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EXPERIENTIAL INTERIOR DESIGN: Branding Entertainment and Nightlife for the Postmodern Young Urban Professional

Niccole S. Skomal
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, nskomal@huskers.unl.edu

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EXPERIENTIAL INTERIOR DESIGN

Branding Entertainment and Nightlife for
the Postmodern Young Urban Professional

by

Niccole S. Skomal

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Past study on Interior Design has been primarily looked at through the lenses of aesthetics and functionality. Only recently have scholars begun to see the influence marketing, in the form of branding, can have on the Interior Design process in targeting specific lifestyle groups. The purpose of this research is to understand the fabric of the postmodern Young Urban Professional lifestyle as a marketing tool for branding and designing services in the form of entertainment and nightlife. With an increasing lack of community and social connectedness in today’s postmodern society, Young Urban Professionals tend to consume entertainment and nightlife as a primary way of defining who they are and how they evaluate others. Being seen at the trendiest and most exclusive restaurants, bars and nightclubs is the primary form of identity, aside from their career focus. In forming relationships with these consumers through lifestyle brands, nightlife venues gain a competitive advantage over surrounding businesses. Raised during a time of modern marketing and the introduction of experiential marketing,
experience is everything to the Young Urban Professional. This background research acted as the basis for the following research questions: 1.) what aspects of experiential design are most attractive to the Young Urban Professional lifestyle and their devotion to the brand? And (2) how can interior designers provide a branded nightlife experience that attracts and identifies with their particular lifestyle? To answer these questions, background research on both lifestyle and experiential branding are targeted to the postmodern Young Urban Professional. Meanwhile, field research in the form of “Learning from Las Vegas”, identifies design implications common between various venues in Las Vegas that attract this target market and shows how they can be applied to venues in the Midwest, or more specifically, Omaha, Nebraska.
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1. Introduction

In past studies of Interior Design, scholars have looked at the field through the lenses of aesthetics and functionality. Only recently have scholars begun to see the influence marketing can have on the Interior Design process, however research on the subject is still in its infancy. The incorporation of branding can provide a link between interior design and marketing that allows for designed interiors to target specific lifestyle groups. With the “Original” generation of Young Urban Professionals being credited with the very creation of the brand back in the 1980’s, their postmodern counterpart is an appropriate lifestyle group to study.¹ The purpose of this research is to understand the social fabric of the postmodern Young Urban Professional cohort in comparison to their predecessors, the “originals”, and use that as a marketing tool for their brand consumption. The Young Urban Professional uses brands and services as a primary way of defining who they are, which suggests that the incorporation of branded design implications can attract them as a target market. The goals of this research are to determine brand implications for the postmodern Young Urban Professional lifestyle, to identify defining aspects of experiential branding and design, to localize experiential entertainment to the postmodern Young Urban Professional and to identify design implications for branding postmodern Young Urban Professional entertainment and nightlife. These goals can be accomplished through two specific research questions: (1) what aspects of experiential design are most attractive to the postmodern Young Urban Professional lifestyle and their devotion to the brand? And (2) how can interior designers

provide a branded nightlife experience that attracts and identifies with the postmodern Young Urban Professional particular lifestyle?

2. The Concept(ion) of Brand

In order to understand where the brand currently stands in its evolution, it is imperative that the reader be familiar with its history and how it came to be. While many believe branding to be a twentieth century phenomenon, research suggests that brands are believed to be as old as civilization depending on how the concept is defined. While research on ancient brands may be lacking, there is historical knowledge that has lead marketers to believe this could have validity. According to Moore and Reid, as far back as 2300 BC, products were received, stored, processed and distributed from the civilization of Harrapan India to Mesopotamia. Most of the products found during an excavation in 1921 contained seals trademarked with different animal prints to identify the sender of a certain piece of merchandise. This could be considered as one of the earliest known examples of a brand.

Initially, the term brand was a verb, or the action of “branding” cattle in an attempt to identify them as property. The brand itself represented a symbol that ranchers would use to identify their ownership, a trademark of sort, pointing distinctly to their origin. Since then, the term has been taken over by the marketing industry as a way of identifying

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3 Moore and Reid, 7-8.
products and the companies who own or have created them. Branding started being discussed in consumer behavior journals as early as 1942, however it became a major topic to marketers in the 1970’s when it started being considered earnestly as an integral way of setting products off from the competition.\(^4\)

Brands since then have been a phenomenon in the marketing world, taking modern consumer thought and behavior to an entirely new level. As a result the definition of the term brand has changed and is more commonly referred to as “a class of goods identified by name as the product of a single firm or manufacturer”.\(^5\) The American Marketing Association takes this definition a step further and describes a brand as “a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s good or service as distinct from those of other sellers.”\(^6\) Both of these definitions strengthen Moore and Reed’s thesis statement that “brands, from all periods in history, display two immutable characteristics related to the conveyance of information to stakeholders: information about quality and information with the purpose of indicating the origin of the product (which sometimes includes differentiation information).”\(^7\)

\(^4\) Moore and Reid, 3.
\(^7\) Moore and Reid, 5.
A brand differentiates products and services that appear similar in features, attributes and possibly even benefits. It is a tagline like “have it your way” that instantly brings to mind Burger King. It is the swoosh symbol that is instantly recognizable as Nike. It is a shape, like the unique bottle of Coca-cola. It is a spokesperson like Bill Cosby for Jell-O. It is a sound, like the four notes of Pentium processors. It can even be an actual product or service like Kleenex tissues or Xerox copies. A brand is anything that resonates in the mind of the consumer and instantly tells them which company or product it belongs to while bringing to mind the values that they stand for.

The term branding is still discussed, not so much as the physical act, but rather as Alina Wheeler defines it, “the disciplined process used to build (brand) awareness and extend consumer loyalty. It is about seizing every opportunity to express why people should choose one brand over another and the desire to lead, outpacing the competition, and giving employees the best tools to reach customers.”8 Advertising professionals not only use branding to help consumers better recognize their product or service but also to build a good reputation by maintaining or surpassing a set of standards.

While these definitions begin to provide insight into the concept of modern branding, they merely brush the surface. With intensive study on the subject by marketing professionals for more than 40 years, the term has become much more complex in character. It has come to include the addition of image or meaning, relating directly to

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consumers’ cognitive representation of a brand. “Information, such as awareness, attributes, benefits and image, such as thoughts, feelings, attitudes and experiences” have more recently been portrayed through the concepts of brand value, brand personality and brand identity.9

Brand value is a concept that has become extremely pertinent in the financial world, portraying brands as valuable business assets. Brand value is created by making the brand central to the business’s strategic aims. It can be defined as “the monetary premium that results from having customers who are committed to a particular brand and who are willing to pay extra for it; also, the financial value attributed to the brand, apart from other tangible assets.”10 This concept takes into effect every attitude that consumers have ever made about a brand through experience or messages made by the company. In order for a brand to be valuable, consumers attitudes have to be positive, making it extremely subjective.

Brand personality is a primary concept that marketers use today, which focuses on human characteristics as a way of identifying with consumers on a more emotional level. “Researchers have focused on how the personality of a brand enables a consumer to express his or her own self, an ideal self, or specific dimensions of the self through the use of a brand. Practitioners view it as a key way to differentiate a brand in a product

9 Moore and Reid, 25.
category, as a central driver of consumer preference and usage, and as a common
denominator that can be used to market a brand across cultures.”¹¹ Reid and Moore
suggest that brand personality was introduced through media and its subsequent
advertising and therefore before the 1920s this dimension of branding could not have
existed.¹² The simplest way to express a brands’ personality is through tangible attributes
that can be seen through brand identity.

Brand identity is the “outward expression of the brand including its name, trademark,
communications and visual appearance.”¹³ It becomes the physical parts of a brand that
create perceptions in the minds of consumers. A brand’s identity is what helps consumers
to remember a company and what often brings them back. “Brand identity is tangible
and appeals to the senses. You can see it, touch it, hold it, hear it, and watch it move.
Brand identity fuels recognition, amplified differentiation, and makes big ideas and
meaning accessible. Brand identity takes disparate elements and unites them into whole
systems.”¹⁴ Since the brand is created by the brand owner, it is what the he or she wants
consumers to see the brand as. On the contrary, brand image is the mental image that
consumers see the brand as. Good brand management seeks to reduce the gap between
these two visions, uniting the company with the consumer. This is good business and this
is what makes a brand successful.

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¹¹ Jennifer Aaker, “Dimensions of Brand Personality,” *Journal of Marketing Research*
34, no. 3 (August 1997): 347.
¹² Moore and Reid, 24-25.
accessed 21 August 2011.
¹⁴ Wheeler, 4.
According to brand expert Alina Wheeler, brands have three primary functions. The first is to act as a form of navigation. Every single day, consumers are exposed to six thousand advertisements and each year, to more than twenty five thousand new products. Brands help consumers choose from an overwhelming amount of choices in every product and service category. Second, brands provide reassurance to consumers. “They communicate the intrinsic quality (or value) of the product or service and reassure consumers that they have made the right choice.” And finally, brands provide a level of engagement with their consumers. They utilize distinct imagery, language and associations to encourage consumers to identify with the brand as themselves or their ideal selves. Above all, the “ultimate role of brands is to carry and communicate cultural meaning that is both transactional (information-related) and transformational (image-related) in character.”

“Branding and brand-based differentiation are powerful means for creating and sustaining competitive advantage.” Interior branding has become an area of extreme competitiveness in the particular because it is a tangible way of telling the story of a brand to consumers. By manipulating type, color, imagery, and space, branded interiors have the ability to engage consumers. Such engagement establishes a dialogue that builds comprehension, commitment, participation, loyalty, and trust, all of which are

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16 Moore and Reid, 26.
important in creating customers and bringing them back. “More and more, we’re “building” and “telling” stories to connect our clients to their key constituencies: current and prospective customers or participants, investors, partners, donors, boards, staff, peers, and media.” The process of interior design has always started with a concept and through storytelling, branding has the ability to make designs relevant, target a lifestyle, and provide an experience.

3. **Lifestyle Branding**

“Brands are not static: they have many facets to their personality. In order to build up and retain equity as a preferred brand in the mind of the consumer, a brand must evolve to stay connected to its target audience in its day-to-day, moment-to-moment existence. Brand presence at its best connects intimately to the consumer’s lifestyle.”

