



Shop Small in Another World

Experiential Shopping in Fictional Media

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this thesis was to explore the interesting world of experiential shopping in fictional media and how it is utilized in the design of shop spaces of their imagined owners, such as artisans, craftspersons and merchants. The study aimed to reveal how to give the viewer or player a memorable shopping experience, and a sense of a place.

The theoretical part of the research was conducted through qualitative analysis of three case studies from fictional media. This analysis method helped to present a broader overview of the topic. The research delved into the techniques that were used in the case studies: two animated films and one video game.

The results of this research suggest that these methods can be applied in impactful ways to submerge audiences into the world of exciting storytelling, compelling visual aesthetics and thoughtfully crafted spatial designs. These elements blend together and form a deep sense of place, while leaving a lasting impression on the viewer's memory.

This study provides evidence to support the claim that immersive experiential shopping and cohesively curated space design along with other important components, can make shops in fictional worlds feel more tangible in the minds of their parallel shoppers. This study is a stepping point for further research on the topic.

Key words: experiential retailing, shop, fictional media, space design, immersion

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ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

Auralization	Process of crafting an audible simulation of a specific sound field in a virtual space
Diegesis	A narrative or plot, typically in a film
Experiential shopping	Immersive engaging retail experience
Intradiegetic	Components existing inside a fictional world's story
Spatial design	Holistic space design method
Spatial layout	Arrangement of objects and characters within physical or virtual spaces

1 INTRODUCTION

In the fictional world of media, the story might take its viewers away from the bustling main street to take a walk in a more calm, tucked away side alley. Walking through this paved avenue, the viewer encounters locals commuting and running their daily errands. The shop bell rings, and people here and there are entering these quaint storefronts that are more than happy to exceed an invitation for their passers-by. Amongst the little stores, the camera stops in front of a small brick-and-mortar shop. There, the busy artisan who has perfected their craft is making something truly unique. Their items are created and collected with time and care, and the shopkeeper is carefully placing some of them to the shop window so they might peak the interest of a potential customer. These small independent shops, often depicted in fictional media, serve as more than mere backdrops; they embody the spirit of their artisan owners and the stories they and their crafted designs tell.

The store as an experience has evolved to be the standard in the retail industry. The products of the store are as much part of its atmosphere, than being the main attraction. Retailers focus on creating destinations where customers want to spend more time in, with the means of brand recognition and space design both online and on-location. (Huddleston & Minahan 2011, 75-76.) reference This thesis explores how experiential retailing is presented in fictional media, focusing on two animated films and a video game investigating how these small independent shops are portrayed and what kind of experiential shopping experiences they offer for the viewer or player.

According to Kim, Sullivan and Forney experiential retailing is defined as "a strategy that transforms products and services into a total consumption experience, including aspects that are both utilitarian and hedonic" (Kim et al. 2007, 75). The term concentrates on initiating immersive and engaging experiences for the consumer, and can be divided into three main themes: atmosphere, service and engagement.

The first research method used was the descriptive literary review in the first three chapters. Content analysis method was used when examining different case studies of shops appearing in various entertainment media titles, such as artisan bakery Gütiokipänjä from the 2D animated movie Kiki's Delivery Service (1989), The Fireplace convenience store from the 3D animated movie Elemental (2023) and the Kochi Dye Shop from the video game The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild (2017). The thesis used this method to gather how experiential retailing, visual elements and storytelling techniques from these titles, in order to understand the ingredients they consist of.

Understanding how these fictional examples of their real-life counterparts absorb their consumers in a way that they are left with a memory of a visit to a fictional shop, opens up possibilities for research opportunities. The objective of the thesis is to find out how experiential shopping of independent shops' are presented in fictional media. The thesis will examine how different kinds of methods are utilized to create these experiences and how the shop spaces in the case studies are designed, possibly evoking curiosity towards the stories behind their imagined owners and merchandise for audiences.

2 EXPERIENTIAL SHOPPING

The primary objective of the thesis was to find out how independent shop environments are presented in fictional media and how they portray engaging shopping experiences. Aiming to find an answer to this thesis was "How does fictional media portray experiential shopping?". This chapter will examine how various experiential shopping techniques are utilized in real-life retail, and later find out if similar methods are employed in their fictional counterparts.

Yi-Fu Tuan was a geographer who was intrigued by topophilia. The term is described as the emotional connection that exists inherently between humans and their physical surroundings. As found in the work of Tuan (1977, 3) the geographer accentuates the experience and the experiential conception of physical place. (Lowrey 2007, 7.) Tuan suggests that "Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to the one and long for the other." (Tuan 1977, 3).

The competition that online retailers pose to brick-and-mortar stores has led to a strategic shift towards experiential store design and this chapter focuses on exploring these diverse elements. The fusion of immersive experiences, sensory engagement, brand storytelling and world-building all come together to create enhanced shopping experiences for audiences in fictional media.

