

How to Build a Compelling Experience in AT&T Flagship on Michigan Ave?

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1. Executive summary

1-1 Topic, research question, and intended audience

Given the context that e-commerce is taking massive volume of passenger traffic and revenues away from physical stores, how can physical stores take advantage of their unique assets to compete becomes an essential question to investigate. Trends like emerging technologies, customers' changing behaviors and expectations, are also playing important roles in the battle. For physical stores, learning more about their existing or potential customers and building compelling experiences by leveraging various trends, are crucial for them to survive and prosper again.

As a team of three graduate students from IIT Institute of Design, we conducted a seven-week research project on retailing experiences to address this issue. After visiting several retail stores, we decided to take AT&T flagship on Michigan Ave as a case study to investigate. AT&T is a mobile service provider that is also ambitious about being a leader in technology innovation and customer experiences. But from our observation, we think that there are still spaces for AT&T to improve to align their business goals with their actual physical stores. So through the project, we want to better understand the customers' actual experiences and expectations, and also where AT&T is doing well or still needs to invest. At the outcome of the research, we will provide recommendations to our intended audiences to improve the overall customer experiences. We will answer questions like does AT&T flagship achieve what they want to and why, what are customers' experiences in the store looks like, and how to improve them, why AT&T store (and their current use of technology/non-technology to attract people) isn't effective to create sustainable engagement, how tech/non-tech elements in a retail store encourage customer engagement and build good experiences.

Our intended audience is AT&T leadership team, but our research result can also directly benefit other stakeholders, such as customers, suppliers, company owners, store personnels and managers. We want to help AT&T learn their customers and themselves better to find existing misalignment between their ambition and reality. We will also point out potential opportunities for AT&T to attract and retain customers at the end of each sections. Our research can also benefit further research about retail spaces.

We conducted both secondary research and primary research and then organize our insights and opportunity into three themes for AT&T to invest. The three themes go deeper from "perception vs reality" to "in-store shopping experience" to "interaction in AT&T". We also generated several principles and multiple concepts in each themes for design team.

We analyzed data based on three different perspectives: high level evaluation of vision and

reality (perception vs reality), 5E framework, and interactions among human and machines. First analysis shows that customers didn't recognize the whole idea of AT&T's vision from store experiences while they perceived parts of AT&T's intentions. Second analysis shows the demonstration sections for new technologies were less utilized from customers than other areas that exist non-branding stores, and it suggests that to create much more clear instructions that convey customers the purposes of each sections in the store would help to fill the gap between AT&T's intentions and customer's understanding. Third theme argues that there are three roles of technology in the retail stores - namely, 1) technology as product 2) technology as support and 3) technology as experience. The second and the third are used to help customers to learn technology and to increase engagement of the store, and we could say the functions are similar with staff at the store. Here, an opportunity is that AT&T could redesign assignments of staff and devices to create a more orchestrated human-machine integration.

1-2 Team bio

Yanyan is a second year master's candidate at IIT's Institute of Design, concentrating on user experience, design research, planning and strategy. Before coming to ID, he studied industrial design at Dalian University of Technology in China. He is worked at multiple companies as product designer, design researcher, and also user experience designer.

Aiko is a final year student at master program of IIT Institute of Design. She studied human sciences in her undergraduate at Waseda University in Japan. Before entering ID, she worked for web design, information architecture and user experience design for an IT service company and a design agency.

Jinjia is currently a first year student in IIT Institute of Design. With his background in Industrial Design, he has certain experience in product design and user experience design. Now he is pursuing his career goal in interaction design and user experience design.

2. Summary of secondary research

Because of the prevalence of e-commerce, sales, traffic and advertising impact of physical stores drop notably[1]. Following with the increasing rent of the space, physical stores are continuously struggling with how to attract customers. In this context, leading retailers realize that creating compelling user experiences is increasingly essential in winning.

Customers' shopping behavior and modalities have evolved a lots. As an article from Marketing Science Institute says that there are five major shifts[2]. First, customers are no longer going to offline stores only for purchasing products, they are also demanding experiences now. Second, customers prefer customization instead of conformity. Third, the retails experiences change from plutocracy to democracy, because now it's much easier for customers to access some luxury brands. Fourth, customers begin to expect "new and now" which accelerate the product's development life-cycle. Fifth, customers change from self to community, and they are more sensitive to the social impact of a brand. Ask how to satisfy customers' needs is equal to ask how to win.

Also retail stores want to promote customers' social behaviors[3]. Companies long realized the importance of building strong bond with customers, but they ignore creating relationships between customers, both behavior and roles. Offline stores can change from a market space to a learning and socializing space. For example, activewear retailer Bandier created a space where people could hang out, take a barre class, and grab a juice. Buying yoga pants is an afterthought. "We're really interested in creating a reason for customers to come to the store several times a week. We're seeing people spend their entire Saturday at the store"[4], the manager said. Opportunity of future research here can be about examining customers act in groups and virtual communities.

People's expectation about the future shopping experiences is heavily influenced by some big technology trends, such as IoT, AI, VR, automobile, social media. Some think retail stores "must leverage their unique assets of sales associates to deliver an optimal in-store experience and start a one-to-one conversation with the customer after he/she leaves the store using chat-bots or AI", and "The automobile will once again change the face of retailing because they can be used for package delivery"[5]. Some recommend using social media to mold unique customer experiences, capitalize on geolocation, be authentic and make shopping fun, regardless of how it's done[6]. Also some advocate that It's time for retailers to bring the online and in-store shopping experiences together[7]. The goal is to offer customers a seamless shopping experience across multiple channels, and find the best way to combine e-commerce with in-store shopping to create a connected retail experience such as use of virtual reality.

For sure offline stores can be a true differentiator in this Amazon-centric world for multichannel retailers and brands by fulfilling customers' changing demands which online

stores can't address. So from the store entrance, to the exit and everywhere in between, it's all about creating exceptional shopper experiences at each touchpoint with customers. Nike's digital retail experience is a good example[8]. Also, social environment, service interface, retail atmosphere, assortment, price, customer experiences in alternative channels, retail brand all can influence the overall customer experience.

For AT&T that is mainly perceived as a mobile service provider, but eager to become a leader of advanced technology and customer experiences, figuring out how to take advantages of various trends is very important. Simply following others or holding a technology first mindset is far less than enough. That's why our research can be beneficial for AT&T by investigating on customers.

[1] Bloomberg Gadfly. Nov 17, 2016. Why Retail Flagships are No Longer Hot Property. Retrieved from

https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/news-analysis/why-retail-flagships-are-no-longer-hot-property?utm_source=Subscribers&utm_campaign=01b73c02af-&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d2191372b3-01b73c02af-419414589

[2] Pavel Kireyev. Sep 12, 2012. What Are the New Rules of Retailing? Retrieved from <http://www.msi.org/articles/what-are-the-new-rules-of-retailing/>

[3] Peter C. Verhoef, Katherine N. Lemon, A. Parasuraman, Anne Roggeveen, Michael Tsiros, Leonard A. Schlesinger. Customer Experience Creation: Determinants, Dynamics and Management Strategies. Journal of Retailing 85 (1, 2009) 31–41. Retrieved from https://www.rug.nl/staff/p.c.verhoef/jr_customer_experience.pdf

[4] Elizabeth Segran. Jun 17, 2016. In The Graveyard Of American Malls Bandier Is Reimagining The Brick And Mortar Store. Retrieved from <https://www.fastcompany.com/3058697/in-the-graveyard-of-american-malls-bandier-is-reimagining-the-brick-and-mortar-store>

[5] Michael Hsieh. Aug 2, 2016. High-tech updates to the retail experience. Retrieved from <https://techcrunch.com/2016/08/02/high-tech-updates-to-the-retail-experience/>

[6] Daniel Newman. Apr 19, 2016. How Social And Digital Create The New Retail Experience. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/danielnewman/2016/04/19/how-social-and-digital-create-the-new-retail-experience/#76b6c05a4386>

[7] Building a Better Shopping Experience. Retrieved from <http://www.nurun.com/en/our-thinking/future-of-retail/building-a-better-shopping-experience/>

[8] Nike Digital Retail Experience. <http://demodern.com/projects/nike-digital-retail-experience>

3. Methodology

Our research process is iterative and we also refers to grounded theories[1]. Our data collection and analysis are interrelated processes, and we refined our research topic and questions alongside the collection and analysis of the data. We built themes from data and relationships between themes by affinity mapping. By adding and comparing new data to our existing database, we regroup data to find new themes and eliminate old ones. By doing this, we narrowed our topic which was very broad and vague at the beginning down to an actionable and meaningful direction.

The time span for our project is seven weeks, and we used multiple research methods according to different situations and research phases to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. After we decided to take retail spaces as our topic, we used the first week to conduct secondary research. Secondary research is important at the beginning of a project because it can not only narrow down our topic, but also provide insights for our field research.

In the second week, we conducted field observation in 10 different stores in Michigan Ave, Chicago, and took plenty of notes and photos. We tried to learn more about general experiences in different kinds of stores, instead of narrowing down our topic too soon and lost interesting aspects. After collecting and analysing the data, we decided to take AT&T flagship as a case study because we think AT&T have difficulties to attract enough visitors and their displays are rarely used by customers.

In the third week, we did another round of secondary research about AT&T and invited two interviewees to the field and observe them. We conducted observation and contextual inquiry to learn their behaviors and then conducted follow-up interviews to learn their thoughts and attitudes. We used probes in the interview process to elicit them to talk more about their experiences. We also interviewed one managers and two personnels to learn the vision of AT&T. We also observed customers' behaviors in a quantitative way and mapped the data into a temporal-spatial mapping[2] to supplement our qualitative data and reveal behavioral patterns.

After collecting data, in the fourth and fifth week, we modeled our data and generated some insights by affinity map. We formed three theme from the affinity map. Then we conducted more secondary research to support our themes and insights.

[1]Corbin, Juliet M, & Strauss, Anselm. (1990). Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative Sociology*, 13(1), 3-21.

[2]Nippert-Eng, Christena. *Watching Closely: A Guide to Ethnographic Observation*. Oxford University Press. 2015

4. Overview of research instruments used and raw data collection

We continuously refined our research instruments following the progress of the project. After all we collected a big amount of data from different methods and multiple resources. The data includes secondary research data, such as market trends of retail stores, usage of emerging technologies in retail spaces, social behaviors in retail spaces, changing behaviors of customers, theories about good experience and environment of retail spaces, AT&T's vision and strategy, etc.

We also collected a big amount of primary data, including observation data (images, notes, sketches) from 10 retail stores on Michigan Ave, which is organized by AEIO, observation data from shadowing 2 participants which is organized chronologically, interview data from contextual inquiry which is organized chronologically, interview data from interviewing 2 participants after observation, interview data from intercepting 3 personnels in AT&T, returned probes collected from participants, mapping data which is collected from observing customers' behaviors in AT&T flagship in a particular period of time to reveal patterns in the store, and also quantitative data about customers location, number, moving patterns which is organized chronologically. The data is enough for us to find patterns and come up with insights, but we also think more participants are needed if we want to go deeper.