-Marc Gobe

Lifestyle branding has been around since the concept of the brand was first introduced in mid 1980’s. Since then, lifestyle research has exploded in consumer and management journals along with all other types of media from magazines to television. “The power of brands is insinuated in the notion of lifestyle: through lifestyle, brands start to manage,

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19 Sametz and Maydoney, 18.
control and ‘style’ life itself.”

Surprisingly, no source defines a lifestyle brand better than Wikipedia, which describes it as “a brand that attempts to embody the values and aspirations of a group or culture for purposes of marketing to them. Each individual has an identity based on their choices, experiences, and background (e.g. ethnicity, social class, nationality, etc.). A lifestyle brand aims to sell products by convincing potential customers that this identity will be reinforced or supplemented if they publicly associate themselves with the brand.”

Research suggests that people tend to form relationships with brands in very similar ways to how they form social relationships with each other. In giving a brand a personality, consumers relate to them in similar ways as they relate to other human beings. “Social relationship theory suggests that relationships carry with them norms of behavior that guide people’s evaluations of their relationship partner.” As a result, people tend to form and hold on to relationships with brands that mirror their social lifestyle, either who they currently are or who they strive to be.

Lifestyles can be divided into many subcategories that brands try to identify with. These include but are not limited to income or profession, consumption patterns, social or political views, sexual affiliation, spiritual or religious preferences, and recreational

24 Aggarwal, 87.
25 Aggarwal, 88.
Modern marketing has taken this idea a step further and created their own classifications based on individuals that identify with more than one group. Generally, a blending of demographic and lifestyle factors are better for identifying potential market segments. For example, Young Urban Professionals (more commonly known as yuppies to marketers) are classified as young professionals between the ages of 25 and 34 who are college educated, make a minimum of $35,000 annually, live in urbanized areas and define their social and life success by their consumption habits. Looking back at the previous list, this definition includes multiple subcategories and demographics. The Young Urban Professional lifestyle will be the center of focus for the remainder of this paper.

Many lifestyle brands purposely refer to existing groups or cultures. An example of a prototypical lifestyle brand that will help to strengthen this concept is Abercrombie & Fitch. The company has designed their clothing, retail outlets, and marketing to suggest a specific lifestyle that will embody anyone who chooses to purchase their products… that of a young, preppy, ivy league lifestyle. The way the company has done this is through their specific style of clothing (casual, classic and All-American with the suggestion of quality), their luxurious store environments, and the admirable model-like associates that work in their retail outlets (Figures 1, 2, 3). As for their marketing, they use classic black and white photographs that often feature groups of today’s youth living the Abercrombie lifestyle with a heap of sex appeal. In this way they add the additional suggestions that

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wearing their clothes makes their consumers sexy and popular, in turn satisfying the subconscious desires of sexual satisfaction and social acceptance (Figure 4).

Another source of lifestyle brands are subcultures. According to the Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, a subculture is defined as “an ethnic, regional, economic, or social group exhibiting characteristic patterns of behavior sufficient to distinguish it from others within an embracing culture or society”.27 This definition can be simplified by saying that a subculture is a group of individuals who have interests different from those of the larger culture which may be outwardly expressed or hidden. “The study of subcultures often consists of the study of symbolism attached to clothing, music, lifestyle, sexual affiliation and other visible affectations by members of subcultures, and also the ways in which these same symbols are interpreted by members of the dominant culture. According to Dick Hebdige, members of a subculture often signal their membership through a distinctive and symbolic use of style, which includes fashions, mannerisms, and argot.”28

A prototypical example of a subculture brand is the Roxy brand. Born in the water and beginning as a swimwear collection for surfers, Roxy has ventured out. “Roxy's surfing heritage will always be a key value of the brand, but the goal was to broaden the base and

The fact that Roxy has successfully extended beyond its original product category, as with all brands, is a key indication that Roxy has become a lifestyle. Today, Roxy is a lifestyle brand that targets the female surfer, snowboarder and skateboarder subcultures. Its product line includes comfortable and sporty clothing, sports equipment and accessories for active, young women. They create “individual and practical fashion with a beach and slope feeling and a special brand spirit: daring, confident, naturally beautiful, fun, alive: Roxy.”

This same spirit can be seen throughout their retail stores. Nothing but absolute inspiration covers their walls, while the material selections display the natural elements that their target market is surrounded by (Figures 5, 6). Roxy has even taken their brand a step further as an important part of the surfing community. They not only host surf competitions but also sponsor many famous female surfers. The key goal of the young women that buy their products is to one day be a Roxy girl.

Lifestyle brands have leaked into virtually every area of modern life because of their success in targeting a specific market on an emotional level. More recently, an important area of focus for lifestyle brands are branded interiors. Stefano Marzano, CEO of Philips Design, was one of the first to focus the lifestyle brand concept on interior design. In 1991 he introduced the idea of “High Design”, which focuses on the values and needs of

people. Through multicultural teams of researchers, he studied different societies and developed ways of gathering knowledge and feeding it into the design and branding process.\textsuperscript{31} His research found lifestyle patterns and provided appropriate spaces for different personalities. His ultimate goal was “to leverage design as an agent of change and, in so doing, to enable more sustainable relationships among people, artifacts and environments.”\textsuperscript{32} Such human focus has proven to be an invaluable foundation for brand design and thus interior branding.

The most appropriate way to target a specific market through interior design is by storytelling. According to Sametz and Maydoney, “Storytelling (branding) is natural and easy and entertaining and energizing. Stories help us to understand complexity. Stories can enhance or change perceptions. Stories are easy to remember…and engage our feelings… Storytelling enables individuals to see themselves in a different light, and accordingly make decisions, and change their behavior in accordance with these new perceptions, insight and identities.”\textsuperscript{33} A good story must include: emphasis, repetition, variety, transition, pacing, proportion and portray multiple characters.\textsuperscript{34} Representational imagery in branded interiors is the most appropriate way of depicting a person (lifestyle) in a design.\textsuperscript{35} To design a space that is representational of the lifestyle of a

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\textsuperscript{32} Bevolo and Brand, 34.
\textsuperscript{33} Sametz and Maydoney, 18.
\textsuperscript{34} Sametz and Maydoney, 20.
\textsuperscript{35} Sametz and Maydoney, 21.
\end{flushright}
target market will not only help them to see who they want to be and achieve self-actualization, but will also influence their choice to purchase even at a premium price.

4. The Lifestyle of the Young Urban Professional

The culture of the Young Urban Professional has made a dramatic impact on American society with their emphasis on materialism as a definition of lifestyle. Straying from mainstream ideals, this counter-culture focuses on consumption (rather than production) as a way of defining who they are and evaluating others. Defined as young professionals between the ages of 25 and 34, this market segment is college educated and makes a minimum of $30,000 annually, while living in urbanized areas. Scholar and critics from diverse professions focused their attention on “the emergence of the Young Urban Professional in the 1980’s as an influential demographic group and as a new lifestyle and value orientation that placed extreme emphasis on the pursuit of financial rewards and career success.”

The first wave, also known as the “original” Young Urban Professionals, came to age in the 1980’s as part of the immense baby boom cohort. Born into privilege and by sheer numbers, this group of individuals changed the face of marketing as we know it today.

The “original” Young Urban Professionals were “faced with the energy crisis and the

runaway inflation of the 1970s, and many of them being former student activists, they decided financial power and economic security were goals not to criticize but to emulate. As a result, their distrust of corporate America dissipated. Careers in business, once loudly ridiculed, grew increasingly respectable. As the recession of the early 1980s gave way to economic boom times, success began to occupy the platform baby boomers had once reserved for social justice.39 “Original” Young Urban Professionals were lambasted as excessively consumptive in their pursuit of the American Dream without much regard for those left behind.40 However, it was more so about them finding their place in the world that had changed so much during their upbringing.

In the “original” Young Urban Professional’s universe of lifestyle possibilities, career success was of primary importance and it was perceived in terms of the material rewards it provided. Therefore money and materialism were equivalent to lifestyle and without flaunting it, they had little means for self-identity. The “original” Young Urban Professionals were credited with the very creation of the brand because of their mass consumption of high-end material brands as a way of defining who they were through identification with a desirable lifestyle.41 While the causality of this is confusing, and perhaps circular in nature, it was the Young Urban Professional’s mass consumption of


41 Adler.
newly introduced brands that established brands as part of the fabric of popular culture. Perhaps without the consumption patterns of Young Urban Professionals, brands might not be what they are today.

The new wave of Young Urban Professionals came with the nebulous entity known as postmodernism. Post-modernism is described as “a shift to consumerism, where manufacturing, distribution and dissemination have become exceptionally inexpensive but social connectedness and community has become even rarer.”42 With such a weakening of traditional community and an increasing lack of social connectedness the postmodern Young Urban Professional’s value orientation has shifted dramatically from their “original” counterpart. Those who follow marketing trends have noted that the current generation of Young Urban Professionals, Generation Y, has come to emphasize social status and the consumption of high-end branded services in the search for or attainment of a specific lifestyle, than on luxurious goods as their predecessors preferred.43 Accordingly, branded entertainment and more specifically nightlife venues have evolved into high-end “services” that attract this urban culture. Branded forms of entertainment portray “personalities” that project specific social images regarding

affluent lifestyles while simultaneously providing a venue for socialization and a means for self expression for participating patrons.\textsuperscript{44}

The rise of technology and instant communication via cell phone and networking sites on the internet helps to explain this generation’s search for social orientation through the consumption of services.\textsuperscript{45} Generation Yers are concerned more with hedonistic spending, especially on Saturday nights out and travel. This is made possible by the fact that postmodern Young Urban Professionals have a tendency to remain single and childless throughout the majority of their lives. They are not only able to overly indulge themselves without concern for children, but also shift their focus more to services than goods since their social life is their primary form of identity outside of work. Obviously some members of this group also marry and procreate, but these familial activities do not define them to the extreme extent of their chronological predecessors, such as 1950s professionals.