Store design, sales staff, and other factors act as important parts that shape positive experiences for customers. The direct sensory impressions that a three-dimensional, real-world store environment offers to customers and engages their senses - sight, touch, smell, hearing, and potentially taste, bring customer shopping experiences to life. Comparing this experience to an online shopping experience where users are still unable to use all of their senses, the rich and vivid physical store experience makes online shopping seem somewhat pale in comparison. (Claus & Garaus 2015, 152.) The goal of experiential store design is to partake in the emotional stimuli. The objective of it

is to engage many different emotional and cognitive triggers and form a unique shopping experience for each customer. (Claus & Garaus 2015, 152.)

Experiential retail is more than just purchasing a product or a service. It gives the customers chances to learn, socialize and entertain themselves (Huddleston & Minahan 2011, 79). The utilization of experiential retailing reaches further from expensive or luxurious products and is suitable in everyday shopping experiences. Stores like Build-A-Bear Workshop give a tangible experience by letting customers create their own personalized stuffed bears. This method associating objects with time, love, loyalty and fun has played its part in the success of Build-A-Bear Workshop. (Huddleston & Minahan 2011, 79.)

Online experiential retailing has quickly gained popularity. This form has gained success because of applications of advanced technologies that improve the shoppers online store experiences. Such methods for example are virtual dressing rooms for clothing shopping, where people can envision how an item could fit them based on their measurements. This feature decreases returns together with online chat features, which assist shoppers to make more informed purchases. (Huddleston & Minahan 2011, 80.)

2.1 Customer journey

Customer journey mapping (CJM) is used as an important part of customer programs which offer insights into the needs and wants of customers through how they interact with the business. The process includes visualization of each customer interaction at every stage of the customer's life cycle. CMJ is vital as it obtains the perspective of the customer into the way the business thinks and functions as a tool to plan changes along the way, recognise dependencies, document experiences that vary, curate experiences for different parts, and through the business foster good communication. The mapping supplies a shared overall understanding with the help of a visual map and manages to stitch together shattered customer experiences in different phases of the

customer journey. Assisting in aligning performance metrics and bringing together customer expectations and their actual experiences. (Pennington 2016.)

2.2 Immersive retail experiences

Experiential shopping transcends beyond the normal act of just purchasing a product and alters the retail environment into an interactive setting where consumers can explore products, create connections with brands and immerse themselves in the narrative. Experiential retailing has become a standard for the industry, and it highlights the creation of immersive spaces for customers. The products are not anymore the focus, but they play a vital part creating the atmosphere for the store. Now retailers brand themselves and create an environment that is a destination for customers to stay longer in the physical store as well online. (Huddleston & Minahan 2011, 75-76.)

2.3 Sensory engagement

All the senses are engaged in experiential shopping interactions and they go beyond just visual stimulation. The combination of auditory, olfactory, tactile and gustatory elements enables a deep association towards the brand in question and the fictional world it aims to generate. The in-store experience that engages all sensory stimuli such as music, colors, scents and they all play their part as important elements in the creation of well-rounded store encounters. For example, a moviegoer or a gamer misses out on two of these important stimuli, scent and touch. The concept of "touching" whilst gaming stays on the level of "mental touch" when the player navigates the on-screen action.

Experiential shopping, which is practically the combination of emotional and cognitive stimuli, strives to shape unique shopping encounters for each

customer that are tailored to their needs. It beats conventional shopping and shifts into sensory and engaging occasions. (Claus & Garaus 2015, 20.)

Nordstrom, an upscale premier department store, exceeds the method of just playing pleasant background music for their customers (Claus & Garaus 2015, 152). Muzak has become an all-purpose nickname for generic elevator- and background music that was branded in 1934 (Allen Anderson 2015). In many of their stores they showcase a grand piano which is played by an elegantly dressed pianist. This adds entertainment value and additional class to their stores. Nordstrom distincts themselves from competition by uplifting the common feature of background music to be enjoyed live and with an elegant grand piano. (Claus & Garaus 2015, 152.)

2.4 Storytelling and world-building

The strategic use of storytelling and world-building in experiential retailing plays an important role by involving both of these elements to a store environment enabling an immersive experience which sets a profound sense of place and connection to the fictional setting. The infusion of stimulating stories to a retail space and rich world-building transforms conventional shopping transactions to unique and resonating journeys.

Consumers today desire items that appeal to them and enjoyment whilst shopping, is called by consumer researchers and retail experts "hedonic shopping". The phenomenon is not universal, but often customers are expecting a mix of fun, entertainment and fantasy elements when shopping. Keeping this in mind retailers can anticipate these desires and stand out from their competitors, traditional and online. (Claus & Garaus 2015, 153.) According to Arnold and Reynolds (2003, 77-95) there are six different types of hedonic shopping classifications, from which this thesis will focus solely the 'adventure shopping' type. This choice meets the criteria that appears often in fictional media and is used in the case studies of this research.