5. Three themes and insights from data analysis

5-1 Introduction

After collecting data by various methods, we organized the data into three themes based on different scale from strategic level to implement level: perception vs reality, in-store shopping experience, and interaction in the store.

The first theme focusing on finding the gap between the new AT&T brand value and customer's perception about the new AT&T brand. The second aims at finding better practice to convey the new brand and services concepts to the customers. And the third theme deals with the issues while customers interacting with the environment, devices and people in the store.





We think those themes are important for AT&T to investigate and invest if they want to achieve their business objectives. We will talk about them in details in the following sessions.

5-2 Theme 1: Perception vs Reality

Perception vs. Reality

Here we analysed AT&T Michigan avenue store from the perspective of (1)what AT&T says, (2)what AT&T does and (3)what customer felt. (1)what AT&T says analysis based on information from the corporate website [1] as well as press release[2] and store staff interviews. Data for (2)what AT&T were from store observation and organized based on AEIOU framework. (3)what customer felt data came from the interview sessions at store visit.

Perception vs reality

<p>What AT&T says</p> <p>From the corporate website, press release and store staff interviews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AT&T is a communication company. Michigan ave store is a brand store; customers see AT&T is leading in wireless technology and makes people's lives better. Customers can interact and buy product while experience evolving wireless technology. Lifestyle is another theme; customers can see how the technology fit their lifestyle. Selling customer experience; designed from the design and layout of the store, to display of products and services, to the in-store technology and store staff. 	<p>"Connect people with their world, everywhere they live, work and play ... and do it better than anyone else." (AT&T Company Profile)</p> <p>"Customers can touch, feel and see how our latest devices and apps will fit their lifestyles, whether they're interested in fitness or music, entertainment or family." (Michigan Avenue store Press release)</p>	<p>What AT&T says vs does</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Michigan ave store is basically an embodiment of AT&T's intention; customers can see many wireless products and demonstration of future technology. Mock-ups and curated display created lifestyle feelings. Sales staff are well trained
<p>What AT&T does</p> <p>From store observation</p>	<p>Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Store staff navigated customers based on their purpose at the entrance. Customers who want to consult with store staff talked at the desks in center Customers visited individual sections of demonstrations There were special events that introduce products in certain lifestyles (ex. dog owners) <p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volume of background music was high Seasonal decorations created a change in environment Store had clear zoning of tech product display, consultation with store staff, demonstration of connected life and learning space about AT&T. <p>Interactions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heavy customer service; there were more store staff than customers; each of them have roles to navigate customers; they don't push to buy Demonstrations simulated context of use. Connected life demonstration using technology and mock-ups of residential spaces <p>Objects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some displays were curated; not only products itself but displayed together with related styled accessories and books. People tried interactive tech products. Some of them were display only. 	 <p>People can see its seasonal decorations from outside</p>  <p>The combination of kitchen mock-ups and products helps people understand context of use of the product</p>  <p>Sets of similar styled products and books creates curated feelings</p>  <p>Clear zoning: products (left), demonstration (right), consultation (center), learning (front)</p>	<p>What AT&T says + does vs customer's experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Even though customers perceived parts of AT&T's intentions, they didn't see the integrated idea. The store experience didn't change customer's mental model about what AT&T is doing.
<p>What customers felt</p> <p>From the test session</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers understood and appreciated individual products and customer service but didn't understand overall vision of the brand. Technology caught customers' attentions while they lost interests when it's contents were boring, not very relevant or its interface was hard to use. Customers felt history areas as a museum. Some of the display (the cubic showcase) were considered as selling a lifestyle. 	<p>"I didn't notice of big picture of what AT&T wants to promote, only find some details such as car navigation. AT&T should emphasize the topic, and parts should support the topic."</p> <p>"They are selling lifestyle, not product or service. The cubic showcase in the front. It shows a modern lifestyle instead of products to be sold. It not only display some small trendy products but also some fancy widgets like wallets and watches."</p>	

What AT&T says vs. does

Considering our observation at the store and what AT&T released, we could say that the Michigan ave store is basically an embodiment of AT&T's intention in following senses;

- AT&T says it is a brand store; in the store, they offer display in the way that customers can see and try many wireless products and demonstration of future technology. Meanwhile, some of demonstration videos are fairly basic level such as just explanation of the function but not let people simulate how it works.
- It is featuring "lifestyle"; the store holds special events that introduce products in certain lifestyles, and mock-ups and curated display in the store created lifestyle feelings. It has kitchen, living room and car mock-ups and it helped to simulate actual environment to use of the connected technology. Some displays were curated. That mean they are not only products itself but displayed together with related styled accessories and books.
- It is selling customer experience; sales staff are well trained and there are several zonings for different purposes such as demonstration areas, consultation areas,

gallery and display areas. Each of Sales staff had roles to navigate customers and they don't push to buy.

What AT&T says + does vs. customer's experience

In contrast, how far customers understood what they are offered by AT&T was not straightforward. Customers, who visited the store at the first time, perceived parts of AT&T's intentions while they didn't see the integrated idea. Customers recognized individual efforts of AT&T; customers appreciated individual products and customer service and some of the display (the cubic showcase) were considered as selling a lifestyle. Here, content and usability of the display mattered to the customer satisfaction when people try out the technology. However, they didn't understand why AT&T is offering connected lifestyle. Two factors might be affected this issue; one is there are no explanation of AT&T's vision in the store. Another factor would be AT&T's domain is shifting from a communication company as they are buying media company and invest in IoT technology[3]. If Apple store does the similar arrangement people will less likely to have problems with understanding its intention because Apple already propose their vision in a very clear way in its conferences and the domain is not shifting. We would think about short-term and long-term recommendations to address this issues.

Recommendations

Short-term recommendations

In order to create a better connection between the vision of AT&T and consumer's mental model, the store should provide displays that convey messages of the vision and how AT&T is changing from a providing just network for consumers in the store.

Long-term recommendations — *redefining and developing the role of the store*

From secondary research, we found the shift in values of shopping experience; people are seeking experience than buying products[4]. What if we emphasize the store's role as a learning and socializing space, what features could be developed? The AT&T flagship store already has socializing and learning functions; they offers events that people can socialize and the demo spaces as well as the history area provide learning experiences. The demonstrations featuring connected future life were composed of multimedia (such as interactive screens, video), mock-ups of residential spaces and digital/non-digital products. This design are well suited for the offerings they sell — ubiquitous technology that are difficult to have tangibility and therefore hard to find utility in a first sight — and demonstrations are supposed to help consumers to simulate how the technology fit in their daily life. However, currently contents of the multimedia still remain in basic explanation of the services and don't reach to the level of convincing cases. Since usage of the connected lifestyle is a still developing area and therefore it is expected that it is difficult to propose very sharp usage for AT&T.

One way for this issue might be to create co-learning experience with consumers. Similar with the concept of *living labs*, how about to engage with consumers and explore the usage and scenarios with them. Living labs are defined as “user-centred, open innovation

ecosystems based on a systematic user co-creation approach integrating research and innovation processes in real life communities and settings”[5] and require active user involvement and co-creation[6]. It is appropriate to help selling new technology because meaning is constructed through dialogue of both users and designers in the sense that Gunn et. al mentioned that “the way concepts are developed, produced, and communicated always has reference to constructions of context”[7]. Also, including aspects of research, knowledge production, and evaluation as part of a participation is not new idea; it is used in international development field[8]. Taking these ideas, the store could offer consumers opportunities to participate of exploring of the technology and apply the scenarios they created to the communication of new technology adaptations and product development. The store could have co-creation sessions using live technology with consumers as well as collecting user’s thoughts by setting feedback forms next to the demonstrations. The explanatory video would be more scenario-based story from user’s point of view than pure explanation of how it works and benefits. Also, customers would be able to learn each other about future technology usage and socialize.

[1] AT&T’s company profile <http://www.att.com/gen/investor-relations?pid=5711>

[2] Michigan Avenue store press release

<http://www.att.com/gen/press-room?pid=23251&cdvn=news&newsarticleid=35277&mapcode=>

[3] For example, Higginbotham, Stacey. AT&T's plan for the Internet of things goes way beyond the network. Fortune. Sep 15, 2015. Retrieved from

<http://fortune.com/2015/09/15/att-internet-of-things/>

[4] Kireyev, Pavel. What Are the New Rules of Retailing? Market Science Institute. Sep 12, 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.msi.org/articles/what-are-the-new-rules-of-retailing/>

[5] About us. European Network of Living Labs. <http://www.openlivinglabs.eu/aboutus>

[6] Frequently Asked Questions. European Network of Living Labs.

<http://www.openlivinglabs.eu/FAQ>

[7] Gunn, Wendy, Otto, Ton, & Smith, Rachel Charlotte. (2013). Design anthropology: theory and practice. New York: Bloomsbury.

[8] Kelty, Chris. (2016). “Participatory.” In Digital Keywords: A Vocabulary of Information Society and Culture, edited by Ben Peters. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

5-3 Theme 2: Eliminating the sense of distance

AT&T is trying to transform from a traditional mobile service company to an integrated communications company. During this process, it is inevitable for the customers to have a sense of distance about the changing brand identity and services. This hypothesis also fits with our observation in the store and indicates that we need to design the communication

process that helps consumers to dispel the sense of distance and accept the new AT&T brand.

In this research, we use 5E structure to categorize our data in different phases of people's journey to a retail store. And we divide the data into four phases: attract, guide, engage and reminisce, in order to find out what element give rise to the sense of distance.

Attract: creating a more welcoming atmosphere

The Chicago AT&T flagship store is the first and one of the two flagship stores in US. It is well-designed and work as a showcase to show everybody about the new AT&T brand. But from our observation, some of the design is so high-end that may drive some customers away while some other design is still not attractive enough to arouse people's interest.

Lack of branding effect

AT&T is a well-known brand and has good reputation among the consumers. But comparing to other hot retail brands on the North Michigan Avenue like Apple, Nike, or Disney, AT&T has a pale branding effect. This is fit to our observation that when stores like Apple, Nike and Disney on North Michigan Avenue are packed with customers, there's less population in AT&T flagship store even in busy hour.

Though branding effect is a complex topic and involve different aspect, it is an issue for AT&T to consider.

Make the environment welcoming

The design of store entrance is one of the factors that works to attract customers into the store. We visit several stores in commercial area and find some attractive example: The Apple retail store's entrance and its well-known glass façade, the Nike store entrance with two-story high sport posters, the entrance of Disney which full of cartoon figures all over the wall and floor. Comparing to the entrances of other stores, the entrance of AT&T flagship store is more like a traditional store with normal revolution door. Normal and not attractive.

The interior design of AT&T flagship store is modern and high-tech. In our interview, S continuously mentioned about the store is "fancy". And also she thinks it is a bit much for a tech related company to build up the "fancy" image. In some point, the environment even impedes customers coming into the store.

The other interviewee X mentions that the design and decoration is luxury and he thinks it is not a place for him to come. He thinks the design style implies the store tend to welcome people of higher class. The store's delicate design and a handful of customers make him feel a sense of distance too.

This founding indicates that people may have different perception about the brand identity when they entering the same store. And customers will prefer the store that fits his class. So

there's an opportunity for AT&T to research about their main customer body and create a welcoming and comprehensive experience while people is entering the store.

