping mall ‘menu’. The Simon’s gamble on the retail-entertainment complex was a move that seemed to suggest what was in store for malls elsewhere. Obviously, the proximity of the Mall of America to Southdale invites analogies and associations. An industry expert argued in Advertising Age that the Mall of America represented the “ultimate mall” — on one hand the completion of the project that started at Southdale, on the other, a new paradigm for the mall that could become as influential as that Southdale blueprint it superseded (Pemson, 1994). A commentator in the New York Times suggested that the mall represented an attempt to “redeem Mr. Gruen’s misbegotten dream”. (Karlen, 1992). This suggestion is valid in the sense that the retail entertainment complex can be understood as a response to a growing disenchantment with malls. Gruen’s negative assessment of the application of his ideas has been followed by a series of interpretations and critical evaluations of the impact of malls on American public life (e.g. Crawford, 1992). What is more significant, the mall industry sensed that more and more consumers found that the traditional shopping mall with its formulaic designs and standard tenant mix of national chain stores carrying virtually identical merchandise, was losing its luster (Shillingburg, 1994). The International Council of Shopping recently recognized a “purported consumer disenchantment with shopping centers” which it sought to counteract with a public relations campaign to bolster to industry’s image (Robaton, 1996). Mall developers and managers explored other ways to improve the image of the mall and reenchant consumers’ experience at the mall. In their communication to the industry (and possible tenants), Simon declared the project nothing less than a merchandising revolution. Urban Land’s April 1993 issue featured a Simon advertisement for leasing opportunities at the Mall. It showed Leutze’s painting, “Washington Crossing the Delaware”, and asserted, “Ours won’t be the first revolutionary crossing to change the world”. The copy below the national icon explained,

In our case, we’ve crossed the entertainment experience with the shopping experience, but its revolutionary all the same. Mall of America is a concept that may not entirely alter the course of human events, but will certainly change the way
people think about "going to the mall", it's an incredible, unparalled American adventure and we enthusiastically invite you to be an important part of it. (Urban Land, April 1993)

The contrast between Simon's playful use of the American cultural symbols and Gruen's exalted allusions to the national heritage in Shopping Towns, U.S.A. is striking. Even Melvin Simon had difficulties finding his bearings in the new territory: The Mall of America represented, "I thought it was mind boggling, I still do, it's the largest retail development in the country. It's going to be like going to Disneyland" (Jarvis, 1992, p.1A). The fact that Simon invokes Disneyland is by no means incidental and should be taken seriously in the analysis of malls. The mall industry looked to the Disney's enchanted kingdom, the flagship of the entertainment industry, for the reenchantment of the consumer's experience at the mall. As Crawford (1992) and Sorkin (1992) have argued, the projects and principles from Disneyland meet those of Southdale in the Retail-Entertainment Complex, it represents a cross-breeding of theme park and the regional mall. From a consumer research perspective, the issue is how the retail-entertainment complex is changing the way consumers think about "going to the mall" and how to come to terms with this change. To do this we need to consider how the theme park and the mall, two original American sites, are combined, whether they really are commensurable at all and what impact the new ways of orchestrating the consumer experience is having elsewhere. In other words, a closer look at which elements, techniques and approaches Simon's 'crossing' presents us with is required.

The Mall of America has been directed at both tourists and local shoppers. It was most likely the first mall that was conceived as a shopping destination, rather than a mere retail location or marketing place and the first to have a tourist department and arrange intercontinental tours. This is an illustration of the process Urry (1995) has called a de-differentiation between tourism related forms of activity, such as shopping, sport and culture. The visual consumption of places characteristic of the tourism is brought into the realm of retailing. The retail-entertainment complex is a space to consume as well as a consumer (shopping) space, which has implications for the way it is approached by producers and consumers.

The clearest evidence of a paradigm shift in the Mall of America is the presence of a wide array of entertainment-oriented tenants/attractions. The central theme-park Knott's Camp Snoopy, operated by Disneyland's Californian competitor, Knott's Berry Farm, is the most prominent example. Other amusement features include miniature golf course, Golf Mountain, and interactive virtual reality laser game Star-Base Omega and Underwater World Aquarium. Entertainment companies have been expanding into retailing for some time, and at the Mall of America Disney itself and movie competitor Warner Bros. are represented with their merchandise store concepts. Souvenirs and merchandising apparel and artifacts are also sold at the several Camp Snoopy and Mall of America outlets and at a number of themed restaurant of which Planet Hollywood and Rainforest Café are the most prominent. Danish toy manufacturer, LEGO, which also operates theme parks, features an experimental LEGO Imagination Center—a hybrid between a showroom, play area, and a store.