There are specific brand attributes that both the “original” and postmodern Young Urban Professionals tend to focus on most in their search for an affluent lifestyle, which include seemingly expensive luxury goods and services. “They worship quality in their furniture, automobiles, clothes, grooming products and entertainment; [and] they prefer townhouses


and condominiums, foreign cars and gadgets.”46 After all, according to Frank, “to earn a
good evaluation, something must typically compare favorably with other things in its
class in the immediate context. An inevitable consequence is that our evaluation of the
things we have depends on how they compare with the things that others in the local
environment have.”47 In other words, if one owns things that no other person gets to see,
then the value of these items becomes irrelevant because the evaluation of an item can
only be done through the perception of another. Furthermore, the items are in a sense
worthless if they cannot be compared to other items of the same category.48 In an
influential article, Atwal and Williams note that “luxury is associated not only with the
conveying of an image of quality, performance and authenticity, but also with attempting
to sell an experience by relating it to the lifestyle constructs of consumers.”49 As a result,
the role of marketing has shifted for Young Urban Professionals of Generation Y from
“manipulation of the customer to genuine customer involvement, from telling and selling
to experiencing and sharing knowledge and emotions.”50

46 John Burnett and Alan Bush, “Profiling the Yuppies,” *Journal of Advertising Research*
26, no. 2 (April/May 1986), 27.
Depicted in a Work of Fiction”, 2009, University of Berne; available from
49 Glyn Atwal and Alistair Williams, “Luxury Brand Marketing – The Experience is
50 B. Cova, “The Postmodern Explained to Managers: Implications for Marketing,”
Luxury services, which are most preferred by Generation Y, are usually sought out in the attempts to project a quality lifestyle, more in the eyes of others than in their own. Generation Y being so much about individualism also strives for some form of collectivity, which means fitting in socially and materialistically.\textsuperscript{51} Marketing expert B. Cova writes that “a lack of community must be compensated for by the consumption of images and symbols that reassure people of their identity and give meaning to their lives while offering the illusion of belonging to a virtual community of consumers.”\textsuperscript{52} Postmodern Young Urban Professionals consume products and services that best express their current identity or an identity they hope to attain in the future. Since luxury brands have been associated with the affluent and wealthy in the past, such brands are the first to be adopted by postmodern Young Urban Professionals as a way of identifying with a higher class lifestyle or who they aspire to be.

As another way of identifying with a higher class lifestyle, postmodern Young Urban Professionals are extremely appreciative of culture, especially in their cuisine. Dinners out have always have been a major source of entertainment and social involvement for them and as a result, they are regular take-out patrons and restaurant-goers. After work they often seek out the latest and trendiest restaurants and nightlife venues, creating fads for Tex-Mex cooking, Japanese sushi, and other ethnic cuisines. Social endeavors have become a primary way of identifying who they are and evaluating others and the


\textsuperscript{52} Cova.
introduction of culture into the equation even further strengthens the affluent status they
seek out.

Young Urban Professionals will never lose their taste for quality things, however, those
from Generation Y tend to be more budget conscious than their more frivolous
counterparts.53 With the current economic status of the United States economy, luxury
goods and services have evolved to fit the postmodern Young Urban Professional’s wants
and needs perfectly. New luxury, a term coined by Atwal and Williams, is defined as
“products and services that possess higher levels of quality, taste and aspiration than
other goods and services in the category, but are not so expensive as to be out of reach.”54
“New luxury brand positioning strategies often combine a high perceived prestige with
reasonable price premiums in order to attract consumers. These strategies are radically
different from those implemented by traditional luxury brand owners, who maintain a
strict consistency between perceived prestige and price premiums so as to preserve their
brand’s exclusivity.”55 Since the postmodern Young Urban Professional tends to live and
spend on a starting salary, cheap luxury is an integral part of their persona and lifestyle
but if necessary, they are willing to pay top dollar to identify with an affluent status.

53 Adam Penberthy, “Generation Y Consumption,” Gen Y Guy, 2008; available from
http://generationyguy.wordpress.com/2008/01/04/generation-y-consumption/,
Internet; accessed on 1 December 2010.
54 Atwal and Williams, 339.
55 Yann Truong, Rod McColl and Philip J. Kitchen, “New Luxury Brand Positioning and
the Emergence of Masstige Brands,” Journal of Brand Management 16, no. 5/6
(March 2009): 375.
The key marketing strategies that have been employed to make both generations of Young Urban Professionals purchase goods and services are those that make them feel good about themselves, hipper, smarter, sexier, and more technologically savvy or ‘techie’. Choosing a product or service for them was and continues to be primarily about buying a set of related attributes. As a result, brands, and branded products or services, are fundamental to the way the Young Urban Professionals experience life and the way they give meaning to it.\textsuperscript{56}

An honored marketing scholar, Angela Hughes, notes that “Generation Y is poised to take over as the largest and most lucrative consumer group for marketers, a position that has long been held by the Baby Boomer generation”, or for the purposes of this research, the “originals”\textsuperscript{57}. The consumption behavior of Generation Y, however, differs greatly from their counterpart, which has led marketers to rethink their approach. In effect, modern marketing has turned away from traditional marketing techniques to capture this consumer.

First, Young Urban Professionals from Generation Y prefer instant gratification rather than saving for a once in a lifetime experience. “Generation Y craves immediacy from the companies that they buy from because they are accustomed to getting what they want


when they want it. This is largely a byproduct of the indulgent parenting from the Baby Boomer generation, who wanted to give their children everything that they didn’t get as children.”\textsuperscript{58} Having to wait too long for a product or service will push the postmodern Young Urban Professional away. They insist upon receiving the latest trends in record time.

Another marketing technique for Generation Y and the postmodern Young Urban Professional is to provide a customizable product or service. They believe that with the rise of technology, anything can and should be customized to fit their lifestyle from clothing and electronics to cars and even services. Generation Y appreciates just about anything that lets them show their individuality, while remaining part of the collective group. Scion, a brand of vehicles produced by Toyota, has become extremely profitable as a result of this approach. “By making their cars customizable online, Scion has created a feeling of an underground club for the core group of young customers who have bought their cars. Scion strategically launched their vehicles to young urban male trendsetters and has since felt a ripple effect.”\textsuperscript{59} (Figures 7, 8, 9)

The final and most widely accepted marketing technique with the postmodern Young Urban Professional is the use of experiential marketing. Raised during the introduction of modern marketing, to this group of consumers, the experience has become more important than the product that helps them achieve it. “The Generation Y consumer

\textsuperscript{58} Hughes, 13.
\textsuperscript{59} Hughes, 14.
values their life experiences more than older generations ever have and a company that can help them enjoy their experiences may be more able to win their loyalty in the future. In effect, experiential marketing can help a brand bond better with the consumer.”

5. Experiential Design and Branding

Brands in general have evolved into two complex interactions among consumers, culture or lifestyle and the experience. Since this research has already looked at lifestyle branding, this section will discuss those aspects of the built environment that are most important in providing an experience for the user and how that experience can contribute to the personality of the brand. While relationship marketing has been around for a few decades, the concept of experiential marketing is relatively new. First introduced in 1998 in an article by Pine and Gilmore, titled “Welcome to The Experience Economy”, experiential marketing has become extremely important to today’s consumers. “As leisure time for American consumers has decreased, our demand for meaningful experiences has increased.” Experiential marketing can be defined as “A form of relationship in marketing that seeks to establish a touch point or connection with the customer - connections in the form of experiences that are personal, memorable,

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60 Hughes, 16.
interactive and emotional in scope."63 With both design and branding being extremely subjective processes, experiences are all interpreted differently by different users. Each user takes the elements provided by the designer and interprets them based on their own identities, values and lifestyles.

"With postmodernism came the creation of a hyper-reality, where reality has become an illusion to the consumer and authenticity or what is genuine or real is no longer desirable."64 In effect, the characteristics of postmodern consumers are experience based with an emphasis on participation through interactivity, connectivity and creativity.65 Activities within the parameter of luxury services are more of an aesthetic nature than a functional one, with consumers immersing themselves in the experience through active participation. After all, the very essence of the postmodern experience is participation; without participation, the consumer is merely entertained and does not experience.

"Traditional" marketing techniques focused on features and benefits as the primary way of selling to the masses, but eventually marketers realized that today’s consumers wanted a connection on a more personal level and traditional techniques became virtually obsolete.66 Consumers no longer trust companies that utilize these traditional

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63 “Glossary,” All Over Media, 2011; available from http://www.allovermedia.com/
64 Cova.
65 Cova.
66 Bernd Schmitt, Experiential Marketing: How to Get Customers to Sense, Feel, Think, Act, and Relate to Your Company and Brands (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 13-
frameworks. They strive for some form of psychological connectivity which has made experiential marketing so successful. Experiential marketing techniques today, however, have evolved from what they once were into an entirely new entity. They no longer merely connect with customers emotionally. Rather they have progressed to reach consumers in every way possible from building websites to designing interior environments that bond consumers with brands in personalized, multi-sensory ways.

“Growth in branded environments has grown from the recognition that the experience consumers have is the best indication of the brand attributes they will ascribe to your product or service. Architects and interior designers became brand advocates as more and more manufacturers began creating their own experiences.”67 There are three phenomena that are believed to have contributed to the transition into modern marketing. These include “the omnipresence of information technology, the supremacy of the brand, and the ubiquity of integrated communications and entertainment”.68

14. “Traditional Marketing refers to a canon of principles, concepts, and methodologies that marketing academicians, practitioners (marketing directors, brand managers, communication managers), and consultants have amassed throughout this century and, in particular, during the last thirty years. Strangely enough these concepts have been around in marketing, essentially unchanged, for decades. The principles and concepts of traditional marketing describe to nature of products, the behavior of consumers, and competitive activity in the marketplace. The key features of traditional marketing include 1.) functional features and benefits, 2.) a narrow definition of product categories and competition, 3.) customers are rational decision makers, and 4.) methods are analytical, quantitative, and verbal.”