Insight

For the entire phase, a trendy brand image is critical to invite customers to visit the offline stores. AT&T should keep building up a stronger and trendy brand image like Apple to attract more customers.

Also, the design of the entrance is the first step to attract consumers. It is beneficial for AT&T flagship store to redesign their entrance and make it different. Besides, customers are more willing to visit the store while the style and design of the store match their social status. AT&T should keep its design style fit to their main customer group.

Guide: leading people to the new AT&T

Since AT&T is changing its position from traditional mobile service provider to an integrated communications company with advanced mobile services, next-generation TV, high-speed internet and smart solutions for people and businesses.

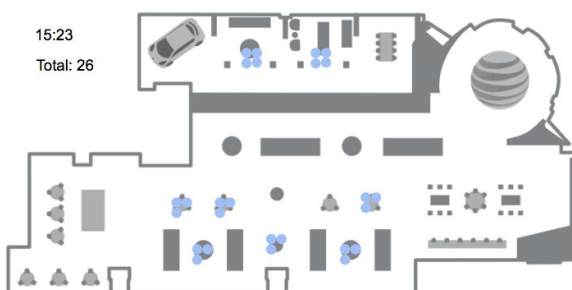
This transformation introduces more features into the AT&T flagship store, and making it more challenging for designers to create better experience when guiding customers to what they want or what they are interested.

Arouse customers' interest

According to the building plan of the AT&T flagship store, the space is divided into Explorer Lounge, Lifestyle Boutiques, Experience Platform and The Gallery.

The Lifestyle Boutiques includes, Chicagoland, Share Your Life, Be Productive and Get Fit. The Experience Platform includes Street Smart, Jam Session, Now Showing and Family Life. The former focuses on introducing new products that fit with the current lifestyle trends. And the latter is more about how AT&T's cutting-edge technology and service help people to create a better future life.

Though there are various products and services provided in the AT&T flagship store, more customers are still focusing on the mobile phone and the mobile service. From our



they can inquire the staff with mobile services and the product display shelves. By contrast, there are few less people in the area where showcase the variety of current AT&T services or the history of AT&T. This implies that people are still stick to the old image of telecommunication companies like AT&T that they only sell mobile

phone and mobile service. They need more guidance to encourage them exploring the new section.

Also, people are less conscious about the different sections. In our field note there's not much sign or instructions that distinguish these sections. And, some of the area are being used for different purposes, like, people like to rest in the Experience Platform because there's sofa and chairs. Two customers in our observation sitting and napping in the Jam Session for more than one hour.

This finding shows that despite the sections are well designed, people do not understand the purpose of the section. The Experience Platform do not have enough content to draw people's attention. And people do not learn much from those sections.

Guide customers properly

The service level is closely related to the customer experience. And customers tend to have better shopping experience if the service is beyond their expectation. Interviewer J and interviewee S went to the AT&T flagship store at 11 a.m. when it just opened. They are greeted by the associate manager T and lead them to walk around the store. When S shown some interest on a drone, manager T directly led them to the back of the store and show them a new one which he took from the storeroom. In the following interview, S said she was amazed by the service because she thought the manager T knew that they would not buy the drone but he still shown great enthusiasm when introducing it.

Insight

Though there's much efforts on the interior design of the AT&T flagship store to showcase the new AT&T brand, there's not enough instruction to guide customers to go through these sections and also there's lack of attractive contents for customers to explore. As a result, consumers is afraid of and do not want to approach this section. AT&T should consider having more staff and design better visual instruction to help customers exploring the new section and learning about the new AT&T brand.

Service level beyond customers' expectation could largely increase their experience. To achieve this, AT&T need to know about their competitors' service level and create a better and unique service. Providing better experience not only create a better image for customers to remember, but also make them more willing to explore and make purchase in the store.

Engage

In this phase customers explore and interact with the products and interaction devices in the store. The following Theme 3 will be specific on how customers interact with the products and devices in the store. Also it will talk about customer's interaction with staff, other customers and the environment.

Reminisce: making things memorable

In this phase customers left the store but they still have a comprehensive impression of the branding, environment, products, and service of the store.

Make unique memory

Compare to other store, the AT&T flagship store has larger space and better environment. One of our interviewees said she never been to a mobile provider store like this. From her previous experience the mobile service provider only sells service and cell phone. But in AT&T flagship store, they are selling a lot of products besides cell phone which implies that it is trying to tell story and sell lifestyle to customers instead of selling single products.

The experience in AT&T store differentiate it with other mobile service providers, making a deeper impression to the customers.

Provide tangible memory

In some other stores, they will give customers little gifts like caps, postcards and stickers with the brand on it and most of the customers tend to accept and keep the gift. When customers take this souvenirs back home, this tangible gift can recall their memory about the store. It can also work as a media to transit brand identity to the customers. Also the gift plays as a positive figure with helps brands to make a better impression to customers.

Insight

Customers may have a deeper impression about the store if it can provide good experience and distinguish itself from other competitors. The AT&T flagship store focusing on building the experience instead of selling products, so that it can provide a unique experience to customers which different from its competitors.

Also providing tangible gift with brand name can also help making better experience and impression after customers left the shore.

Conclusion

By analysing customer's in-store journey: attract, guided, engage and reminisce, we find some opportunities for AT&T to better promote its new brand and services to customers. First, AT&T need to create a more welcoming environment for mass consumers instead of keeping a stylish, high-end image. Second, it is beneficial to provide more instruction and contents for the new features so that customers can better understand the new AT&T brand. Last but not the least, creating a unique and long-lasting experience to impress consumers.

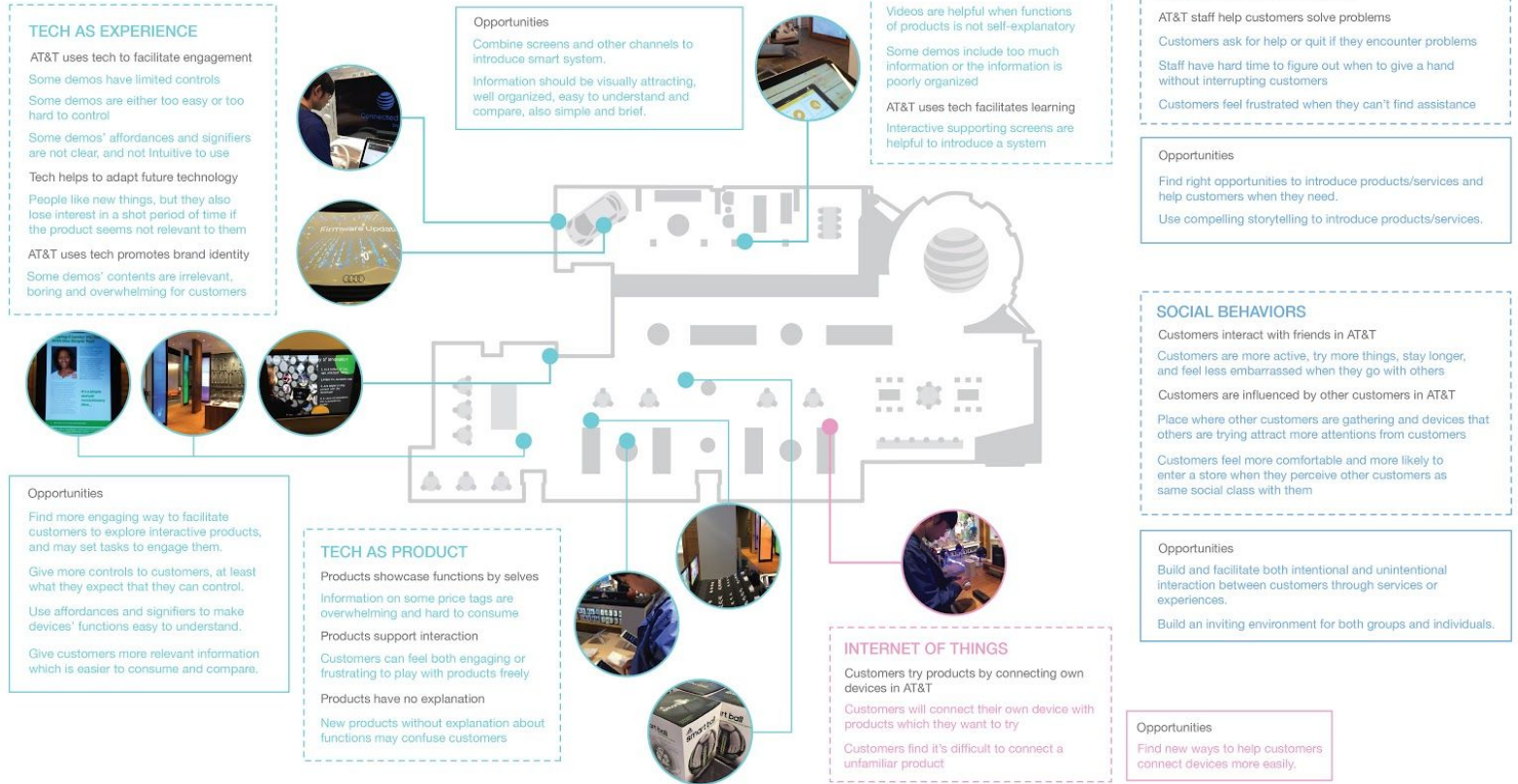
5-4 Theme 3: Interaction Issues in AT&T Flagship

Interaction is the most important component for customers' in-store experiences. Customers not only interact with machines, they also communicate with people. Following the fast development of Internet of things, users can easily connect their devices to demo products in stores. All three kinds of interactions can influence customers' overall experiences dramatically which we will talk about in details In this section.

In the research process, we didn't only observe what our interviewees did, but also asked them why they didn't use certain devices or product to get insights from nonusers' perspective[1]. This gave us some interesting insights and design opportunities. Also, people's relationship with each other and technology somehow reflects the changing culture[2] and theory of social practice[3]. People's expectations are changed by technology, but technology and customer service can't totally support their needs. People and technology are influencing each other and the dynamic is continuously changing. Customers also become participates in experiential stores[4] where they can influence each other's behaviors. Also we took a situated approach[5] to investigate interaction, which means different people with different goals may have different understanding of a same interaction. This also reflects the theory of decolonizing the design[6] which means the design in the store should be more open to people who are not viewed as a potential customers. Then algorithm[7] and designing for machine users can be an interesting topic to investigate.

INTERACTION IN AT&T'S FLAGSHIP

Interaction is an important component of the whole in-store experience. After investigating in AT&T flagship, we find three kinds of interaction happening in the store (list on the right), which can influence customers' overall experiences. Staff in AT&T are helpful, and some technology is also fancy. But the biggest problem for AT&T is how to use their resources to engage customers. What AT&T is providing and what customers really want are somehow misaligned, so finding out the misalignments and fixing them can be really important.



Interaction Between People in AT&T

This can happen between customers and staff, and also between customers and customers. This kind of interaction mostly involves human actors, but may also support or be supported by technology usage. Sometimes customers even can't notice their behaviors are influenced by strangers, which is observed several times in the research process.