Adventure shoppers long for exciting and stimulating shopping experiences, and seek for such environments where those desires are fulfilled (Claus & Garaus 2015, 154). Pine and Gilmore (1999) identified many experience realms from which three are catering to adventure shoppers: aesthetic, entertainment, and escapist.

Claus and Garaus (2015, 155) list noteworthy examples:

- M&M World's sensory-rich stores where the chocolate scents, colorful displays of candy, characters meets, and M&M color mood analyzer, which tells which candy suits best your present mood
- Dark Room's dramatic displays were in front of pitch-black walls, a light focused on displaying their eclectic garments in a theatrical manner
- Las Vegas and the city's elaborately themed hotels and experiences.

Escapist experiences are likely the notably immersive and engaging adventure shopping methods. The Adventurers Club at Walt Disney in Orlando, Florida delivered a perfect example of how the method can be executed. Visitors were transported into an idealized colonial club of the early 1900s, and it showcased interactive elements like talking masks that greeted guests when entering, clubs own greeting, theme song, rituals and traditions, and engagement with eccentric characters in themed areas whilst facilitating a unique participatory atmosphere. The Adventurers Club is permanently closed after the restructuring in 2009 of the Pleasure Island district. (Claus & Garaus 2015, 152.)

2.5 Brand storytelling integration

Experiential shopping seamlessly blends brand storytelling into the narrative of fictional worlds. The uses of characters, themes, and symbolism signify the brand's core values and play deep emotional connections with consumers instead of conventional product-focused methods. The use of this kind of immersive strategy fascinates shoppers and also leaves a lasting impact that captivates the essence of the brand for the consumer.

A 5-foot-tall snowman-shaped tumbler (Picture 1.) played as a strategically placed attraction for the festive "Yuletide Farmhouse" collection at The World of Disney store at Disney Springs. Other interactive elements such as floor projections displaying paws of snow and snowing effects across the walls invite customers to take selfies to sweeten the shopping experience. (Bewil, 2019.)



PICTURE 1. Disney Parks Blog (2019). "Yuletide Farmhouse" collection at The World of Disney store, Florida.

The retail creative designer of Disney Springs, Paul Seys (2019) states in Bevil's article (2019) that "There are interactive elements, too, tied into the projection." Seys (2019) underlines the integration of customer preferences with the store design stating "We see our guests love to take selfies." According to Seys (2019) "We're trying to make sure everything, every element down to the smallest piece is telling the same cohesive story", which solidifies the definition of immersive brand storytelling integrations (Bevil, 2019).

Aesthetic, entertainment, education, and escapism seamlessly blend and shift between static and dynamic elements. The static and tangible features include such features as products, store fixtures, fittings, signage, and packaging which

together form the brand image and experience. These together strive to narrate the intended brand story for customers. (Huddleston & Minahan 2011, 76.) Healy, Beverland, Oppewal and Sands (2007, 751-778) state that the dynamic elements "emphasize human interaction through the customer-staff-store interface". The combination of these two components demands substantial investments from retailers and the returns need to be profitable (Huddleston & Minahan 2011, 77). One approach to foster customer loyalty is to shower them with experiences, as contemporary consumers increasingly expect and appreciate unique retail experiences (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 97).

3 WORLD-BUILDING

The combination of world-building and storytelling works as an enhancing factor regarding immersive experiences. The mix of these two elements was examined in this chapter to obtain more detailed understanding of how weaving the narrative into the retail environment acts as a contributing factor when the aim is to create an amplified sense of place and a deeper connection with the fictional setting. Achieving this enriches the customer experience and bases a more profound emotional link with the retail space and the brand.

This chapter references many insights many insights from Mark J. P. Wolf's book titled *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation* (2012), which provides a comprehensive overview of world-building practices and its elements in media and stresses world-building besides narrative and other storytelling methods. Mark J. P. Wolf is the author and editor of over twenty books and a Professor at the Department of Communication at Concordia University Wisconsin. He has a B. A. (1990) in Film Production and an M. A. (1992) and Ph. D. (1995) in Critical Studies from the School of Cinema/Television (renamed the School of Cinematic Arts) at the University of Southern California. (Concordia University Wisconsin 2024.)

When engaging with imaginary worlds, immersing yourself in paintings, novels, movies or video games means a journey inward to imaginary worlds. Engaging stories like this absorb their adventurers in their fictional settings and act as the basis for the driven narratives whilst reminding them of their constant presence during these experiences. The mere enjoyment of an imaginary world can be satisfying on its own, going beyond just the aspect of storytelling. (Wolf 2012, 16-17.)