The spirit and techniques of theme parks is not confined to entertainment related tenants but suffuses much of the mall, and challenges traditional principles of shopping center and retailing development, design and management. The approach to design adopted from theme parks relates to practice of 'theming' (Gottlieber, 1997) or Disney's terms 'imagineering'. Imagineering designates the creative process of 'making the magic real' i.e. translating fictions and fantasies to concrete themed architecture and attractions in Disney's various projects (The Imagineers, 1996).

The design of the mall's common areas reflects principles of theming/imagineering, California architectural firm Jerde Partnership, the champions an architectural style of experiential placemaking, added a particular 'flavor' to each of the malls four main arcade-street corridors: North Garden, West Market, South Avenue and East Broadway. For Jerde architects, like Gruen, to budget constraints and merchandising objectives, stood in the way of creative design statements that emphasized other aspects of the communal experience than shopping. As Jerde's project manager remarked, "we wanted the mall to be bold, but it got 'blanded' out" (Crosbie, 1994, p.71). Simon's development team wanted to create a shopping-friendly environment which was 'familiar to people' not to make any 'radical design statement'. They believed that "...the synergy of the mixed uses would bring people in not the architecture." (Shillingburg, 1994, p.82). Instead of making a radical statement in the design of the mall itself, developers encouraged tenants to go beyond traditional store and sign design principles to communicate store image and create more unique, spectacular and interactive stores.

Management policies towards retail tenants are linked to the orchestration of the whole mall experience in other ways. For instance, vacant store space is used for 'wall fixture units' or 'temporary in-line' stores, typically run by small entrepreneurs with an interesting retail concept—mall management is ready to assist them in testing. If the concept proves successful, the lease might be upgraded to a 'real' store in the mall, if not, other entrepreneurs might get the chance or new retailers might have been recruited to take over the vacant spot. In this way mall management not only ensures that the unattractive vacant areas that communicate failure are eliminated and made profitable, but also that store concepts unique to the mall are developed and contribute to continuously renew what the mall has to offer local shoppers. Thus retail recruitment, leasing and development policies are also a part of a general impression management process for the mall.

Another innovation in Retail Entertainment Complex partly inspired by Disney are corporate partnerships, known from Disney Epcot Center and involvement in World's Fairs and Expos. The idea is to link names and logos of major companies to exhibits and attractions and to develop cross-marketing opportunities, in which mall and partner/sponsor promote each other in and outside the mall. Exhibitions, displays and events attract media attention and consumer traffic. Events and displays are staged to generate or take advantage of traffic in specific areas of the mall at specify— and optimize exposure for either corporate sponsor or mall tenants. Chrysler interactive display called: "Great Cars. Great Trucks." including a virtual reality car ride is a advanced example.

According to one of the Disney Company's definitions, imagining means 'engineering dreams into reality' (Imagineers, 1996, 86). Solomon and Englis (1994) introduce a similar term, "reality engineering", in a discussion of the pervasiveness of commercial concerns and images in everyday social life. They demonstrate how marketers are constantly attempting to engineer the communications environments of their constituencies, and in the process are blurring the boundaries between popular culture and commercial signification. The discussion is deliberately limited to mass media, but it is made clear that the domains of reality engineering also include engineered 'real' environments, such as Disney World and Nike Town. The Mall of America is also
advertising and PR managed, so its reality engineering efforts extends from the concrete space to media image.

**CONCLUSIVE REMARKS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

In this historical overview, we have sought to justify the emphasis placed on malls by postmodern consumer theorists. We have not elaborated on the theoretical concepts applied by postmodernists, but demonstrated empirically the (re)enchantment of the shopping experience through an analysis of various historical sources of mall development.

In the process we have brought attention to the importance of the production context to the understanding of the consumer experience. The notion of orchestration underlines the significance of production for consumption, and should remind us that ethnographies of consumption should pay attention to the efforts to structure and animate consumer settings and experiences. Interpretive consumer research has tended to neglect this production side, in a possibly understandable attempt to distance itself from more traditional empirical research of "managerially relevant" consumer manipulations. But this as well as the discovery of the richness of consumption experiences beyond the information-processing perspective has also lead to an over-emphasis of the consumers' own universes, and an ensuing neglect of managerial activities.

To theorize the consumer experience independently of its orchestration is to maintain an illusion of the autonomous consumer. Likewise, it is to neglect that the social institution of consumption is inextricably tied to other social institutions: production, economics, law, etc. A continuous neglecting of this embeddedness will possibly lead to more and more detailed understandings of micro-level consumer behavior within consumer research, but the field will miss an opportunity to contribute to the tide of interest in the issue of consumption in social and cultural theory.

What role does community play in malls? What are the relations between physical structure and consumer demands? How does consumer feedback influence mall orchestrations? What are the cultivating and socializing effects of malls? These issues are some of the more important ones to be addressed in future research elucidating the strategies of actual design executions and their implications for consumer behavior.

**REFERENCES**