1. Interaction between customers and staff in AT&T

This always takes form of customer service. Staff mainly service as showcasing how to use technology, introduce product and technology by words, and also help customer solve problems.

Staff help customers to learn how to use a device by showing or leading them through the interaction process. When J went to the AT&T flagship with his interviewee S, there was a staff showing them how to use a product named Petzi in Toy Town. This product is a smart device for pet owners to interact with their pets, but all the researchers and interviewees didn't notice it at all before this visit. This device is embedded in a smart home section which is not very visible. The staff's demo helps them to learn about the functions and special features of Petzi. This also happened in T-Mobile store, the staff try to show Y's interviewees X how to control the voice boxes by a touch screen. There is also a special example happening in Sephora, where customers can reserve a 15-minute make-up session with staff in the store, where they can really try the product in a customized way.

Staff also purely introduce by words instead of really manipulating the product. When J and S went to the AT&T flagship, the store manager Tony led them to the present tree, and introduced the products on that tree. In this situation, Tony didn't really showcase them how to use the product, but instead, he described the use case and functions by words. When Y was in Best Buy looking at camera, there was a staff asking him if he need any help. Y refused him first and then tried to ask him for help. The staff used some technical words which were hard to understand, but he also explained the advantage and usage case of the camera which he recommended clearly. Y got a overview of the product, though he didn't try it by self.

Staff also help customer solve problems. Customers always have problem when they interact with different devices. When Y and X went to the store, X didn't know how to connect his phone with a product, so he asked for help. He tried to talk with a guy nearby him, but found that he is a security. Then X tried to find some other staff, and finally Tony came to help. Although Tony couldn't connect X's phone with the device directly, he worked with X together to figure out how to do that. When X entered the store of T-Mobile, a staff began to follow X and coach him about how to use the product. But then he began to ask X does he use T-Mobile phone for several times. After the field visit, X reflected on his experience in two different stores, and he said "I don't like the feeling that I can't find help when I need, but also don't like people try to help me when I don't have any problems".

2. Interaction between customers and customers in AT&T

The interaction between customers involve deliberate interaction and also unconscious influence, which can both influence customers' behaviors and feelings.

Customers may choose to go to into AT&T with somebody else and they behavior may change because they have accompany. When X was in the AT&T flagship. X said he won't enter some luxury stores without accompany, and he will feel more comfortable to enter fancy stores. Otherwise he may feel a little awkward. This also happened when J, Y, and A visited the Verizon store, J and A played a game in front a big screen which can censor players' motion. After leaving the field, A mentioned she won't use that device if she was

here by herself. People may be more active and open to try new things when they have accompany.

Customers' behaviors can also be changed because of other customers in AT&T. Customers intend to move to where other customers are gathering, and there are always people watching other's use demo. Our temporal-spatial mapping also reveals this pattern. X mentioned he feels good and safe if the customers in a store wear similar clothes with him, because that implies other customers are in the same social level, which further implies the store is for people in his social level. This also happened in other stores. There was a man observing other customers watching a demo in Best Buy. Also when the research team is in T-Mobile, a boy was playing a VR device. There is a digital wall nearby the user which can showcase the perspective from the VR user. After the boy began to move and marvel at his feeling greatly, there were more and more people gathering around the screen watching the boy playing. Also his father took over his son's VR device after observed his son for few minutes, and he refused to return the VR device back to his son, though his son wanted it back.

Human to Machine interaction in AT&T

As a high-tech experiential store, AT&T flagship provides customers plenty of devices to play with. Initially, we think that technology can support the in-store experience, but then we think that it's more appropriate to say that technology is a part of the overall experiences. Following with people's developing expectation with technology, technology now can fully affect people's sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual experiences in different ways. Technology is also playing different roles in experiential stores, such as product, support or experience which should provide different interactions to fulfill customers' needs, and I will address this in details.

1. Technology as product

Although A&T defines itself as an experiential store, it's still trying to sell products. AT&T's high-tech products range from smartphone to smart home product, and also including emerging new application such as smart ball (a smart soccer or a smart football teaches users how to play the sport) and smart pet feeding system. Different with traditional consumer products, functions of these devices are always invisible by purely showing their physical forms. Challenges also come with the requirement to demo these products.

The first kind of products can be demoed by simply turning them on. Their functions are very straightforward and don't require complicated interaction to showcase. When X was wandering in AT&T flagship, he was attracted by a projector which was projecting on a small screen, and he said "interesting" after observing it for a few minutes. TV demo belongs to this kind of demo. TVs in different sizes are turned on at the same time in Best Buy. Customers can easily decide which one to purchase depends on their size and resolution.

This kind of demo is suitable for products which don't need complicated interaction, such as TV and project. If the store wants to showcase some complicated products in this way, at least they need some support technology to introduce the potential use case of that product, such as a screen demonstrating a short introduction video, which we will talk in details then.

Ideally, the other kind of products should be manipulated by customers to fully showcase its full functions. Smartphone, sound box, VR glasses are all representatives of this kind of products. When showcasing this kind of products, stores usually leave the device on desk to be used by customers freely. In AT&T store, X tried two different kinds sound boxes to compare their sound qualities. X also played a game on a iPad. When Y and X visited the T-Mobile store, a kid was play a VR glasses in front of his family. This kind of product sometimes can be hard to demo, so there are always personnels wandering around in the store waiting to help customers to use the products. The VR demo mentioned before needs a special staff demoing to customers all the time and customers can't play it without supervision. But when there are no staff helping, using the demo can be random and a little confusing. There are also instructions embedded inside the product itself. Apple products in Apple store have embedded instructions inside products to guide customers walk through the functions. Some stores also use some simple introduction tags to introduce how to interact with products, which can be seen all the time in Best Buy, such as the Nest products in Best Buy is introduced by tags. Also there are some supporting devices to help introduce the product, this kind of demo will be discussed in the following section.

2. Technology as support

As mentioned in previous section, high-tech products demonstrated in experiential stores may need customers to conduct intuitive interaction to fully experience the functions. staff are not always available and customers are not always want to interact with staff, so supporting devices to help demonstrate those products can be an important part of the in-store experiences. This function can be also conducted by an instrument paper attach to the product, so how to use technology to promote the experiences of customers to consume information in a new way is very challenging and necessary.

Content, control and signifiers are main components of experience while using supporting devices (also when technology works as experience). Content means the information about products and how to use the products, such as the supporting devices in Best Buy always provide tons of information about how to use products. Most of the time, this kind of devices are simply screens which can play a demo video. But some of them can be a little more interactive. Sephora has a nice device where the scent of perfume is the content. Customers can really smell the perfume after they choose which kind of perfume they want to try by a screen. This is a interesting way to use different sense as content other than visual. Some products are their own supporting products, because they have a screen where they can show how to be used.

Control means how easily a person can control a device, this includes how to start a device, can customers opt out or stop the demo, how to control voice volume and video speed, etc. In Verizon, there is a bicycle and screen in Fitbit demo area. But customers need a staff to start the demo for them. Also in Best Buy, a demo of how to use a voice box is very loud and can't be stopped. Sephora's makeup simulator is a device not only easy to control but also interesting to interact with. The device can put the makeup directly on customers face on a digital screen. The screen in Verizon near the phone display is fancy but very hard to interact with. Customers need push very hard to trigger the interaction and latencies is very long, too.

Affordance[8], means property or set of cues that indicate to a customers of how to interact with an object or feature. Take the interactive screen in Best Buy for example, some screen looks like touchable but actually not, some are opposite, looks like untouchable but touchable, which is very confusing. The supporting devices for the sound box in Best Buy have several buttons, there are small tags under each button to tell people what is the function for each button. Nike store has lots of screen to show detailed information of different shoes. These screens are easy to use but still need some learning. When customers choose a button named "call for help" the edges of the screen will glow orange light, which is a very weak signifier that it even didn't notice it existed, so he pushed the button several times because he couldn't find the feedback. In Apple store, there is a little kids struggled to reach a table which is almost same high with him to play with a Apple phone. Although this seems more like an accessibility issue, but the affordance of the table means the products on it is for adults, not kids.

3. Technology as experience

As experiential stores, AT&T stores and other stores have a lot of experiential devices for customers to interact with to improve customer engagement. This kind of devices mostly are interactive screens in different sizes. But there are also reality based interaction devices, such as the huge motion capture screen in T-Mobile. The basic components of experiential technology is pretty the same as supporting technology, but because experiential technology has no practical functionality (supporting technology is helping customers to learn more about the products), the engagement is much harder and important for customers.

When customers interact with this kind of devices, they are more or less consuming information from the devices. S said the experiential devices are all boring because the content is boring and not relevant, where she was referring to the information the devices provide. The same thing also happened to X, but in a more interesting way. There are 4 pillar with full-size touchable screen in AT&T flagship, which looks really fancy and attractive. But when X was visiting the store, he passed by the pillars several times but never paid any attention to them. After visiting the store, Y asked X if he noticed those pillar screens, X said yes. When Y asked X why he didn't try to interact with them, he said he knew the content must be boring. This is always true because in a comparatively period time of observation, J found very few people actually interact with the pillar screens. Also an interesting thing is that

X paid lots of attention to the physical display of historical stuff, but when the same content is moved into the digital world, he just simply ignored it. X mentioned he thinks the technology should all support products, instead of showing irrelevant information. Visual is also brought up by X, when he talked about why he gave up trying the car navigation demo, because the interface is ugly and information is competing with each other, he doesn't know where to begin and focus.

Control is also an important component here. The worst scenario is customer can't control the devices at all, which is more like a technical issue rather than a design problem. When J, Y, and A visited Verizon, there is a huge movie captured screen. J and A were trying to play the game, but A can't control her character at all. Although J can control his character somehow, but he can barely control it precisely. Sometime customers need to ask for assistance to try something, such as there is a treadmill in Nike store which needs an assistant to turn for customers. Also sometimes customers can't fully control an experiential device such as the car navigation device, customer only can control part of the whole experiences. Opting out sometimes can also be hard to process, such as one of touchable screen in T-Mobile, once a customer begins a video, he/she doesn't really know how to stop it, so they can only leave it unstopped. Also control can be too easy for customers. When X mentioned about why he gave up playing with the car navigation devices, he mentioned he thinks the control is too easy so he lost interests.

The affordance is also important for improving customer experiences. How to use it, and even when to use it would be obvious. Take the screen in T-Mobile for example, there is a big screen which customers can take a picture with predefined background and send them to customers by message or email. Also there are some company information embedded in that system, such as where the T-Mobile service can work. When X visited the store, he passed by the machine because he didn't know it's a device you can interact with, he thought it's just a display screen. Who to use usually is implied by the size of devices. For example, in Disney store, there was an adult sitting in a chair drawing something which is obviously for kids. From an observer's point of view, this can be awkward. Compared with the kid in Apple store, we can see different stores are targeting on certain kinds of customers both with or without deliberation.