67 Norton.
68 Schmitt, 3.
The progression from traditional to experiential marketing can be seen through recent IKEA advertising. A print ad uses traditional product presence with the addition of their ever-present logo (Figure 10). Graphically, the Scandinavian furnishings giant is suggesting their service of free home delivery, which many people feel is important when purchasing home furnishings. And while the ad does show a few of their products, it fails to communicate on an emotional level with the consumer. What will the furniture feel like in their home? Is it comfortable? Is it expensive? This particular ad leaves many of the average consumer’s questions unanswered. A recent experiential form of advertising in Japan allows the consumers to test the home furnishings in a less than traditional setting. As winner at the Cannes Lions Advertising Festival in 2009, The “IKEA Home Furnishings Liner” connected with their target market on every emotional and cultural level (Figure 11). After transforming a train inside and out, users were able to physically be part of the advertising during the opening week of the IKEA store in Kansai, Japan. The concept was to “persuade the people of Japan that IKEA Home Furnishings was a great and fun way to improve their life at home: from a place to sleep to a home to enjoy”. Each car of the train was wrapped in a different pattern and the seats of each train were replaced with the comfortable sofas of IKEA that matched the exterior patterns. The trains had caution stickers displaying IKEA’s soft toys that said “watch your hand”. Price tags were attached to all of the problems including their popular roller shades. This extremely successful form of outdoor marketing allowed consumers to test

the products and displayed to them how the fun patterns of IKEA furnishings could correspond with their lifestyles. It also benefitted the brand image in demonstrating their affordability and quality, while showing genuine concern for their consumers’ well-being. As a result, opening day sales set the world record for IKEA stores with nearly 40,000 customers.

“Today, customers take functional features and benefits, product quality, and a positive brand image as a given. What they want is products, communications, and marketing campaigns that dazzle their sense, touch their hearts, and stimulate their minds. They want products, communications, and campaigns that they can relate to and that they can incorporate into their lifestyles.”70 Marketing expert and professor Bernd Schmitt, looks at consumer experiences through five different SEMs (Strategic Experiential Models). Such models include “sensory experiences (sense), affective experiences (feel), creative cognitive experiences (think), physical experiences and entire lifestyles (act), and social identity experiences that result from relating to a reference group or culture (relate)”.71 It is imperative that experience providers touch consumers using more than one model in order to provide a more holistic experience.72 The remainder of this section will focus on how sensory features and the incorporation of technology in the interior built environment can work together to provide such an experience.

70 Schmitt, 22.
71 Schmitt, xiii.
72 Schmitt, xiii. Experience providers, referred to as ExPros by Bernd Schmidt include communications, visual and verbal identity, product presence, co-branding, spatial environments, websites and electronic media, and people.
Sensory features in the interior built environment are an important part of interior experiential branding. In fact, they have become one of the most significant ways of influencing user experiences. Sensory marketing may be used to differentiate companies, products and services, add value to them and even motivate consumers. Sight, sound, touch, smell and taste can all be designed to cater to a specific experience whether it be suggestive of lifestyle, culture, or primarily conceptual. The sense of sight can be captured by the visual design elements of a space. These are represented by the conscious selection of materials, furnishings, artwork, and lighting along with the incorporation of unique design elements, brand elements and the use of technology. The sense of sound can be captured by the auditory elements incorporated into a space. These are represented by any ambient noise, including but not limited to the type of music played, sound effects, design elements that make noise, etc… The sense of touch can be captured by the tactile qualities of all surfaces of a space. These include the physical qualities of the selected materials and furnishings, technology respondent to touch such as lighting, or any touch points. The sense of smell can be captured by aroma of the venue or individual spaces, the scent of drinks or food or even the incorporation of scented materials. And finally, the sense of taste can be captured by anything provided for the user to put in their mouth, including food or drinks. Certain smells can even give off a taste when taken in. Anything that the user sees, hears, touches, smells or tastes can contribute to the overall experience they have and a combination of these will provide a purely sensory experience.
An example of a sensory environment that is extremely successful is the Rainforest Café, branded and designed by Schussler Creative, Inc. Describing itself as “a ‘wild place to shop and eat’, The Rainforest Café is part adventure, part restaurant and wholly entertaining for the whole family (Figure 12).”\textsuperscript{73} The restaurant takes every detail to the extreme in re-creating a tropical rainforest. There are real life waterfalls, flourishing vegetation and native animals surrounding the dining rooms. The Rainforest Café is an entirely experiential restaurant where not only does the design place the user right in the middle of the rainforest, but they include multiple sensory techniques and technology to bring it to life. The spaces, which are similar from one location to the next, utilize many special effects from fog machines, lightning and thunder to moving animals and bird noises all in the attempt to “capture the senses” (Figures 13, 14). The brand takes the experience even further. It makes every attempt to cater to the kids with an interactive activity book that helps kids get closer to the characters in the restaurant by telling them a story. Their mascot, the tree frog, even hosts children’s birthday parties. They also highlight their brand in every way possible. Not only are the items on the menu suggestive of the rainforest theme from the type of food to the way they are named (i.e. Raging Thunder Buffalo Wings or Rumble in the Jungle Turkey Wrap), but the designers provide a specialty bar featuring drinks made of fruits from the rainforest, called the Magic Mushroom Juice Bar (Figure 15). Their incorporation of all of the senses is what takes The Rainforest Café from merely a restaurant to an overall experience.

The role of technology is another important topic in experiential interior branding and the creation of user experiences. By the year 2020, it is believed that technology will become a part of our everyday environment, rather than being contained as it is currently. According to Schmitt technology is not only continuously showing improvements in speed and reduction in weight, but is also transforming entirely from print to voice, from voice to live video and so on. All forms of media are converging to fit the needs and demands of today’s technologically advanced consumers.74 The point here is that by being able to “send and receive information in any medium to practically anybody anywhere, will allow people and companies to connect and to share an experiential universe with one another at any time”.75

Ambient technology or that which is incorporated into the surrounding environment has become crucial in providing an interior experience for today’s consumers. Interior touch points have become the ultimate way to create a unique experience. The aptly named TOUCH Nightclub in New York City utilizes many different forms of ambient technology along with the sensory addition of touch. From a main bar that lights up when touched and LED powered digital screens, to color changing lighting effects and light beams that bounce around the space, TOUCH nightclub spared nothing when it came to following through with the concept (Figures 16, 17). With the majority of the space in a neutral gray color, the furnishings become a part of the experience as they change constantly with the LED screens and lighting effects (Figures 18, 19).

74 Schmitt, 4.
75 Schmitt, 6.
While TOUCH Nightclub has incorporated many different forms of technology into their venue, they have merely touched the surface of all of the technology that is offered. There is currently a shift in progress from merely using technology to living with it. One of the newest forms of ambient technology, known as “ambient intelligence” or “Am I”, will radically change how people interact with technology. “The vision of AmI is characterized by two key features: intelligence and embedding. The feature of “intelligence” refers to the fact that the digital environment is able to analyze the context and adapt itself to the people and objects that reside in it. The feature of “embedding” means that miniaturized devices will increasingly become part of the invisible background of peoples’ activities, and that social interaction and functionality will move to the foreground.”76 As a result of this dramatic shift in technology, interior designers will be forced to look at technology and experience in the built environment in an entirely new way.

6. **Branding Entertainment and Nightlife for the Postmodern Young Urban Professional**

Research on marketing to the postmodern Young Urban Professional suggests that both lifestyle and experiential forms of marketing are inherent in their motivations to consume. Through the previous research on both their lifestyle and connection to experiential marketing, it is apparent that this cohort is most attracted to nightlife venues that are trendy, provide a customized experience and entertainment, encourage

participation, demonstrate cultural affiliation, and/or suggest an affluent and luxurious lifestyle through quality, exclusivity and expense. As a result of this influential cohorts’ mass consumption of nightlife and entertainment, luxury brands mixed with experiential pursuits have led to a newer construct of nightlife, where themed and stylized environments are aimed at the Young Urban Professionals’ demands, tastes and lifestyle.

According to experts on youth cultures, identities and the consumption of city-nightlife spaces, Hollands and Chatterton, “the rise of incomes amongst wealthy city livers and university students has been the greatest stimulant of demand for branded, stylized and safe nightlife venues.”77 As previously suggested, the brands of these venues are often created to respond to specific consumer identities, which is of ultimate importance to the postmodern Young Urban Professional in their search for social connectedness and identity. “While there is not a strict correlation between class and nightlife consumption preferences, labor market position does play a key role here. The upper classes and wannabes continue to colonize the most exclusive and expensive nightlife destinations [as a representation of status].”78 For the remainder of this research, nightlife will be defined as “social activities and forms of entertainment that are available at night in bars, nightclubs, etc…”79 This definition will also include restaurants that are open late,

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78 Hollands and Chatterton.
centered around some form of entertainment or socialization, and include a bar with premium drinks.

Branded nightlife venues today act as separators from the more mainstream ideals Young Urban Professionals try to avoid. Anything, products and services alike, which are created for the masses, are unfavorable to the postmodern Young Urban Professional. Services in particular do not provide customized experiences that take values or lifestyle into consideration. The newest branded nightlife venues to target this significant cohort realize the necessity of focusing on their value system and as a result, provide unique atmospheres for networking, socializing and meeting other people similar in social status. Luxury branded nightlife venues are especially relevant to the postmodern Young Urban Professional consumer because such venues emphasize the success of their patrons while aiding in their expression of perceived mobility, status and maturity.

As a result of the industry’s shift toward marketing to target users, there have been many changes in the definition of nightlife. Such changes include “different types of licensing, new attitudes toward dress codes and gender relations, especially more female-friendly environments, a diversity of uses mixing eating and drinking, a ‘chameleon’ approach by appealing to different audiences throughout the day and a broader range of alcohol preferences such as wine, spirits, bottled designer beers and alcopops. Some of the most recent trends in nightlife spaces move towards “semi-expensive cafés and style-bar
concepts, which are based upon seating, eating and drinking in a highly design-oriented environment.”

This mixed-use nightlife venue concept was first identified by Chatterton and Hollands in 2002, when they wrote about the production and consumption side of nightlife venues or as they called them “Urban Playscapes”. In that paper, they wrote, “Within the dominant experience of nightlife, there are a number of differentiated and overlapping spaces which appeal to the aspirations and styles of various cash-rich groups such as the yuppies [Young Urban Professionals].” As a result, more upscale, mixed-use style venues are becoming extremely popular.

In the entertainment capital of the world, Las Vegas, this “mixed-use” aspect of nightlife design is extremely apparent. Every venue is forced to make itself unique in some way in an attempt to stand out from the crowd. Many of Las Vegas’ most famous nightlife venues are frequented by the postmodern Young Urban Professionals because they not only offer a venue for socialization, but also include different forms of entertainment. This two-or-three for one package if you will, contributes to the identity of the brand, making it stronger and more effective with this target audience than those that offer strictly socialization or entertainment. After all, the Young Urban Professional seeks out entertainment. Whether that means the addition of a sensory light show or even a

retractable roof that opens to the stars. Some venues take this concept a step further by offering the opportunity for participation. This has been shown through the introduction of gaming venues and party pools. Of course these are extreme examples, but as you will see later in this paper, every part of nightlife can be learned from Las Vegas.