According to Wolf, even though narratives have vital roles that act in shaping and experiencing fictional worlds, the understanding of how these settings operate independently goes beyond just narratives (Wolf 2012, 11). This leads

to the conclusion that imagined worlds function on their own without the stories. The difference highlights the dynamics of the two, which sheds light on the diverse qualities of immersive experiences.

Setting the Marvel Universe apart from its competitor, DC Comics, is Marvel's dual approach to reflecting real-world issues with psychologically-motivated characters and by making sure that there is seamless integration between the universe's interconnected storylines. Compared to Star Wars, Marvel exceeds continuity which is brimming with intricate details and constantly employing the evolving sociopolitical realities of its audience. In *The West Wing*, contrasted against Marvel, the show incorporates current events but operates within their own established continuity without the commitment of a broader connected universe. Marvel sets itself apart by its groundbreaking approach by combining adventures of superheroes, soap opera elements, and social commentary within a universe that is purposefully fused and shared. (Friedenthal 2021.)

Transnarrative worlds use an extensive amount of details which requires organizational frameworks. Space, time and characters serve as the first structures of these organizational tools. Locations are linked by maps, events fall in order due to timelines and genealogies reveal the relationships between characters. The world itself is formed of nature, culture, language, mythology and philosophy where all layers build upon the previous. The distribution of world information to the audience is an essential part, even though each structure's degree differs from one another. These structures can be implied indirectly or spread out word-to-word for audiences, with such materials as maps, timelines and glossaries. (Wolf 2012, 154-155.) Possibly the most common and oldest tool imaginary worlds are presented for audiences is the map (Wolf 2012, 154-155).

3.1 Fictional worlds as immersive environments

World-building can be used as a potent tool in the creation of immersive environments. Meticulously crafted worlds serve as captivating settings and submerge audiences deep into the world of fictional stories and offer engaging narratives and improve the experiences. Wolf stated that "Worlds can exist without stories, but stories cannot exist without a world" (Wolf 2012, 29), which leads to the conclusion that captivating stories often attract audiences to an imaginary world and contribute by maintaining intrigue, whilst the opposite is not always the case. Fascinating worlds can exist independently of distinct narratives. Narrative and world-building together consist of complex details which play vital parts in the works of creating immersive and thrilling experiences.

A secondary world needs to have a high level of invention, completeness and consistency to be believable and engaging. When a story expands its growth can stall because if it can not match the complexities of the Primary World this can lead to inconsistencies. Inventions which do not reach a certain level of uniqueness make the world feel too much like the Primary World. A world that has not reached the level of completeness hinders narrative expansion and questions that have not been answered. Conflicting elements in world-building directly affect the outcome of how another world is perceived, and if it is believable. (Wolf 2012, 33-34.)

Gaining an understanding of world-building depends on the concept of combining scattered elements in an organized way, like in intricate systems. The spatial dimension is especially important in defining the phenomenon. In film theory, the concept of space is essential with the junction of time which impacts on narratives and immersive experiences. (Boni et. al. 2017, 13-14.) This leads to the conclusion that spatial dimensions align with the idea that explicitly crafted story worlds which include the strategic placement of these elements create a lasting and engaging experience.

Disney's theme park Disneyland possesses the immersive potential and is embodied by the term "all-encompassing" which conveys how the lines of reality and fantasy in the theme park are blurred. Composed of Fantasyland, Adventureland, Frontierland, and Tomorrowland, Disneyland takes its visitors into a magical story world and also challenges the boundaries of reality. Mickey's Toontown consists of a cartoony walk-through of Mickey's home and at the same time other equally "real" attractions that create an immersive combination of the plausible unbelievable. Visitors can take home some of Disneyland's story world elements such as character-based products, and so can obtain a part of Disney's fantasy into their daily lives. (Boni et al. 2017, 102-103.)

According to Green and Kapell (2017, 79) they state that the experience of moviegoers or readers, will have a limited scope of the visual data or the description of details and the camera pilots the view of the presented world. The authors argued that "The reader may choose to build this fictional world more completely, or simply disregard world-building beyond what the author provides", which leads to conclusion that the level of immersion of a fictional world depends on if the audience chooses to rely on the details provided by the author's or expand their own view of the fictional world.

In video games, the players can explore their surroundings more freely. This empowers players to unfold digital narratives which improves the immersion of the game's fictional world that acts as an important base for exploration and story engagement. Players act as the camera pilots and can focus on details that other mediums necessarily would not show, and this leads to a sense of agency and point of view of how the world is experienced. (Green & Kapell 2017, 79.)