Machine to Machine interaction in AT&T

With the development of IoT, more and more devices begin to talk with each other through internet, bluetooth, geolocation and etc. There is a blog talking about the potential of using geolocation to send in-store customers notification. Although the research team hasn't seen that level of application of IoT, there are still some in-store touchpoints involve machine to machine interaction. When X was in AT&T flagship, he connects his phone with a sound box to play music with it. There are two ways of connection, with wire or wireless. X was an experienced user, so he could connect his phone with the sound box easily without difficulties. This kind of machine to machine interaction is still based on customers'

deliberate behaviors so far. Users need to pull out their personal devices and connect them with demo products. The whole process still need customers' experiences to achieve. If the customers are less experienced, it's not easy for them to connect the two devices together. Although X could connect with one product easily, he encountered difficulties when he tried to connect with the other product he was not familiar with, so he needed a staff to help them.

So how to make the connection between devices more user-friendly can be a good question to ask. Indicators on products can be a potential solution. Supportive screens can be helpful. But neither of them are satisfying.

Discussion

Interaction is an important component of the whole in-store experience. After we collected data from field observation and conversation with both customers and store manager and staff, we think it's appropriate to organize these data into this three categories according to actors involved in the interaction. There are still strong connections between these three categories, such as customer service always support the interaction between customers and devices. After organizing data in this way, we can map out what's happening more easily, and prepare for the analysis phase and assist with generating insights related to interaction experiences.

After all, engagement is a higher level of the components mentioned before. There are some engaging interaction examples in the research process which can cover certain categories at the same time. For example, the makeup simulator in Sephora, which is engaging because people can learn about the product through gaming. Although the definition of engagement is elusive sometimes, a good experience is always based on good usability, such as content, control and affordance. Technology is applied more frequently in retail space, but there is no systematically to define the role of technology in a retail space. What's more, interaction can also happen between people and between machines, which can also be designed carefully to improve customer engagement. Sephora is a good example of how to make customer service more engaging by providing the 15-min makeup service.

Conclusion

The opportunity space of interaction for AT&T is also in these three categories. For customer service, staff need to learn when to involve into a conversation with a customers without bothering or ignoring them. Also AT&T should facilitate people in the store to interact with each other in both intentional and unintentional way. Both individuals and groups should be paid attention to and they may have different needs.

Because customers can have problems connect their devices to the products in the store, thinking about how to make this easier can be beneficial. Also with the development of IoT,

maybe devices can talk with devices even without the notice of users, such as recommendation by geolocation.

AT&T's effort to create unique experience for customers by technology should be praised, but there are still design issues existing. At first, the information, no matter on screen or on price tag, is always overwhelming. To address this problem, we should think about how to make the information visually attractive, easy to understand and consume in a short time, simple and brief. Also the information on device should be relevant to customers, a video about AT&T's history surely won't attract many people. Second, screen is a good way to communicate information but not all. Some new products such as smart ball need better way to demo. Also some devices' affordances are not intuitive, people don't know what they can interact with or how to do that. At last, control can be a problem. There are some devices don't match customers' expectations, such as the steering wheel can't be controlled. Customers like to explore by themselves, but also incline to quit when they find the control is too easy, or they simply think that they already know everything about the product. So opportunity here is how to keep customers in a right flow, neither too easy nor too hard for them to explore. Maybe some tasks to challenge users can be an engaging way.

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5-5 Conclusion

The three themes go from a big picture to experience to interaction, because we want to provide AT&T different levels of insights. The first theme is at a strategic level and talks about the vision of AT&T. In this level, there's opportunity for AT&T flagship store to change its role

as as a learning and socializing space and create co-learning experience with consumers. The second theme is more about overall user experiences at each touch points alongside the journey. Some good practices can be applied in each process of the journey and help customers to have a better understanding about the new AT&T brand. The third theme is more about usability which is easiest to improve, including the interaction and content of the products and devices in the store. And how staff can better communicate with customers and introducing products to them.

After all, the three theme provide AT&T a strategic roadmap for achieving its business objectives. And AT&T can take a step-by-step process to transform form detail implement to branding strategy.

6. Reflection of the process

// Aiko

What worked?

Observing many different stores in a few days worked as a way to gather a good amount of information quickly. Also, it made us easier to make a comparison because we have many different kind of samples to think of.

What were challenges?

To decide the selection of store, criteria to choose right selection were difficult. It is also connected to decide the scope of the research. If we narrow the scope only in mobile providers, it'll be easier to choose the target of the observation. However, through the research I feel what broaden my mind was observation at a not directly connected stores (such as Dylan's candy bar). I think observing similar kind of objects are good for evaluation and finding problems while to look at similar activity in different domain will be good for getting inspiration for making ideas.

//Jinja

What were challenges?

For large brands, the staffs may be cautious about the interview and provide some "safe" answers. So it is challenging to know their real thinking about their work.

//Yanyan

What were challenges?

At on field research stage, we also tried to hand out a survey link which is printed on a well-designed piece of paper outside of each store. But we can't hand out them because people didn't want to collaborate. So we gave up handing out survey and purely focused on observation. It can be very hard when trying to interview (or survey) a random person, particularly in a commercial space.

7. Appendix

Research raw data

Field Observation

1. Ten stores in Michigan Avenue

We conducted field observation twice for different purpose. We were interested in topic “retail space” and then narrowed it down into “experiential retail stores” according to our secondary research (see introduction at the beginning). We found 10 - 15 stores on Michigan Avenue to investigate. We used AEIOU framework to help use observe systematically and organize data. we selected 10 most representative ones to document here.

Store functions

Observation of each store (selected notes and images)

Best Buy

Activities:

People watch other people try some products.
People compare products with demo.
Two people play a demo together.

Environment:

The shelves are divided by different brands, which makes it lack of consistency in style.
It's already 11:00 but there's still not many people there.

Interactions:

Service people use technical terms which confuse me.
Feeling embarrassing while trying the speaker because it's loud.
Some of demos cannot even be stopped.
Interaction on the shelves is super simple. Most of the time there's only a button to press for starting the video demo.

Objects:

Some screens look like touchable but not, vice versa.
It's hard to match price tags with right products.
The product comparison is hard to read for inexperienced customers.
Customers don't know how to choose.
Interactive display need instruction to teach people how to use, hard to read.

Demo is only simple videos.

Verizon

Environment:

Near the entrance there are accessories sections and main sections are at the end of the hallway.

Space where have seats are crowded. ← Customer service area?

Some spaces are not inviting, a guy come here and just leave.

People like to chat here.

Themed interiors (Chicago deep dish pizza, CTA signs).

Interactions:

Selfie booth exist but not working at the time we visited.

Huge screen is attractive, motion capture is fun, but works not very well.

The Verizon have lot of entertaining interaction section for the customers. But lacking in staff makes everything not as good as we expected.

The staff is still focusing on helping customer with product and service, and too busy to help those people who want to try their interaction devices.

People want to play a screen, but seem like confused about how to use.

You need a staff to begin a demo.

Objects:

The categories' names on signages are vague (such "have fun").

Seat is always welcome.

Decorations are fancy and seems intended experiential feeling, but there are not many special things to interact.

T-Mobile

Activities:

People enjoy to watch other people play.

The father takes over his son's controller and play with it. His son wants to take over but his father don't want to give back the controller.

The sales stuff cheered up people trying the game.

Interactions:

There's enough staff for each area. So people for different goals are all well served. For example, one staff teach us how to use the photo device and another customer are guided to have a tour in virtual reality.

Selfie machine for tourist.

Have fun and also get information about global roaming spots T-mobile provides globally.

People see information when they interact with the screen for fun.

It displayed twitter hashtag (#TMobileMagMile) but asked only phone number to input.
Don't know how to use at the first and leave. A staff teaches us how to use and then we take a picture together.
People can see what others see through the screen (what makes me want to try).

Disney

Activities:

adults let their children to choose products and adults buy whatever they chose.
Some people are carrying babies with them and shop.
A guy dances following the background music.
A kid talks to himself and run anywhere without parents.
People stay in the middle of the traffic and talk.
People (look like tourists) take pictures.

Environment:

This store has fully customized interiors and exteriors.
People can enjoy the Disney culture from the entrance.
Decoration everywhere for different series.
Heavy traffic in the stores.

Interactions:

Other experiential aspects; drawing spaces and music video.
A staff gave me a Darth Vader sticker for my Darth Vader hooded.

Objects:

This sign suggests the store plan some events for children everyday.
Shelves are designed as very low -- children's view height.
This helps customer's shopping.
Some people push baby cars.
Look like people touch it a lot.
Large screen playing cartoon and music.

Users:

An adult draws something on a workshop table which looks like for kids.
Who is shopping? Parents or kids?
An adult enjoying his drawing.

Apple

Activities:

Many people are staying to use free-wifi, but not shopping.
People used theater space to take rest and use free wi-fi.

A person was looking at iPhone 6 with a broken iPhone 6 in hand.
People wanted for staff to take out the Apple watch to play with.

Environment:

Check-out has a designated place but the desk is clean without any hardware checkout machines.

Genius bar.

iPad on the short desk (on the left) had a lot of game apps for children.

Apple store is very bright different from other the tech related stores we visited this time.

Users:

A kid is playing a phone.

Nike

Activities:

People stay in front of screen.

People take pictures.

People searched product using the interactive screens on the wall.

Environment:

Wired mirror places.

Each floor has different theme. Such as area where displays basketball related items, the floor of that area is made by wood which mimics the court.

Has zonings for different type of product; shoes, wearables, clothing.

Interactions:

Affordance problems.

Can't touch the things exactly.

Screen showed the schedule of the running events but cannot book from the store; only from [nike.com](https://www.nike.com).

Customers are able to buy products directly from the sales person without going to the checkout.

Selfie machine; usability issue - you can't tell what's that when you are in front of it, because the screen is at back.

Objects:

People love cool things.

Personal service desk exist.

Sephora

Activities:

Not many customers was interested to try the makeup simulator.
There is a man trying to play with the “visual artist” prudently.

Interactions:

Interactive scent tester (scent tool): This interactive machine allows customers to try and understand different flavors in interactive way; you can choose a type of scent and see what the main components of the scents and see products that includes specific flavors visually. At the same time you can smell the perfume from the nozzle on the right.

Makeup simulator (quick cosmetic tool): This table have screen, mirror and removers. It seems designated place for makeup class. The screen allows customers simulate putting different lip colors and eyelashes without taking and remove them.

Objects:

Custom engraving: This machine allow customers add engraving to the perfume product. Engraving Initials are suggested by the store.

AT&T

Environment:

Big stage for events is near the entrance.
Personal service space is just a bar table.
Thematic space: “Chicago”.

Interactions:

Has a interactive/ non-interactive learning space of AT&T’s history and actions for environment, women power in tech.

Objects:

Books and curated products in certain theme are effective to express brand image and life style feeling.
Has several demonstrations of smart home, car navigations.
Don’t know what’s smart ball is.

Dylan’s Candy Bar

Environment:

Connection with first floor and second floor are more inviting. (Most of the stores we observed, there are always less people in second floor, but Dylan’s Candy Bar not)
Provide special service, such as party room.
Some kinds of performance, dress up.
Thematic store in the store (American retrospective candies).
In-store Cafe/bar space for socializing.
Interesting decoration and display (famous person’s favorite candy...).

Interactions:

3-D printer to print your candy. Promotion video explain how to use it.
Devices help you to design your own package easily.
Photo booth.