In defining the postmodern Young Urban Professional thus far, it is apparent that they prefer nightlife pursuits that provide entertainment and quality in the experience. Therefore in branding nightlife for them, it is not only important to focus on aesthetics, but also on other qualitative measures. They appreciate quality in every aspect of their nightlife venues from the interior environment through quality materials and experiential features to quality food and drink and personalized service. The brand must focus around the experience in every way possible and on multiple levels to attract the Young Urban Professional cohort and to keep them coming back.

The first area in which the postmodern Young Urban Professional expects quality is in the interior environment itself. This is usually the initial reason for a patron’s selection of a venue. The style of the décor may interest them on a personal level or social level. They may go to it because they appreciate the environment or they may frequent it because it is popular with their social circle. This area of quality is the most superficial in that it is only a backdrop for the experience to take place. If the experience either through décor, food and drink, or service doesn’t suggest the highest standards of luxury, the postmodern Young Urban Professional will select a different nightlife venue.
Going back to the concept of “mixed-use” spaces, food and drink go hand-in-hand. The postmodern Young Urban Professional appreciates an experience and in effect, food and drink pairing has become extremely popular. Quite often, this form of dining is set up in a way to provide a unique experience, whether the food is catered to the individual customers or is created in a way that provides a unique cultural experience. At the same time, this form of “experience” is extremely social, in that groups share it together.

Quality drinks are also an important part of the experience. Postmodern Young Urban Professionals appreciate branded nightlife venues that provide a signature list of drinks. Such drinks often come at a premium price because they are not only flavorfully created with top shelf liquors, but have also come to represent ones’ status. Cocktails for example have grandeur about them not only in how they are served but also in their classy appearance. Many times the drink list represents the space’s brand in some way, whether the brand is graphically a part of the list or the drinks are named after the brand’s concept in some way. Signature drinks are often most successful because they are usually the best drinks the venue can make and are an easy drink of choice when it is difficult to choose.

Many restaurants, bars and nightclubs have chosen to represent one form of alcohol, while offering only select options of others in an attempt to focus the experience of their venue. More recently wine bars and wine and food pairings have become extremely

81 Liquor companies were among the first commercial centuries to exploit the possibilities of branding.
popular. However, the choices are limitless from a focus on mixed drinks like margaritas or cocktails to specialty brewed beers and even hard liquors such as a vodka or tequila. One excellent example of this is Tacos and Tequila in the Luxor Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas. In pairing Mexican inspired cuisine with a favorite Mexican drink, tequila, this venue offers a unique experience. It caters to tequila fans because it allows for them to try as many different varieties as they’d like, while allowing them to participate in the culture. Meanwhile, the décor exemplifies the cultural experience in many different ways. The concept embodies the cool modernism of the new Mexico City while providing traditional elements and the panache necessary to make it a part of Las Vegas. The stylized design puts patrons right in the middle of a cultural experience, especially with the giant abstract sombrero covering the central bar and huge murals of bullfighters on the walls (Figures 20, 21). Their website also contributes to the experience. Not only does it inform possible consumers about the venue, but allows for them to participate in the brand with a page that educates them on “The Art of Tequila” and familiarizes them with “The Temptresses of Tequila” (Figure 22). Tacos and Tequila has been extremely successful with its design and layout focused around socialization and a concept that provides an experience through décor, food and drink, and culture. And while the materials aren’t as luxurious as a Young Urban Professional may hope for, there is something to be said about the extremity to which this venue submerges its patrons in the experience of one strand of Mexican culture. As mentioned before, the consumption of different types of cultures is extremely important in the Young Urban Professional’s
definition of lifestyle. To be cultured, characterizes them as “having refined taste and manners and a good education”.

A final area that the postmodern Young Urban Professional expects quality is the service that they receive while at the nightlife venues. This is the most important of the three areas in which quality is expected because it is usually the deciding factor as to whether a patron comes back to the venue in the future. If they are willing to pay the premium price, then they expect an experience in the service itself. The most successful nightlife venues have been those that provide the best service. Postmodern Young Urban Professionals expect VIP entry, bottle service, exclusive seating, and personal one-on-one service. This idea will be further expanded upon in the following and final section of this paper.

7. “Learning from Las Vegas” Case Studies and Associated Brand and Design Implications applied in the Midwest

Designing branded nightlife venues for the postmodern Young Urban Professional has been guided thus far by leading concepts suggestive of their lifestyle. This portion of the paper will turn to popular Las Vegas nightlife venues in the attempt to identify experiential design implications that attract this audience. Then it will evaluate how similar implications have been successful in the Midwest, or more specifically Omaha, Nebraska.

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In the original *Learning from Las Vegas*, written by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, the authors recognize that there is a “wealth of architectural information to be culled from Las Vegas”\(^8\) While their research focuses on the architecture and streetscapes of the city, one can learn from Las Vegas in many different areas, including interior design and branding. They drew inspiration from the “original” Las Vegas, located on the Northern end of Las Vegas Boulevard. However, it is the commercial area of the strip, surrounding South Las Vegas Boulevard, that has come to focus on interiors and branding in the attempt to sell the experience of Las Vegas and which will be the focus for the following research.

According to the authors of *Learning from Las Vegas*, “there is a perversity in the learning process: We look backward at history and tradition to go forward.”\(^8\) In effect, the following research looks to existing restaurants, bars and nightclubs for design and brand implications for the postmodern Young Urban Professional, that can be applied to future nightlife projects. Each venue in Las Vegas has been selected for its own purposes, which will be discussed as each is introduced. As explained earlier in this paper, branding is all about storytelling and therefore; each venue will be described in a way that makes the reader a part of the experience.

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\(^8\) Venturi, Brown, and Izenour, 3.
Interior design and branding are both extremely subjective processes in the sense that they cannot be fully captured by rule-based propositions. Each user takes the elements provided by the designer and interprets them based on their identities, values and lifestyles. While it is difficult to come up with an exact strategy or process in design research, however, it is possible to use specific techniques in evaluation. In order to connect design with research, existing case studies of restaurants, bars and nightclubs will be evaluated based on personal observation and experience. Evaluations of each venue will focus on programming, design, branding and qualitative variables.

The programming portion looks at the layout and overall flow of space in each case study and focuses on the elements most important to its success. Looking at adjacent spaces has the potential to find a further connection between design and venue use. Key elements of each venue will be evaluated to establish any uniting characteristics between the different case studies attracting postmodern Young Urban Professionals.

The design and branding portions work hand-in-hand (as they often do) by evaluating the interior qualities that appear to contribute most to the success or attractiveness of each case study. They focus on how any or all of the five senses are used in the spaces and contribute to the overall experience. Sight is represented by the visual presence of materials, furnishings, artwork, design elements, lighting details, and branding elements. Sound is represented by any ambient noise, including but not limited to the type of music played, sound effects. Touch is represented by the tactile qualities of the materials,
lighting respondent to touch, etc… Smell is represented by the aroma of the venue and individual spaces. And taste is represented by the drinks and or food being served. The branding portion of the research will also focus on how the brand itself is translated through the interior architecture and design.

The final area the research focuses on are qualitative variables, which include but are not limited to the quality of the food and/or drinks being served, the quality of the service itself and the quality of the experience. The main focus of this portion will be the service aspect of each case study and whether or not it contributes to the overall quality of the experience. Since luxury is associated with quality, Young Urban Professionals look for luxury in everything they consume. The combination of programming, design, branding and qualitative variables in each venue create the experience that is most important to the Young Urban Professional and the lifestyle they are trying to project to others through consumption.

TAO Asian Bistro and Nightclub, located in Grand Canal Shoppes at The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino, Las Vegas is one of the largest mixed-use venues in the world, and there is much to be learned from the 40,000 square foot entertainment complex. According to Wikipedia, Tao is a Chinese term meaning ‘way’, ‘path’, or ‘route’: “It is a metaphysical concept originating with Laozi that gave rise to a religion and philosophy referred to in English with the single term Taoism. Tao is not a 'name' for a 'thing' but the
underlying natural order of the universe." TAO was selected for this research because it was the highest grossing independent restaurant and nightclub in the United States for the third year straight in 2009. Luxury, exclusivity, and cultural immersion, makes TAO Las Vegas one of the hippest places to be and “be seen”. Tao is an ideal venue for the postmodern Young Urban Professional because the experience is everything.

As one enters TAO, the experience begins instantaneously (Figure 23). Patrons walk down a hallway surrounded on either side by free-standing tubs filled with water and rose petals and surrounded by candles. The rounded opening frames everyone who walks in, as if providing them with a grand entrance for everyone to see (Figure 24). The quality of the experience begins as soon as one makes it to the host station, where they are greeted hospitably and are quickly provided service by a hostess in a traditional black Japanese dress. The entire TAO venue is extremely exclusive and as a result, for anyone who did not make a reservation, this would be the end of the experience. Those who did make reservations are then quickly taken to a table saved specifically for them.

On the way to the table, customers are surrounded by the TAO logo and experience the brand through immersion in Asian culture. The sense of sight is captured at every turn. First they see an Asian rock garden, turned on its side and a part of a wall in the front lounge space (Figure 25). Then they walk past a twenty foot tall golden Buddha that floats “peacefully” above an infinity pool filled with Japanese carp which visually

connects the upper and lower level dining areas (Figure 26). Other design features include a collection of Asian peace pipes inset within a colorful wall of cubes and imported artifacts from China, Japan and Thailand (Figures 27, 28).