The concept of a story world has two distinguishable narrative elements: intradiegetic elements which reside inside the story world, and extra-diegetic elements which exist outside of the fictional world narrative. For example, soundtracks in movies illustrate with their diegetic music that stems within the

story world and what the characters and audiences experience together, contrasted with extra-diegetic music which shapes the emotions of audiences but is absent in the story world. Video games on the other hand portray story worlds with shots and dialogues, whilst the in-game menus and statistics are extra-diegetic creating a steady change between these two parts of story worlds. (Boni et al. 2017, 33.)

The use of technology, art and design in the game industry for game producers to use technology, art and design which transforms into a marketing advantage for their products and also into a way to make splendid profits (Okur & Aygenc 2018). Taking this point of view into account, environment and space design particularly stand out as important elements defining whether a game will be successful or not (Huizinga, 2016). According to Okur and Aygenc (2018) "The narrative language, blending past, present, or future environmental and spatial design with cinematographic principles, elevates video games." Cinematography accentuates the crucial role of space- and environment design as it functions as the most important design element. This binding glue brings together the narrative, story, and game fiction as a priority and engaging players (Green & Kaufman, 2015).

Environmental storytelling creates the preconditions for an immersive narrative experience in at least one of four ways: spatial stories can evoke pre-existing narrative associations; they can provide a staging ground where narrative events are enacted; they may embed narrative information within their mise-en-scene, or they provide resources for emergent narratives. (Jenkins 2004, 6.)

'Show don't tell' is a principle that works well with environmental storytelling. It establishes a link to the actions of characters and also gives traits and personality to the world itself, and is often not as valued a narrative element as other components. (De Nucci & Kramarzewski 2018, 194.) Key roles for environmental storytelling can be communicated with the use of props, writings on walls, signs, fauna, flora, objects, characters, and audio which adds to the immersive experience of the world (De Nucci & Kramarzewski 2018, 196).

In video games which have long-form storytelling and little to no player choice, the concept of Barthes' et. al. (2016, 297) "cardinal functions" applies, although according to Green and Kapell (2017, 78) "In the case of video games, the forms of these foundational storytelling elements are analogous but not identical. In digital storytelling, these elements can take the form of narration, dialogue, or even found objects within the environment." (Green & Kapell 2017, 78.) Digital narratives accentuate elements and objects that might appear nonessential, such as in the video game BioShock Infinite (2013) where background material, propaganda, and audio recordings create an immersive environment filled with clues of the plot and unveil subtle and meaningful parts of it (Green & Kapell 2017, 78). Curiosity and the willingness to encounter such things like in many video games, usually it is rewarded. (Green & Kapell 2017, 79).

3.2 Emotional connection and brand resonance

World-building exceeds the ways traditional stories are told and can spur emotions from audiences which results in the development of deepened connection towards narratives. When it comes to creating a brand strategy, world-building can serve as a potent tool for deepening a connection to brand core values. Emotional connection and brand resonance share nuanced dynamics, and illustrate how world-building can influence the making of lasting bonds between brands and audiences.

Often surpassed by visuals, sounds, function as important parts when developing immersive experiences. Sounds are a great, versatile and inexpensive way of creating an atmospheric sense of place for its listener whilst evoking emotional reactions. For example, within the science fiction franchise Star Wars (1977-present) universe, the iconic lightsaber hum or the roar of Chewbacca arouses immediate responses in memory and showcases how auralization can be used as a powerful tool to enrich visualizations. (Wolf 2012, 64.)

Languages that are invented solely for imaginary worlds have several roles, such as presenting new concepts and giving new perspectives on elements that already exist. The aesthetic and emotional atmosphere of a world or its culture can consist of sounds and visual design of the created languages. Convincing the audience of these verbal and also often written creations might prove difficult due to connections and visuals to their inspirational source, and so raise challenges in the translation process. (Wolf 2012, 184.)

The widely common appeal towards Tolkien's trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien, 1954-1955) and other works of based on the Middle-earth have their roots in the nostalgic description of a far-away land which is filled with lost embodiments of myth, magic and Elvish wisdom (Hassler-Forest 2016, 31). The "spiritual essence" is the fan's extensively conveyed expression of Tolkien's story world (de Kloet & Kuipers 2007).

The "topofocal" technique Tolkien uses in *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955) narrative style uses a detailed portrayal of the fantasy world's geography, which strives away from the usual storytelling structure that is driven by the plot, and highlights connections between the characters and their surroundings (Ekman, Stefan & Ekman, Stefar 2013, 2). The intricate world of Middle-earth does not function just as a backdrop but as a dynamic and important part of the narrative that builds experiences for the characters.

Tolkien's works are frequently specified as Hassler-Forest (2016, 31) observed "by the dialectical tension between a thoroughly anti-capitalist spirit and the reactionary desire to resist not only industrial modernization but also any social movement that challenges class power", this observation implies that subtle explorations of socio-economic themes in Tolkien's narratives show a deeper understanding of the mutual influence among anticapitalist views and the defying of industrial modernization in their fictional worlds. Paradoxically, compared to our postmodern world, Tolkien's fantastical world is often felt as more "real" than its genuine counterpart where finding purpose is difficult and

where the legitimacy of traditional knowledge appears to disappear (de Kloet & Kuipers 2007).