Objects:

High-ended candy with special experiences.
Products related to halloween (also Chicago Cups...).
Sell stuff other than candy; outfits, decorations in candy theme.

Microsoft

Environment:

Very open space without visible boundaries.

Activities:

People can see other people try some immersive devices (such as VR).

Interactions:

staff are very nice and helpful.

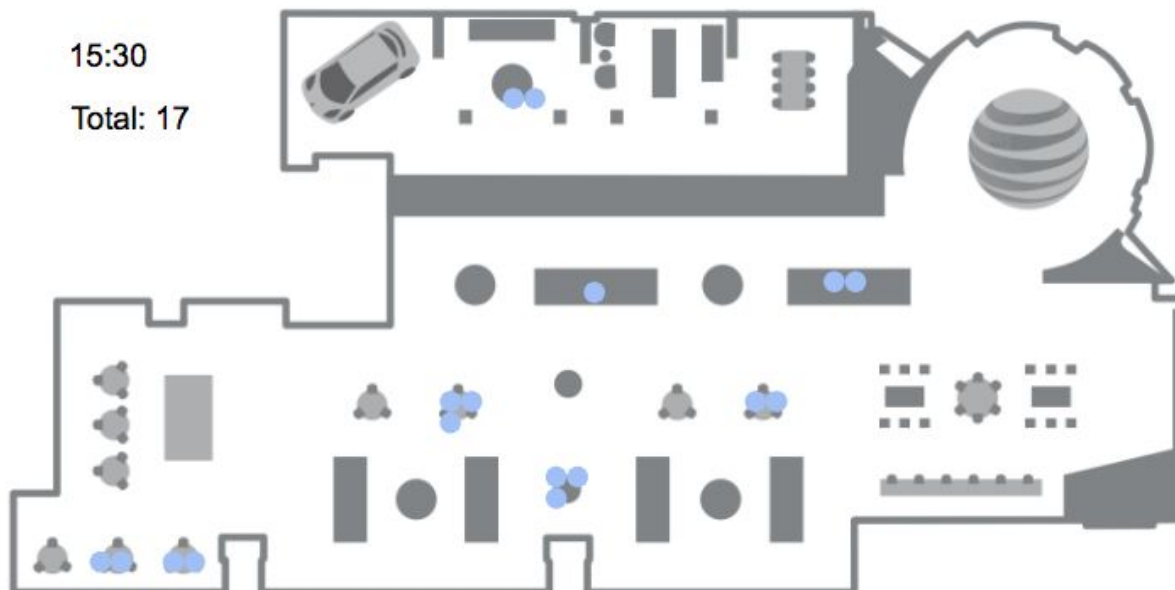
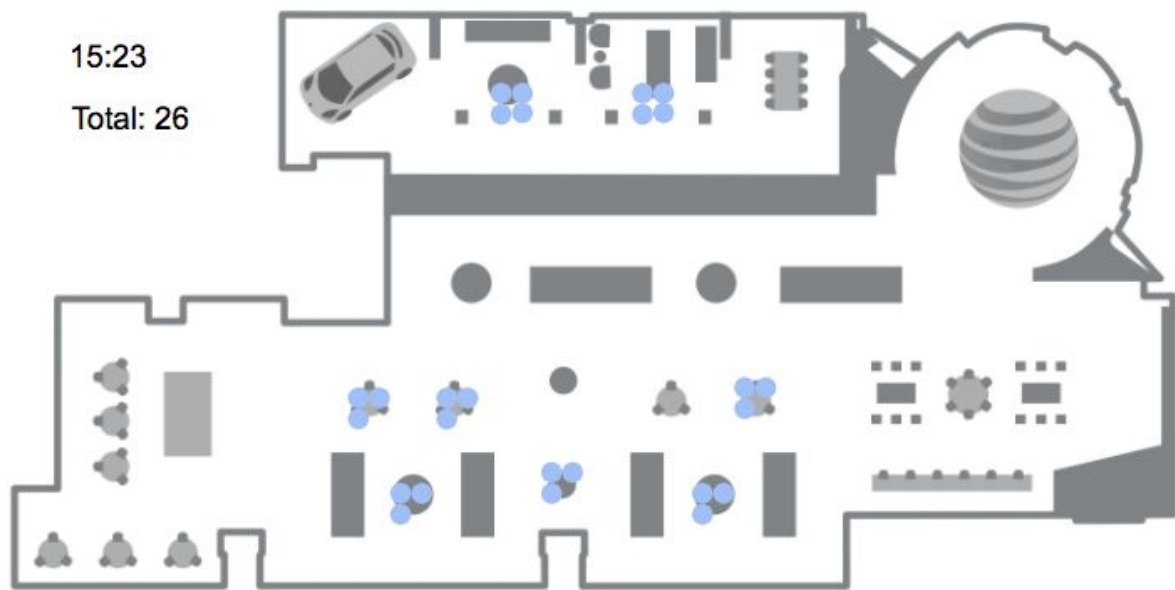
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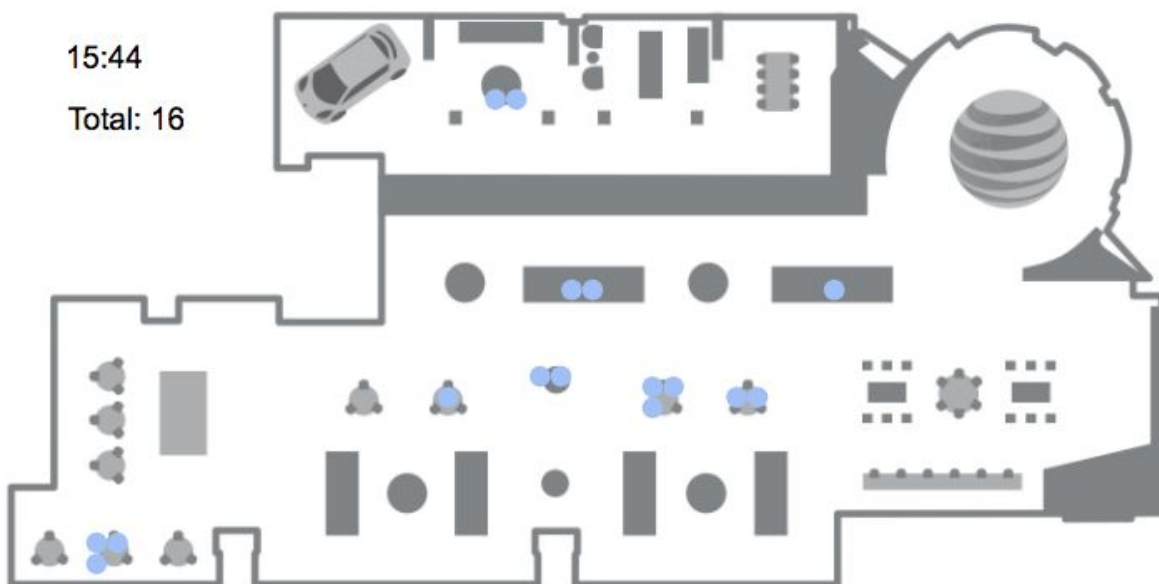
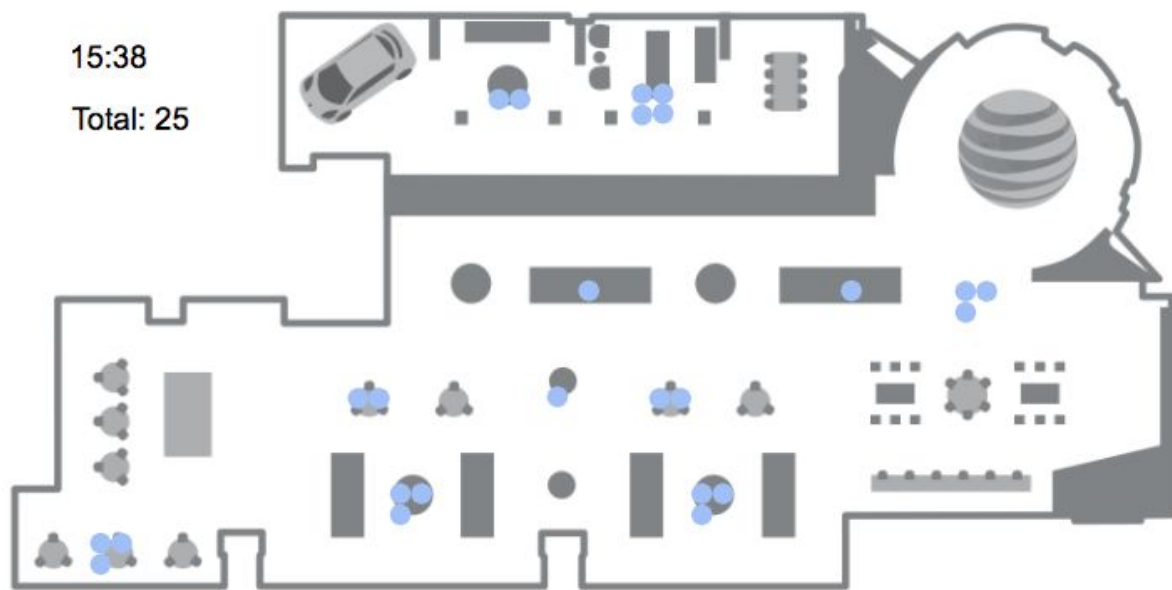
New product you can try.
Free gift; free hat makes me happy.