Only once the customer sits down at their table, are they able to visually take in all of the design elements of the venue. Closed off, smaller and more personal spaces, illuminated in red, are reserved for couples and small parties, while the two-story open space and focal point of the entire restaurant, illuminated in blue, is filled with large tables as the primary social space. Diffused uplighting became a way of making two different things happen in the space. Not only did it visually separate the social space from the more private intimate spaces, but with the blue light being colder and in turn brighter, it forced attention toward the social scene. Reds, golds and greens are the primary color palette as representative of nature with dark rich woods used as accents. Uneven brick walls, different species of wood, a wall of sand and rocks, and hand carved wooden chests are just some of the many textural details incorporated into the design. The loud music that is played is the main source of sound. It is culturally relevant, adding to the brand experience, while making the large venue a bit more intimate by drowning out some of the conversations. The server greets their customers wearing all black. It is then that the service experience really shines through. As a part of the welcoming process, the server places the customers’ napkins in their laps. At TAO, service is what makes the experience complete and they spare nothing when it comes to providing it.
The next step in the experience is the drink list. TAO’s signature drink is the TAO-tini which is made primarily of Asian inspired ingredients including premium mandarin vodka. Other drinks on the list are inspired by the brand story and the culture with names such as Geisha Girl, Lemongrass Cooler and Gingerita (Figure 29). Tao’s drink list is a contributing member to the entire brand story. The food too contributes to the brand with a focus on small plates and sushi, both a major part of popular Asian gastronomy. The combination of Pacific Rim cuisine and specialty drinks provide an experience all their own; they capture the sense of taste literally, and also in a uniquely cultural way.

Another area of the dining room that allows for customers to participate in the branded culture is the sushi bar. There customers sit and eat in traditional Asian style while being entertained by watching the preparation of sushi. Traditional paper lanterns lined the ceiling of the sushi bar, making it a special part of the dining room. More brightly lit than other areas of the restaurant, the sushi bar provides another opportunity for customers to “be seen” (Figure 30).

Wonderful service is provided throughout the entire meal with drinks quickly filled and empty plates just as quickly taken by the servers’ assistants. When the meal is finished, customers are given one of TAO’s own fortune cookies (displaying their brands’ logo) on a plate advertising their house mix compact discs that are for sale (Figure 31). This provides a bridge between the restaurant and nightclub. Soon after the check is picked up, the server offers free VIP admission to their nightclub. Patrons that dine with them
are able to enter the nightclub quickly without waiting in line or paying, which adds an element of exclusivity to the experience. Normal cover to get into the venue is $30 for ladies and $50 for gentlemen.

Before entry into the nightclub, TAO is once again promoting its brand by stamping its logo on the inside of patrons’ arms and giving away free admission to their newest venue in Las Vegas, TAO Beach. One enters the nightclub up a large staircase in the middle of the restaurant, providing once again the opportunity to “be seen”. Once inside, TAO nightclub has an entirely different ambience than the restaurant below. TAO Nightclub is darker and has its own set of design features and brand experiences.

Entry into the nightclub is right in the middle of a hallway that allows one to choose which way to go, in a way forcing them to choose their own destiny or ‘path’. To the right is the ‘bad’ side or the main space of the nightclub that houses a large dance floor and the main bar all illuminated in sinful red light (Figure 32). More modern materials are used on this end with red cast resin chandeliers and brown and black leather seating. Two small stages balance either side of the entrance to this main nightclub space where women perform later in the night. They become vignettes that act out forbidden fantasies. These smaller stories within the bigger picture engage the patrons while adding a dimension of mystery, sultriness and intrigue to the experience (Figure 33).
VIP areas surrounded by the dance floor are areas where seats can be purchased at a premium price and include bottle service. The DJ overlooks the entire room, slightly elevated on one side and sets the mood for the entire space. Service, while much more rushed, is still quality with drinks provided quickly. On one side of the dance floor, another of the free-standing baths seen upon entry defines the space, but here women come in sporadically and dance nearly in the nude. The concept of the nightclub is much more risqué in nature than the restaurant is, but that is what defines nightlife and what attracts postmodern Young Urban Professionals. They want to participate in unique experiences.

To the left of the main hallway, or the Voyeur Hallway as TAO has branded it, is the “good” side. Here, the decor utilizes primarily natural materials, with reclaimed wood doors, a stripped wood barfront and bamboo lighting fixtures. The natural materials also carry into the “bad” side a little with metal pebble columns and resin screens accented with bamboo, in an attempt to unite the two very different sides. On the “good” end, there is a different kind of music, which is much more relaxed and the overall vibe of the space is more laid back. The primary design feature of the space is the Monk Bar, which has a backdrop of hundreds of uniquely carved wooden monk statues (Figure 34). Next to it, a large party room offers a more intimate, lounge-type setting (Figure 35).

The restrooms in TAO Nightclub are another area for great service that the venue was successful in utilizing. Personal assistants in the restrooms provide patrons with paper
towels after they have washed their hands. One element that was unique about the Restrooms in TAO Nightclub was the multitude of different products covering the vanity. The nightclub provides its patrons with anything they might need during their night: mouthwash, deodorant, perfumes and lotions, only begin to reveal everything they have to offer.

TAO Asian Bistro and Nightclub, Las Vegas utilizes every opportunity and surface imaginable to reiterate their brand to their customers and to give off a positive image and experience. From a beautiful environment to top of the line service and VIP treatment, TAO spares nothing when it comes to providing the ultimate nightlife experience. TAO at the Venetian is a unique, multi-level experience that has been successful since it was first opened in 2005 and will continue to remain popular for the time being with postmodern Young Urban Professionals.

Another venue, from which nightlife design and brand implications can be drawn in targeting the postmodern Young Urban Professional, is The Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. This is because all of the venues that make up the Hard Rock project a specific lifestyle that is desirable to the postmodern Young Urban Professional. “Hard rock” is a term used to describe a care-free type of music and is considered a glamorous form of heavy metal which evolved into a lifestyle in the 1980s.86 The hard rock lifestyle

is represented by fame and glamour with the motto “live-hard, play-hard” and is suggestive of the Young Urban Professional in their escape from the daily grind.\(^\text{87}\)

Johnny Smalls and Vanity Nightclub, both located within the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino, are two venues extremely definitive of the Young Urban Professional lifestyle. Johnny Smalls, a tapas restaurant, is located on the main level of the Hard Rock Casino. At first sight of it upon approach immediately begins the experience. Revolving around the concept of Johnny Smalls, a high-roller in the 70s or 80s, the bold and modern color palette of purples, golds and greens, mixed with clean white leather, and retro lighting and furniture contribute to the trendiness of the restaurant and begin to tell the brand story (Figure 36). Carved wooden hand seats make up a small waiting area, but visitors with a reservation, are led immediately to a table. The music too carries the brand concept through with loud Rock-n-Roll from the era of Johnny Smalls playing in the background.

Johnny Smalls, similarly to TAO Asian Bistro, has a visible separation in space, with screens separating the social space (the bar area), from private more intimate seating areas (Figure 37). The bar glows purple and has four sides which allow patrons to look at others (and be seen) while waiting for food or drinks (Figure 38). One sided bars only allow patrons to look at the back wall. This small design detail makes a tremendous

difference and is necessary in providing a successful social space. As for the spatial layout, there are many different types of spaces and seating that offer their own unique décor. The lighting fixtures, furniture, materials, and wall treatments change from one space to another, providing different moods and thus different dining experiences (Figures 39, 40). The lighting contributes to the nightlife concept with dimly lit chandeliers and colored uplighting. Johnny Smalls, originally designed as a nightlife venue, is open until 2am. Recently, they have begun serving lunch on the weekends.

The cuisine at Johnny Smalls is what makes it popular with the Young Urban Professionals and what sets it apart from the competition. Tapas are a major part of Spanish cuisine and refer to appetizers or snacks, basic small bites. The concept here in the United States is similar but the items served are from around the world, are slightly larger in size and shareable, and are not basic at all, utilizing many different culinary techniques in their preparation. At Johnny Smalls, the cuisine has depth in preparation and a variety of flavors. Of course the menu encompasses Spanish tapas, but it also contains Asian dim sum, Italian antipasti, Mediterranean mezze, Mexican antojitos, and classic American starters, in other words, a truly multicultural experience. Having so many options, Johnny Smalls has divided its menu into categories, making it easier to choose. White leather with Johnny Smalls himself embedded in it, a fun font and purple color scheme describe the menu that contributes to the brand story (Figures 41, 42).

With tapas being small bites, the idea is that they can be carried around and eaten during socialization similarly to hors d’ouvres at cocktail parties, but are more of a meal in
character. Tapas are often served during nightlife for this very reason. At Johnny Smalls, it is all-you-can-eat tapas for a set price. A discount is provided to members of the Rockstar Club, a rewards club offered by the Hard Rock Casino. Such a reasonable price for a cultural experience is considered to be “new luxury” and is greatly accepted by postmodern Young Urban Professionals. The way tapas work at Johnny Smalls is two selections are served at a time. The combination of the service experience and the wide variety of flavors from around the world make the cuisine an experience all its own. In following through with the concept of all-you-can-eat, similarly to a buffet, but in a more specially designed setting, Johnny Smalls also has introduced all-you-can-drink sangrias for a set price. The sense of taste is the primary contributor to the experience at Johnny Smalls.

The service is also an area of focus for this brand, as at TAO. The serving staff is extremely knowledgeable on the menu, friendly and eager to help. Following through with the high-roller concept, the uniforms are rock-n-roll style attire. The Hostesses wear black corsets, the waitresses wear black dresses and knee-high socks and all of the male employees wear black dress shirts and pants. The female attire adds a bit of whimsy to the experience similarly to the large murals that cover the walls (Figure 43). Johnny Smalls understands the importance of quality in the products and services it provides. Once again, it is the qualitative variables of a venue that define the experience and keep customers coming back. To ensure their staff is providing the best of the two, they issue a comment card with every check asking about the quality of the food and the service.
At Johnny Smalls, good service is all about efficiency. As soon as the first tapas are
served, the waitress immediately puts in the next order so that small plates are constantly
coming. Once a plate is finished, the servers’ assistants quickly remove them. Timely
service is of the upmost importance to this venue because tables need to be turned over at
a constant rate. If patrons are waiting around for the next serving, not only do the
waitresses miss out on tips, but the business loses money. At the most exclusive venues
in Las Vegas, such as Tao and Johnny Smalls, tables are packed in and constantly filled.
Missing a reservation could mean waiting hours for a table.

The last Las Vegas venue under consideration here is Vanity Nightclub, the newest,
multi-million dollar edition to the Hard Rock Casino. As one of the trendiest places to be
in Sin City, Vanity Nightclub is frequented by postmodern Young Urban Professionals
because of its luxurious décor. Designed around the concept of vanity, this is the place to
be and the place to “be seen”. According to Vegas VIP, “with a name like Vanity, jaw-
dropping beauty is the key factor to drawing in the high-end nightclub crowd.”