3.3 Sustainable immersion

Achieving sustainable immersion begins with a well-crafted world-building that offers a sense of magnetic continuity and sustains an immersive experience that craves revisits from the audience. These intricate details of a world act as a base for exploration creating lasting and sustainable engagement. Layers of the story world and its hidden secrets keep the fictional setting intriguing, forging a deeper connection with all its uncovered details which leads to magnified interest and appreciation towards the world.

The logic of an imaginary world acts as a key part of the story. It gives the audience a sturdy base where they can speculate and fill gaps which creates a cohesive illusion of the world. Ambiguity is often important because too strict set rules can restrict the imagination of the audience, especially in word-based media. (Wolf 2012, 53.)

Describing itself as a place that brings dreams to life, Disneyland offers its visitors the means to defy gravity and move with extensive speed that challenges the rational logic of gravity and what is possible on Earth. The whole theme park is operated with representations of space flight, aliens, time travel, and dream worlds, which together form without limitations of time, distance, or size an immersive postmodern world. Equivalent to how Mickey can travel across different realms, the visitors of Disneyland can experience a story world that welcomes, immerses, and merges all media. (Boni et. al. 2017, 104.)

4 INTERIOR AND STORE DESIGN

Space and interior design play a crucial role in fictional media, influencing the narrative, characters, and overall atmosphere of the story. The main objective of this thesis was to find out how independent shop fronts are presented as experiential shopping spaces in fictional media, and the interior- and space design plays a vital part shaping these perceptions. Space after all serves as a physical embodiment of the story's theme or of its central message.

4.1 Thematic space

Wes Anderson's distinctive cinematic style is often portrayed as whimsical, elaborate, and winding. All creations of Anderson set a voyage to their fantasy worlds that are full of surprises, where colourful scenes are accompanied by intricate details. The director prefers the use of complexities, rotating cast and aesthetics that are timeless, and create love-hate relationships among audiences. Since the release of *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014) it is hard to find a cynical critic of Andersons' work. - - The film is set in the imaginary European country Zubrowka, existing in the time between wars, in the Grand Budapest Hotel that is renowned as fabulously pink. (Marshall 2014.)

Forgetting critics who claim that the fastidiousness of the director restricts Anderson, Marshall (2014) asserts that in the film "unadorned acting is a necessary complement to the decorative set and over-the-top plot". - - The film bakery, Mendl's, is inviting the viewers to savour their culinary delights, and the hotel itself appears like a tiered layer cake beneath sugar-dusting, and this visual delight of a film is waiting to be gulped down by the viewer (Marshall 2014). According to Marshall (2014) the hotel itself is "the largest confection up for consumption" and that the story contains visual treats inside each other like matryoshka dolls that are waiting to be devoured.