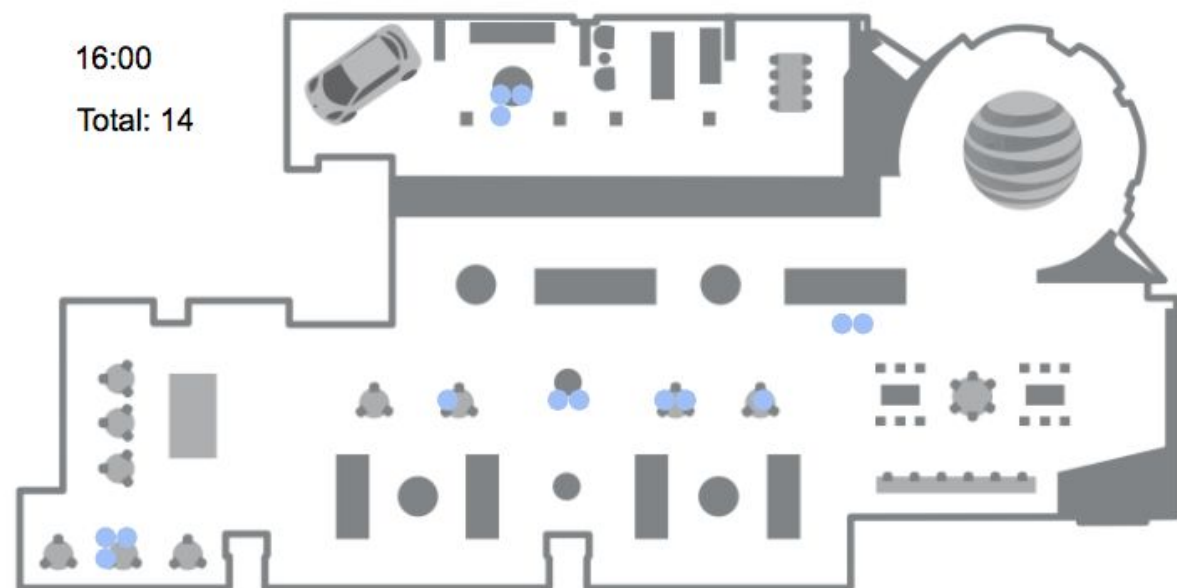
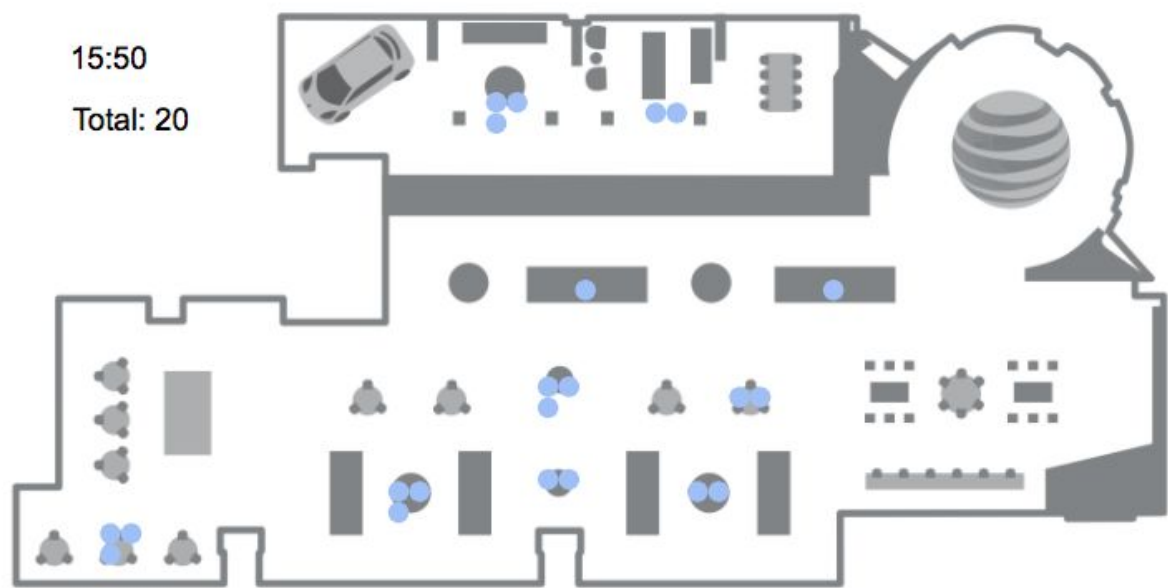
2. In-deep observation in AT&T store

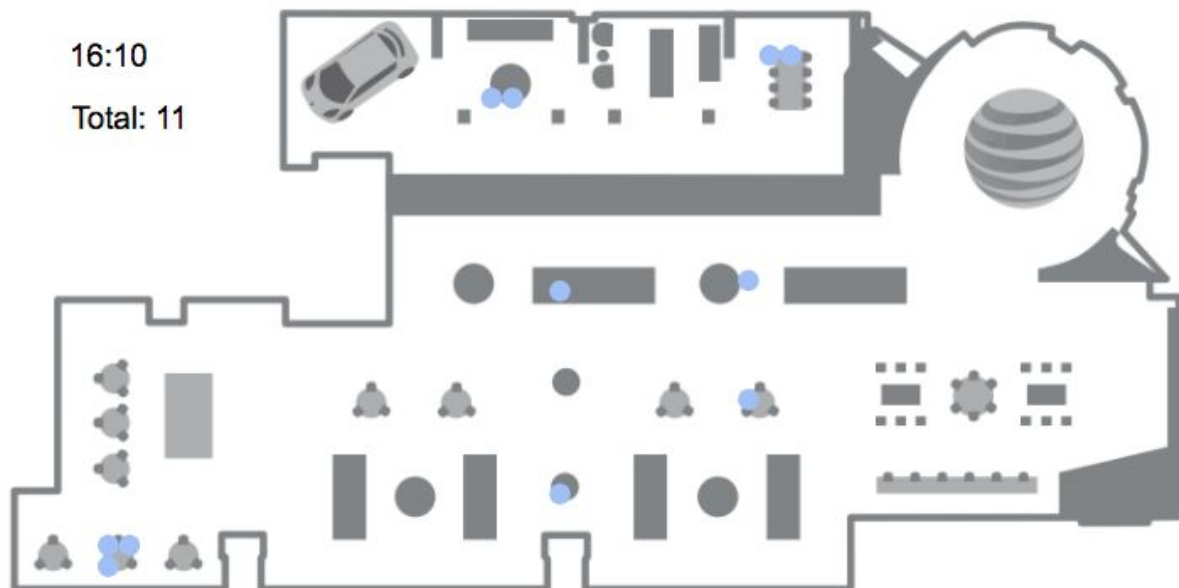
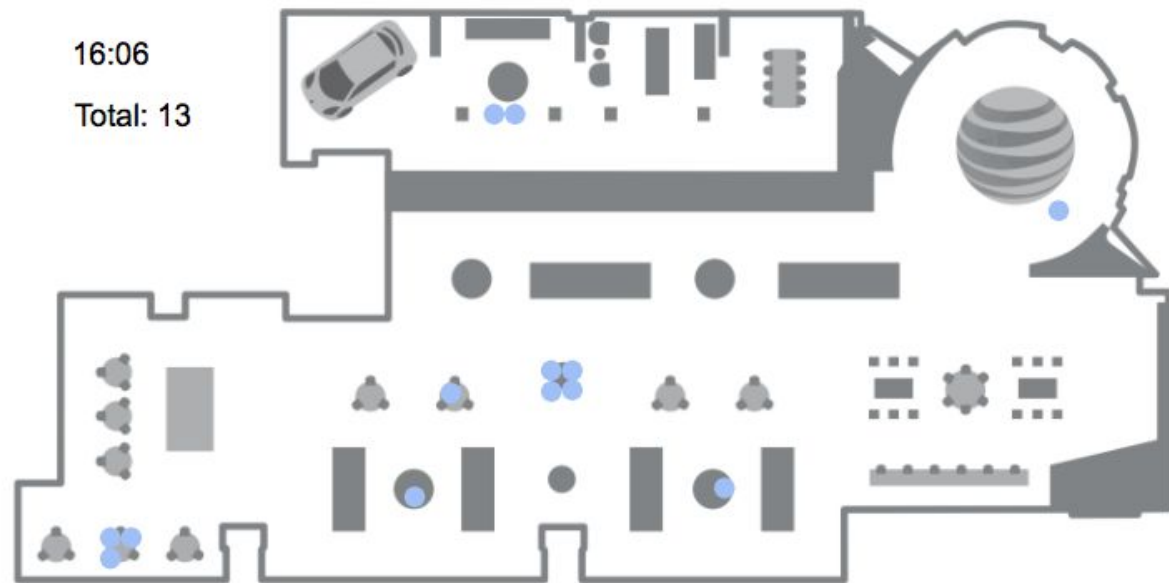
After observing at 10 different stores and debriefing with the team, we found that some high-tech experiential stores which are not purely products orientated, such as AT&T, T-Mobile, and Verizon can't attract enough visitors. So we decided to narrow our topic again down to a specific store, AT&T flagship on Michigan Avenue. We wanted to investigate more deeply about visitors' experiences in this specific store and provide general recommendations for this kinds of stores to improve their performances.

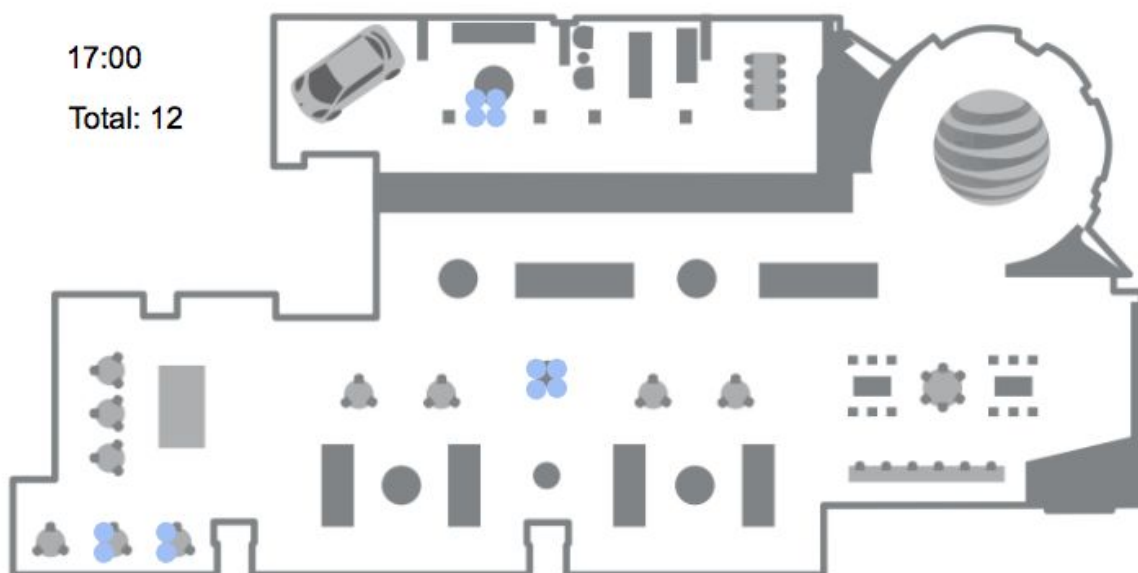
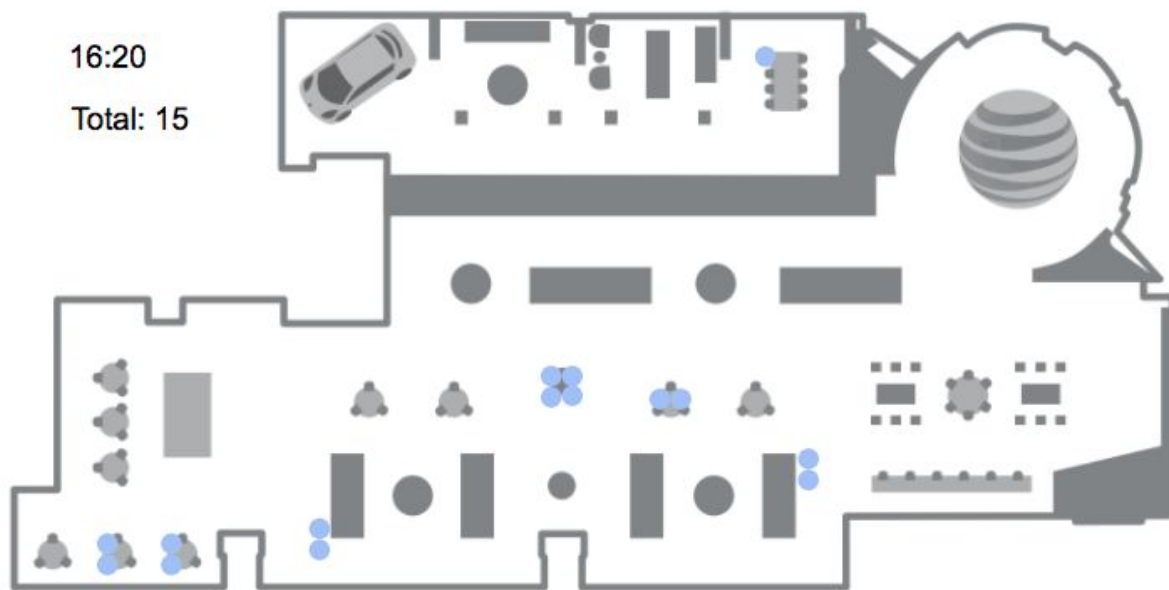
Spatio-temporal Mapping











Staff Interviews

David (Staff)

//About store events

This store holds several events. For example, today it has an event for dog owners. We will introduce how to use smart product for pets.