Located on the upper level of the Hard Rock Casino, atop a grand staircase similarly to
TAO Nightclub, Vanity Nightclub creates the impression of exclusivity, with one waiting
line for VIP, one waiting line for guest list, and only a small area for others. Only those
dressed to impress are allowed in the club and the decision of who gets in is ultimately up

nightclubs/vanity.html, Internet; accessed 7 July 2011.
to the door man.\textsuperscript{89} They maintain the right to refuse anyone. As one enters the venue, patrons are surrounded by the first experiential design element, a hall of broken mirrors that reflect everyone that enters millions of times (Figure 44). The entrance is designed again around the concept of “being seen”. Once in, it is difficult to look away from the primary design feature, a crystal-lined column that flows into the ceiling, embedded with LEDs that acts as a video display constantly changing the experience of the nightclub. From pink light, making the materials look gold to jewel tones contributing to the overall brand, the LED design feature virtually creates the mood of the space (Figures 45, 46). Vanity Nightclub, unlike the previous venues, had the funds to incorporate technology into the space and in effect, completely transformed the nightclub experience. Having the ability to constantly change and evolve will keep the venue new and fresh and will keep patrons interested and coming back. The rest of the ceilings in the space were mirrored, continuing to reflect patrons as they move through it.

The design concept of Vanity Nightclub is old fashioned glamour with the incorporation of modern elements. The main bar, illuminated in gold is the brightest space in the nightclub and is the first area with which patrons interact (Figure 47). It is also one of the main social spaces in the nightclub. The materials seen throughout Vanity capture the sense of touch through visual texture. Luxurious velvet fabrics on banquette seating and giant tufted poufs, mixed with dramatic lighting details on fabric covered walls, add visual stimulation to the space. The burgundy velvet of old world Hollywood mixed

\textsuperscript{89} The door man often coined the “bouncer” does not necessarily have to be male. In London, nightclubs have started to use female bouncers.
with the classic luxury of gold are common elements throughout the space. Meanwhile, digital black and white images of beauty, projected on fabric backdrops become a uniting factor while providing a modern concept of artwork (Figure 48).

Exclusivity is everywhere in Vanity, with every seat and table within the venue reserved for VIP. In order to sit down, one must pay a premium price of up to $500 for bottle service. They also require a party size of four or more, making VIP areas primarily a social scene. In the largest VIP areas, additional features add to their ambience and exclusivity such as a twelve foot long fireplace in the wall or a view overlooking the dance floor where patrons can personally request music from the DJ (Figure 49). Service in the nightclub focuses on the VIP areas with little concern for others. The service aspect is a primary factor contributing to the exclusivity and quality in the experience of VIP.

The creators of Vanity Nightclub understand that in order to bring men to a venue, it must be designed to attract women. As a result, every night is ladies’ night, with free champagne for women until midnight. Champagne with a raspberry captures the sense of taste as the signature drink of Vanity. Champagne in general has a level a prestige that comes with it, often associated with the higher class lifestyle postmodern Young Urban Professionals strive for. The nightclub is prepared with dozens of glasses of champagne prefilled on the back bar. Unlike the other venues previously mentioned, Vanity only has their signature drink; they do not have a branded drink list. As a result, customers order
simple cocktails and the club in turn probably does not make as much off of liquor sales as they could. This may be the reason for the steep entry prices of $20 for ladies and $50 for gentlemen and the extreme cost of VIP service.

The restrooms at Vanity Nightclub are an experience all their own, completely captivating ones’ sense of sight. The women’s restroom in particular is a unique space that alone can reveal the brand story. With vanity meaning excessive pride in or admiration of one's own appearance or achievements, the setting is ultimately vain. The setting of the women’s restroom is a modern version of an old fashioned boudoir. Digitalized lips turned gold and eyes turned silver and ice blue, add a modern and unique element to the space. The digital imagery is the focal point and all other aspects of the design work with it. Unique mirrored blue lights add whimsy, while gold mirror adds luxury to a column that undesirably impedes the space. Red velvet poufs and adjustable personal vanities further strengthen the brand story and contribute to the experiential sense of touch (Figures 50, 51). Even the stalls suggest luxury, covered with a laminate that looks like a tufted white leather seat (Figure 52). Women have the added perk of a hair and nail technician on hand, at a premium price of course. Once again, as with TAO Nightclub, the counters are covered with products that their patrons might need throughout the night. In the men’s restroom, the main design image is that of fantasy: a woman vacuuming in lingerie (Figure 53). This just shows that the designers of Vanity Nightclub put an enormous amount of thought into incorporating the brand story
throughout the venue but in different and creative ways, providing an ultimately vain experience.

As demonstrated, much can be learned from Las Vegas. In evaluating the previous case studies including Tao Asian Bistro, Tao Nightclub, Johnny Smalls, and Vanity Nightclub, many correlations were found between venues. Through thorough evaluation, this research has guided the implications regarding programming, design, branding and qualitative variables for experiential nightlife venues that attract the postmodern Young Urban Professional. This portion of the paper brings the previous research together to answer the original two research questions. The questions were: what aspects of experiential design are most attractive to the Young Urban Professional lifestyle and their devotion to the brand? And how can interior designers provide a branded nightlife experience that attracts and identifies with to postmodern Young Urban Professionals’ lifestyle?

Programming Implications

1. The programming of a nightlife venue should be laid out in a way that provides multiple points for its patrons to “be seen”. The entrance should be a consideration as it is the first and most dramatic opportunity to highlight patrons as they arrive.
2. Multiple types of spaces should be provided that allow for different levels of participation. (I.e. Social spaces vs. intimate spaces.) Social spaces should be open in character, while the intimate spaces, for couples and small groups, should be cozier and more personal in character.

3. There should be a clear distinction between social and intimate spaces, highlighting the social space in some way. This can be done through material changes, increased lighting, floor level variations, etc… Anything that draws attention to the social scene within the venue.

4. Nightlife venues should be mixed-use in nature, providing more than one type of experience or setting. Having access to food and drink simultaneously is one such example. Not only will it increase sales for the venue, but it will attract the postmodern Young Urban Professional as an Urban Playscape that caters to their lifestyle on multiple levels.

5. A venue should exude exclusivity in every way possible and therefore, VIP areas should be dominant in the programming phase. They also need to be placed in areas that are quickly serviceable.

**Design Implications**

1. Trendy, luxurious décor is imperative and should contribute to the brand story. Design features that can be changed will keep a venue new and fresh.
2. If there is funding available, technology should be a consideration as part of the ambient environment. Technology can completely change the ambience of a space while providing different opportunities for participation depending on its application.

3. The design should tell the brand story in more than one way, with the logo clearly displayed within the space. Material, lighting, and furnishings selections should all contribute to the brand experience.

4. Design elements should be incorporated into the space that captivates more than one of the five senses. Only through a combination of senses will a user truly experience a space.

5. The design should provide multiple opportunities for patrons to “be seen” by others.

6. VIP spaces do not always have to merely consist of seating. Incorporating unique design features into large VIP spaces adds to the exclusivity and appeal, making them the place to be.

7. Design geared more toward the feminine side works well because men will go to a venue that attracts women. While postmodern Young Urban Professionals may remain single until later in life, they still search out companionship on their nights out.
8. The restrooms are always part of the experience in nightlife and as a result, their design should be considered as important as other spaces within the venue. Restrooms are an opportunity to provide another level of service as well.

9. A space for entertainment and/or participation should be provided in adding to the experience. (I.e. a platform for vignettes acting out a fantasy, a stage for live music, a large dance floor, etc…)

**Branding Implications**

1. The brand must be designed in a way that focuses on the lifestyle values of postmodern Young Urban Professionals. Since they define themselves by the services they consume, the brand story should project quality, affluence, luxury and exclusivity. The addition of culture can also contribute to a positive experience.

2. The brand story must begin outside of the venue, visible upon approach, and follow through the entire venue, providing every opportunity for users to experience the brand.

3. The brand should be considered in every decision made about the venue from the programming and design, to music played, food and drink served and even service aspects. The combination of these is necessary in providing an experience.
4. The venue should advertise its brand in every way possible from branding the drink list and food choices to advertising events, promotions and products.

5. When working with mixed-use venues, the brand story should be the same throughout, but should be treated differently in restaurants than in bars and nightclubs. Bars and especially nightclubs are more attractive when they are slightly risqué in nature.

6. The brand experience should include some form of entertainment that contributes to the brand story.

7. Restrooms provide another opportunity for brand projection. They can either tell the entire brand story, or act as a small vignette of the larger picture.

Qualitative Variables

1. There should be quality in the design and brand concept, utilizing materials, finishes, lighting and furnishings in a trendy way that attract postmodern Young Urban Professionals. Quality in the design of the venue is what will bring them in.

2. With branded nightlife usually charging a premium price, postmodern Young Urban Professionals expect quality in the service they are provided. The service aspect of nightlife is another area of which can add to the overall experience of a venue and brand. Quality in the service is what brings them back.
3. Quality in the experience is also important in attracting the postmodern Young Urban Professional audience. The incorporation of technology along with consideration in captivating the five senses will create a unique, quality experience.

Now that implications for the postmodern Young Urban Professional have been established, the remaining portion of the paper will show examples of how they have been successfully implemented in nightlife venues in other areas of the United States, such as the Midwest or more specifically, Omaha, NE. The first venue that will be evaluated based upon these implications is Parliament Pub, which is located in a new urban neighborhood referred to as Midtown Crossing. The second venue is Blue Sushi and Sake Bombers Lounge, which is located in the urban fabric of the downtown/Old Market area. These two venues were selected because they are both relatively new and trendy, have their own unique brands, are located in primarily urban areas, and are extremely popular with the postmodern Young Urban Professional cohort.

Parliament Pub is a unique venue in midtown Omaha. Its design concept and brand story combines a rock and roll vibe with elements of an English Pub. This location is the second installment of this popular brand to the Omaha area, but provides a more upscale atmosphere than the other location because of its prime urban location.
Beginning with its programming, Parliament Pub has successfully utilized many implications that target the postmodern Young Urban Professional. The entry, while minute in grandeur was successful in that it is situated in a way that can be viewed from the entire main space of the venue. As a result, those who walk in are instantly seen by others. As for the seating selection, the designer has incorporated many different types. An assortment of large social spaces are located in the main space surrounding the central bar, while more private and intimate seating, separated by velvet curtains are located in the dimly lit back hallway (Figures 54, 55, 56). The social space stands out as another place to “be seen”, being more brightly lit and framed with light boxes. The venue was especially successful in that there is a clear distinction between social and intimate spaces.