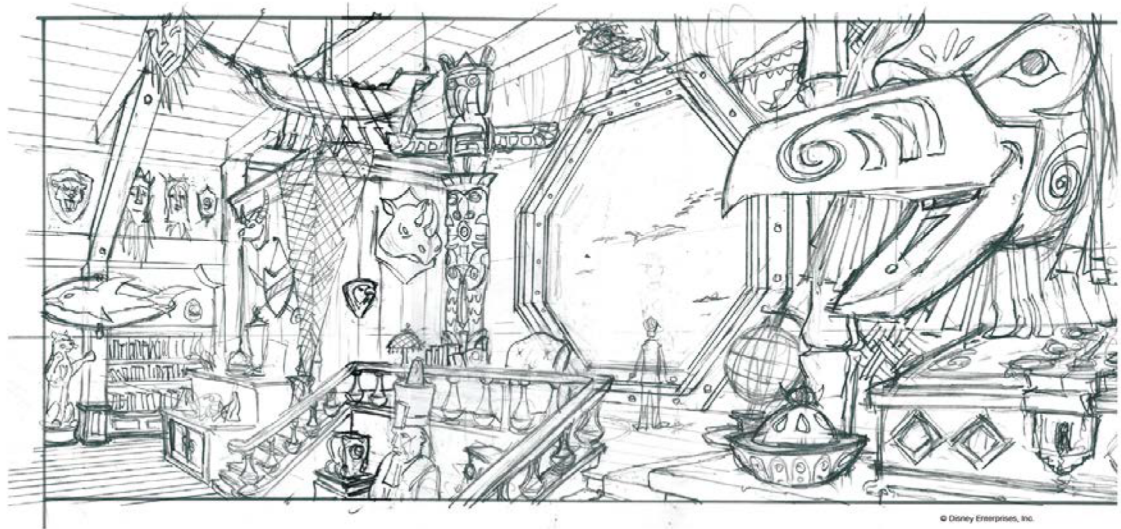
4.2 Character revealing space

How interior space is perceived and interacted by the inhabitants and what kind of impact the space has on them, is always influenced by the habitant's physical and psychological condition, which affects observation, disruptions upon encounters and rendering of spaces that are loaded with associations. Exploration of what encountering architecture as a subjective experience can potentially provide, for example, support and inspiration in the people's ordinary lives. The immersive medium that films can be, can show intricate stories with explicit language that raises emotions in viewers and which resonate with memory. These elements can be applied to "portray the psychological state of a character through the way they occupy and engage with the spaces they inhabit". The elements shown on-screen are carefully curated so they can portray the atmospheric qualities and provide symbolic significance, and also reflecting the characters psychological state (Erk & McConnell 2023, 110.)

The narrative structure of cinematic works offers accessibility, which makes them a suitable medium to convey the importance of architectural spaces and possibly affect everyday lives. Erk and McConnell (2023, 110) state that "It takes us directly into the intimate and subjective way a character inhabits space". Curating analysis of spaces that are portrayed in films can possibly lead to a deeper understanding of the communicative tools of architecture (Erk & McConnell 2023, 110).

Providing an inner look at their layout sketches for the animation *Atlantis: The Lost Empire* (2001) Ghertner (2010, 34-37) shares useful insights for understanding how they came up with one of the design roughs (Picture 2.) for the study room for one of the character in the animation, Mr Whitmore. The character is a very wealthy man, who has a huge window looking out to the storyworld, into the Atlantic Ocean. The very elaborate layout contains elements from Ghertner's research photos that they used as inspiration, and also as

models to depict different architectural elements and objects found in the fictional enclosure. (Ghertner 2010, 34-37.)



PICTURE 2. Layout and Composition for Animation (Ghertner 2010, 34-35). Illustrated idea of the Whitmore's Study for Atlantis: The Lost Empire (2001). ©Disney Enterprises, Inc.

Whitmore's study is the prime of his mansion and the way to enter the space has a touch of grandeur, a birdcage elevator, which is approached from the estate's main floor and then descends into the study. Introducing the study in this way, offers a great opportunity to present the whole space and also the possibility to foreshadow the soon-approaching dive into the ocean adventure. Ghertner's layout roughs provide a wide overview of the entire interior (Ghertner 2010, 37).

Ghertner stresses that the use of real-world references assures a rich and detailed depiction of interior spaces in animations. These insights, illustrations and reference photos that Ghertner (2010, 34-37) provides, leads to the conclusion that the incorporation of real-life architectural elements in fictional spaces enables a strengthened sense of realism and improved sensory experience of audiences in animated environments.

4.3 Atmosphere-setting space

Retail marketers are aware of the influencing power of the five senses. The term "store atmosphere" or "atmospherics" is often used by retailers to describe how shoppers can be influenced through sensory experiences (Claus & Garaus 2015, 116).

Two strategies can be used to achieve an optimal arousal level, and the first one seeks to produce it by merging both kinds of stimuli at the same time. -- The second one utilizes these stimuli but allocates them in two different parts of the store. Shoppers desire evoking stimuli but at the same time long for relaxation and calming stimuli. A store can comprise different sections with arousing elements, such as bright lighting, vibrant colors and music to make explicit zones more energized, and also create calmer areas that focus on delivering a sense of relaxation with the help of tranquil lighting, softer colors and music that is soothing. (Claus & Garaus 2015, 123.)

External stimuli can provoke arousal levels, yet, it is vital to include the second apt state of mood, pleasure. The key goal is to induce positive feelings in customers, and to achieve such a goal considering the store atmosphere is to mix arousal and pleasure together. (Claus & Garaus 2015, 124.) Every environmental stimulus can be divided into two categories, based on its arousal and pleasure levels. Excitement and stimulation are the desired outcomes of arousal, and pleasure in the other is connected to enjoyable sensations. (Claus & Garaus 2015, 148.)

An important question to ask when thinking about a suitable retail environment is: what is the outcome you want to attain with the store atmosphere? (Claus & Garaus 2015, 124.) The atmosphere in a store should be set in the proper place on a scale, causing pleasant feelings that are arousing (e.g., sports store, music store, theme park, bowling alley) or non arousing with a blend of enjoyable sensations (e.g., wine store, bookstore, spa) while evading placement between unpleasant and sleepy. (Claus & Garaus 2015, 124-125). The summarized

answer of how the desired store atmosphere can be achieved is the application of a suitably increased arousal level as well as a high level of pleasure (Claus & Garaus 2015, 124-125), which leads to the conclusion that bringing these two elements to the store atmosphere can encourage a positive and engaging shopping experience, which enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The store atmosphere is a crucial part of the retail environment and it contains controllable elements such as music, scents, lighting, color and density (Claus & Garaus 2015, 126). Music in a store setting can be applied in various ways, by altering the volume, tempo and genre of played melodies. Taking into consideration the store's target group taste is vital, but because of strong research results, the recommendation is to employ slow in-store music for positive customer response. (Claus & Garaus 2015, 128).