Other events are such as college prep.

We reach out to people through social media

Media manager plans the events

//About the store

This is the first these kind of store at AT&T. Now we have brand store in San Francisco. It is three times larger than this store.

We have very small stores in shopping mall but I think they will be gone. Customers will just go to other space such as Best Buy, and we need more and more brand stores. If you don't know how to use, you don't buy.

We need to crease experience to make people come back again.

Tony (Manager)

//About the store

[How this store is different from other store?] This is physical embodiment of AT&T; customer experience, innovation, showcase of our priority such as smart device, connected TV, and connected cars.

We're brand store. Our main purpose is build brands [than sales].

[How you define experience?] Customer's overall satisfaction. Make them happy when they visit. Technologies here are catalysts of creativity. Customers will find discover their own needs; "how we can use it in their life?". This is based on the corporate strategy.

[Roles of staff] brand ambassadors will help guide customers. Browser help demo. Tech help technical supports and operation team.

[How to make repeaters?] By giving customers experience above their expectations.

Jeff (Manager)

//About the store

Goal: Connect anyone better than the others.

There's foreign tourists on Michigan Avenue. The flagship store also works as a sign.

Half of the space is not for selling products but selling experience.

AT&T provide comprehensive service and let customers know how to use their services no matter how their goals differ.

There's a activity tonight for customers who have dogs. We'll introducing them the product related to the pets, and also show them the future life with their pets.

There's no counter, and all purchase and payment is through the tablet. So there's less gap between staff and customers. And also staff can reach out to customers more often.

Shadowing

Participant: Sophie, 22, student

11:01 Get into the store, all staff are in a line waiting for the new coming customers.

11:02 Greeted by the associate manager Tony. And he lead up to the present tree. Then he started to introduce us the product on the tree.

11:04 Tony get us a Parrot drone from the storeroom. And introduce us about the drone.

11:07 Tony left and we went back to the entrance to start again.

11:07 Sophie start looking the phone shell. She love fancy phone shells and was planning to buy one somewhere else. She love the showcase there because there's all shiny fancy products.

11:19 To the Street Smart section. She said she won't spend that much time if she came here alone. The interaction is disappointing because it didn't show much and the content was boring.

11:25 To the Toy Town. There's a staff showed us how Petzi work. It's a interesting pet camera which you can control the machine to shoot treats to your pet. We all like it very much.

11:29 Try Samsung S7, we discussed about the curve edges and Samsung Pay. She is interested because she saw in in the commercial on the Internet.

Then we try the charging pad but there's no demo and we are not Samsung user. It's a bit disappointed.

11:43 The history wall. Interesting interaction device, but the content is so boring. "It could only be found in those boring museum. And there's not much connection between the picture I scan and the content it plays."

11:46 The interaction of the huge touching screen is interesting, but the phone make her feel a bit embarrassing. And her arm is tired after swiping for long time. The design of the interface is fancy enough to attract her attention.

Participant: XB, 27, student

(I notice that XB is laughing)

Q: Why are you laughing.

A: I just recalled some funny memories.

Q: What's that?

A: Once upon I was in Beijing, I went into a luxury store. There were only two people here, and I felt so awkward at that time.

Q: Is this store giving you the same feeling?

A: Not really, this store doesn't seem like that high level.

Q: Why? Can you explain a little more?

A: Because customers here look like normal people. But I don't think I would come in by myself. But there are also some fancy decorations, such as the boxes over there, which make the store looks a little luxury.

(XB connects his own phone with a sound box, and test the sound quality)

Q: How do you know how to use them?

A: I have the last version of this product.

(XB opens the VR glasses)

Q: Why do you open it?

A: It doesn't work. So frustrated.

(XB asks a guy standing nearby for help)

A: Can you help me ...

X: I am a security, I don't know how to use it. You should ask others.

Q: I need to find a staff to help me to connect my phone with this. I don't know how to use it.

XB tries to connect his phone to another voice box, but he doesn't know how to do it. So he looks for assistance. The staff can't connect at first, but they figure it out together quickly.

(After trying the product Y)

Q: What do you think about the two products?

A: X is better than Y, because...

Q: You can tell the differences even when the background is so noisy?

A: Yes, but I still prefer quiet.

(XB tries to unfold the wire, and it takes him a little while. But he still can't make it. He leaves directly)

A: There are more and more wireless products coming out after iphone 7 released.

(XB picks up a smartwatch and tries to open it. But he can't make it)

A: I do enjoy the shape of the product.

A: I like the store displaying some old stuff. It's interesting. I also like the way they display them. They put them into this beautiful glass box, which makes them look good.

(A smart car display)

Q: What brings you here?

A: It looks different, other places are also small products.

(XB looks up to search the projectors, and he also plays the dashboard for a little while)

Q: Why you stop playing?

A: The interface is so ugly, so I don't want to interact with it anymore.

Q: Do you get how it works?

A: Yes, I think it just showcases how different functions work. I get it, so I don't want to play with it anymore.

A: Usually after visiting a store, I'd like to walk around again to check whether I left something interesting out.

(In front of the entrance)

Q: Will you go in this store?

A: Of course not.

Q: Why?

A: I think T-Mobile is selling sim card, or things related to phone. This is my perception. Also, there is no window, so I can't see what's inside.

(I ask XB to play with a screen which he doesn't think is touchable, and he stop playing soon)

Q: Why you stop playing with it.

A: It's useless. Too much content I don't care. I want content about products.

The sound box can't connected to XB's phone. There is a staff continuously talking with XB, show him how to try the sound box and ask if he has a T-Mobile phone number.

XB tried to pick up a phone to play with, but the phone stick to the base

Participant Interview (Cultural Probes)

Protocol

1. Please describe your first impression of that store.
2. What do you think the purpose of the store? Sell products? Experience store?
3. Which devices are your favorite devices, why? Which devices work not well for you, why?
4. How do you like the customer service? What's your favorite customer service style?
5. Can you describe your favorite space (may not be a retail space) to us?
6. Do you think the store support your goal? Why or why not?
7. What do you think is the most important factors in a retail space? Which one AT&T is good at? Which one it's bad at?
8. Would you like to come again? Why or why not?
9. How do you understand the function areas in the store? (Boundary object)
10. If let you redesign, what do you want to add, remove or rearrange? (Boundary object)
11. Please compare your experiences in AT&T and T-Mobile and describe their strengths and weaknesses. Which one do you prefer to go?

Participant interview debrief: Sophie, 22, student

1. Please describe your first impression of that store.

Fancy.

Selling lifestyle, not product or service. They put the fancy phone shell and other products at the front part of the store.

Telling story to you, drone, pet camera, car connection.

2. Which devices are your favorite devices, why? Which devices work not well for you, why?

Petzi, the pet camera which shoots treats. The M&M story. It tells how much love people have in their life.

The huge touching screen. Never see or use before. The content is not that interesting but the device is attractive.

The present tree in the show window. It's rotating with shiny blue and gold color. And each product on the display is interesting and fancy enough.

The car is boring, like an exhibit in the old fashion museum, only kids would have interest to touch. The video is boring and there's a series of that.

But the projection is attractive. It caught my eye for the first sight.

3. How do you like the customer service? What's your favorite customer service style?

It's nice, staff come time to time and ask if anything is needed. The associate manager directly take the dorne from the storeroom and show us.

One of the staff is not that familiar with the product, he doesn't know the shell is for iPhone 7 only or for both 6s and 7. But he help us to take the shell off when we can't take it off.

4. Can you describe your favorite space (may not be a retail space) to us?

The cubic showcase in the front. It shows a modern lifestyle instead of products to be sold. It not only display some small trendy products but also some fancy widgets like wallets and watches.

5. Do you think the store support your goal? Why or why not?

For people who just want to have a quick browse of the store, it's really good experience. You start with a relaxing mood, the staff won't pushing you to buy any products. The widgets are interesting enough.

6. What do you think is the most important factors in a retail space? (Card sorting) Which one AT&T is good at? Which one it's bad at?

Service. There's more staff than customers in the store when we first came in.

Display and layout. There's different sections in the store, they encourage me to explore. Lot of things to see, but in a good order.

The history wall is not a good experience. There's no instruction for the wall. It makes me tired because I need to figure out how to use it. Also after scanning the picture, the video is so boring that disappointed me.

7. Would you like to come again? Why or why not?

No, one time is enough to see the tech devices in store. I hope there's new things come up every time I come.

8. If let you redesign, what do you want to add, remove or rearrange? (Boundary object)

In those fashion store which all girls likes to go, there's a eye catching area. It would be like clearance, or little fancy jewel section, where can attract lot of people, and making the space lively. There could be a space like this.

Participant interview debrief: XB, 27, student

My first impression of AT&T is that it's a little luxury, and gives me festival feeling. Decoration is good. Products looks like high quality, I want to enter. It's a little luxury, I feel a little bad because wearing casual clothes, but I still prefer to enter.

I think the store is focusing on both experience and products. Usually I go to store only for products. Sometimes I find some products randomly, and I will plan for a while afterwards. Then go there to buy. AT&T can basically support my goal, and I would like to go again and want to buy some products. I like the bluetooth voice box and earphone (high quality, special), and home movie theater. (T-Mobile) Most of the products I already saw before.

I think staff in AT&T are nice. staff were playing soccer, which made me feel relaxed. staff also wore casual clothes, which makes customer feel close. I prefer to ask staff when need, but staff approach to me by themselves is okay, I will just tell them I don't need help. I don't like the feeling that I can't find help when I need. staff don't need to follow and ask me all the time, sometimes I don't want to answer, if I want something from them I can ask.

I like products can be tried. I think shape of products is important, but quality is more important. I think the most important thing for a store is that customers can try products, also the space should be clear and wide, provide more chance to try products. AT&T is too noisy for me, also too much decoration. It should support trying products, not distract me from that.

I think tech should help to introduce products and service. I like to do things directly, such as purchasing. I don't want to consume too much information, because I have no patience. But the experiential devices always try to give me too much information, that's why I don't want to use them. I didn't notice of the big picture of what AT&T wants to promote, only find some details such as car navigation. I can only see parts, can't see big picture. I think AT&T should emphasize its topic, parts should support the topic. (Using cultural probes) May be they can put something near the entrance, so I can know what they want to do immediately.