In consideration of the mixed-use concept popular among postmodern Young Urban Professionals, Parliament Pub offers both a lounge-type setting, and a nightclub-type setting in one with the incorporation of a dance floor that adds a level of participation to the experience. An elevated platform originally meant for live entertainment has been turned into a space that doubles as a DJ booth and a VIP area, adding an element of exclusivity to the space. As a result of Parliament Pubs successful programming, they have become the place to go for important events. According to the designer, there are bachelorette parties and birthday celebrations every weekend that request bottle service and the top of the line service that accompanies it.
The design and branding of Parliament Pub midtown go hand-in-hand. The brand story starts as soon as one approaches the venue with the ambience of the space exuding through the windows. From Dodge Street, the main street on which the venue is located, and on the side of entry, bay windows showcase the brand's logo and provide a hint of the brand story (Figures 57, 58). Once inside, it is the trendy décor and hip vibe at a premium price that makes this venue extremely popular with postmodern Young Urban Professionals. The central bar, illuminated in red, sets the mood for the entire space. Meanwhile deep wood tones found in the paneling throughout the venue are reminiscent of traditional English pubs (Figure 59). Rich red velvets and sleek black leather are suggestive of rock and roll royalty. The décor screams bachelor however, the incorporation of more feminine details such as the red cast resin chandeliers covered in jewels, the whimsical swirl designs above the bar, and the elegant design of the women’s restroom provide the perfect combination that caters to everyone. The mixing of traditional and modern materials creates a unique experience that contributes to the brand story.

One of the main design elements, a 1954 Triumph Chopper is elevated atop a light box that doubles as the back of banquette seating (Figure 60). It is indicative of the time frame in which the concept revolves around. The timeline is set in the mid 1950’s and 1960’s, when rock and roll was taking over Britain. This design feature sets precedence for other design elements in the space. Imagery of rock and roll legends, such as members of The Who, line the walls in the back hallway and red wallcovering covered in
fishnet pantyhose is used throughout the venue. Another element carried throughout the
space is the use of the white lion, iconic of Parliament. Lion statues are located on either
side of the centrally located chopper, with the backdrop of a red wall covered entirely in
white lion heads that frame the giant brand logo (Figure 61).

The design of Parliament Pub captivates the senses the moment one walks in. The dark
red ambience of the space, along with the use of trendy, unique, and luxurious materials,
and the glow of the fireplace, captivates the sense of sight. The rock and roll music
contributes to the sense of sound while adding another dimension to the brand story.
Sleek black leather, plush velvets, and tufted banquette backs contribute to the sense of
touch. And premium drinks contribute to the sense of taste. The quality of the
experience at Parliament is purely a sensory one. According to the designer, there was no
budget for the addition of technology; however, the brand story is designed in a way that
did not need it.

Another reason for Parliament Pub’s success is the fact that the designers carried the
design and brand story throughout the entire venue, including into the restrooms. As
mentioned previously, the women’s restroom is elegantly designed around the concept of
rock and roll but applied in an extremely feminine way with the color palette of silver,
pink and black. The combination of luxurious design features give the space the feeling
of an old fashioned English powder room, adding to the brand experience. Black laser-
cut mirrors, whimsical art-nouveau styled wallcovering, elegant crystal sconces and
beautiful pink basins make the women’s restroom at Parliament an experience all its own (Figure 62).

The final venue to be evaluated based on the recommended design and brand implications is Blue Sushi and Sake Bombers Lounge, a nightlife venue located in the urban fabrics of the downtown, Old Market area in Omaha, Nebraska. With two very different types of venues located under one roof and the combination of food and nightlife with culture, Blue Sushi Sake Bombers has become extremely successful in targeting the postmodern Young Urban Professional cohort. Its extremely urban location near the downtown business district has made it the place to be and the place to be seen after a long week at the office.

Once again, beginning with programming, Blue Sushi and Sake Bombers both have provided their patrons with a grand entrance, situated in a way that they can “be seen” from the entire venue as they enter (Figures 63, 64). Low banquette backs and open floor plans aid in this possibility, while brighter lights illuminate those who enter. At Blue Sushi Sake Bombers, there is an enormous shift in the design from one level to the other. While there are combining elements that bring the brand story together, the best way for the space to be evaluated is as two separate entities.

Blue Sushi, a sushi restaurant with Pacific Rim inspired cuisine, is located on the street level of the venue and is more of an intimate dining space with only a few different types
of seating offered. The combination of banquette seating, floating four-tops and seats at the sushi bar, while adding to the intimacy of the space and the experience of the venue, does not provide a social space (Figure 65). This is because Sake Bombers Lounge, located upstairs, also serves food and in effect was designed to be the main social space with many different areas and types of seating primarily for large parties. Closest to the bar is a row of lounge seating with cocktail tables covered in Japanese Sake advertisements. Just behind them is a row of large free floating tables, and even further back in the space is a row of large tables, divided by screens that make them a little more private (Figure 66). There is no intimate seating upstairs, while there is only intimate seating downstairs, which provides a clear distinction between the intimate and social space of the venue. With Blue Sushi illuminated in blue and Sake Bombers Lounge illuminated in red, color variations further strengthen the concept of division which can even be seen from the outside, upon approach to the venue (Figure 67).

As for the design and branding implications seen within venue, both the main and upper levels contribute to the brand story and experience while having their own ambience. With primarily conceptual décor, the space is extremely trendy and is therefore greatly accepted by the postmodern Young Urban Professional. Blue Sushi, designed around the concept of surfing and sushi, both previously unfamiliar to the Nebraska area, is extremely successful in providing a unique experience. As mentioned before, Blue Sushi is illuminated in a blue light that gives the space a serene underwater glow, while pops of orange, suggestive of the sun, both contribute to the brand experience. Surfing and
Japanese fighting videos projected upon the back wall of the sushi bar and a large saltwater fish tank overhanging the dining room also work together in telling the brand story, while providing a level of entertainment (Figures 68, 69). Meanwhile, artwork comprised of Buddha faces and enormous sake cups lining the top of the bar back add elements of culture to the space, contributing to the Asian aspect of the concept (Figure 70). A traditional sushi bar adds a level of participation to the space, allowing patrons to eat in a traditional way, while watching the sushi be prepared. The logo is clearly displayed in the space, not only located on the back of the sushi bar, but also acting as a backdrop for the enormous saltwater tank.

Moving upstairs to Sake Bombers Lounge, the ambience changes immediately. The emission of a red glow suggests a warm social space. Sleek black leather and round white chairs suggestive of flight, along with part of an airplane hangar displaying the brand logo on the back wall give this lounge an upscale yet whimsical feel, with the concept playing off of the popular Asian drink, sake. A pinup model located on the hangar adds an element of risqué to the space which transforms the mood to one of nightlife (Figure 71).

With food and drink being of primary importance to this venue, sight and taste are the senses that primarily contribute to the experience of the Blue Sushi Sake Bombers. The décor offers a very urban setting with the incorporation of lighting effects and branded design details. A wall of premium fruit infused vodkas acting as a design element on the
main level also captivates the sense of sight, while contributing to the sense of taste once consumed (Figure 72). The combination of Pacific Rim cuisine and premium drinks mixed with the trendy yet cultural décor provides an extremely sensory and cultural experience.

The final evaluation of Blue Sushi Sake Bombers looks at the venue from a qualitative standpoint. The service is the primary contributor to the positive experience often associated with the venue. Constantly filling drinks and taking empty plates, the servers on both levels of the venue are extremely professional in making the experience of eating sushi exciting. They are eager to help in anyway and with complete knowledge of the menu, they are an important resource for those new to the sushi scene. The combination of quality in the experience from the décor to the food and drink and even the service make Blue Sushi Sake Bombers the place to be for the Postmodern Young Urban Professional.

8. Conclusion
As this research has proven, there is much to be learned from Las Vegas when it comes to designing and branding nightlife for the postmodern Young Urban Professional. Only associating themselves with the trendiest and most exclusive restaurants, bars and nightclubs, postmodern Young Urban Professionals attempt to define themselves based on their consumption of high-end branded services. Through this, they can successfully project their current lifestyle or one they hope to attain in the future, one of affluence.
Many implications surrounding programming, design, branding and qualitative variables were found during the research of Las Vegas nightlife venues that cater to the postmodern Young Urban Professional. Raised during a time of modern marketing, the combination of these implications provides the experience that they have come to expect. As shown, the design and brand concepts found in Las Vegas can be successfully implemented in other parts of the United States.

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Source: Tom Allisma
Figure 58: Parliament Pub’s Branding Upon Approach (Entry View)

Source: Tom Allisma
Figure 59: Parliament Pub’s Branding Upon Approach (Entry View)

Source: Tom Allisma
Figure 60: Parliament’s Main Design Element – A 1954 Triumph Chopper

Source: Tom Allisma
Figure 61: Parliament’s Logo Wall Surrounded by White Lion Design Features

Source: Tom Allisma
Figure 62: Parliament’s Women’s Restroom Design Features

Source: Tom Allisma
Figure 63: Blue Sushi’s Floor Plan, Omaha, Nebraska

Source: Tom Allisma
Figure 64: Sake Bombers’ Floor Plan, Omaha, Nebraska

Source: Tom Allisma
Figure 65: Blue Sushi’s Intimate Dining Area

Source: Tom Allisma
Figure 66: Sake Bombers’ Primarily Social Space

Source: Tom Allisma
Figure 67: Blue Sushi Sake Bombers Branding upon Approach

Source: Tom Allisma
Figure 68: Blue Sushi Design Element – Video Screen

Source: Tom Allisma
Figure 69: Blue Sushi Design Element – Elevated Saltwater Fish Tank

Source: Tom Allisma
Figure 70: Blue Sushi’s Cultural Design Element – Wall of Repeated Buddha Artwork

Source: Tom Allisma
Figure 71: Sake Bombers Design Element – Risqué Pinup Model on Airplane Hangar

Source: Tom Allisma
Figure 72: Blue Sushi’s Back Bar of Fruit Infused Vodka

Source: Tom Allisma