Scents have a significant role in shaping moods and influencing buying behavior (Claus & Garaus 2015, 131). The olfactory sense is the only human sensation that has a direct connection to the limbic system. This connection triggers immediate emotional responses. Fragrances are leveraged by marketers to evoke feelings of joy, hunger, sentimentality and even repulsion. (Wilkie 1995.) For example, chocolate scent evokes feelings of romance, like in the chocolate shop, Tallipihan Suklaapuoti (Picture 3.), or the use of floral scents that increase the overall time spent in a store (Claus & Garaus 2015, 135). A one-of-a-kind and pleasant scent can effectively differentiate a store from its rivals, and optimal and simple ambient aromas should be aligned with the store's type and products, which leads to positive effects on shopping behavior (Claus & Garaus 2015, 148).



PICTURE 3. Tallipihan Suklaapuoti (Tallipihan Suklaapuoti 2021). The chocolate shop is located in Tampere, Finland and the air is filled with delicious chocolate scents.

When viewers see scented elements in fictional shops that are portrayed in media on screen such as flowers, it can create a multisensory sensation. In the contemporary era it is not yet possible for the viewer to directly experience the fragrances through screens, but the visual representation can stimulate memories, familiarity or connection with the depicted scent originators. This can provoke immersion, which makes the fictional setting more explicit and memorable for the audience.

Lighting in stores has a significant impact on the atmosphere and influences customer behavior. When a shopper enters a retail environment, the intensity of lighting greatly affects the customer's first image and behavior of the store. Different lighting designs are used by different store types, such as brightly illuminated discount stores where the intense lightning improves efficiency and impulse buys. On the contrary, department stores use lower levels of lighting to create a relaxed atmosphere for their clientele to increase time spent in the

store. (Claus & Garaus 2015, 136-137.) For example, The Cabinet of Curiosities shop (Picture 4.) uses indirect ambient lighting in their store that according to Claus and Garaus (2015, 146) to make customers linger longer. Contrasted with bright fluorescent lighting and warmer hues will give the image of a discount store (Baker, Levy & Grewal 1993, 445– 460).



PICTURE 4. The Cabinet of Curiosities (Ammenadka 2023). Ambient lightning in the family run shop in Haworth, Yorkshire England.

The apt level of lightning in consumers can evoke desirable reactions such as increased impulse purchases and rising levels of honesty since bright lighting in inclined areas to shoplifting possibly helps to decrease thefts in stores. Properly lit stores can induce various positive effects such as attractiveness towards merchandise, and increase the number of products that are examined which leads to more sales. (Claus & Garaus 2015, 136-137.)

Colors in retail environments affect customer recognition and impact perception, image, classification and interpretation by the transmission of the intentions and message the retail environment desires to convey (Tantanatewin & Inkarojrit 2016; Eisemann 2000; Söker 2009; Valdez; Mehrabian 1994).

Colors serve three main purposes when designing a store, according to Claus and Garaus (2015, 142):

1. Setting the store apart from competitors and positioning it
2. Reposition explicit associations of the store
3. Impacting shoppers' mood and behaviour.

The use of colors for differentiation from competitors and creating associations with certain colors are strategically used by retailers and service businesses to make a consistent image of the brand. Colors act as catalysts that can evoke various associations. When choosing colors the symbolic meanings of them in different cultures and target groups should be taken into consideration. Also, colors can trigger both cultural and biological reactions and affect how consumers feel, pleasure, and also their arousal levels. (Claus & Garaus 2015, 142.)

Perceived crowding is a state of psychological stress when an individual's space demand surpasses the perceived available space. It can arise from small store sizes, individual anxiety, or a high amount of people in the same space. The density of the space is the key to perceived crowding, and it can be either a positive aspect, such as a restaurant full of people which is a sign of the place's popularity, or on the contrary an empty restaurant which cues negatively of the place. (Claus & Garaus 2015, 145.) This leads to the conclusion that for fictional settings involving food establishments, for example, a bustling bakery with a higher density of customers could serve as a positive indicator, reflecting the place's popularity and allure.

In retail environments, crowding should always be avoided if possible, which can be achieved by giving enough space for spots that have high levels of traffic, ensuring that the aisles are wide enough, the store has a clear layout, and using music that has a slow-tempo which decrease customer arousal and impacts to the atmosphere by making it seem calm and relaxed. (Claus & Garaus 2015, 145.)

According to Claus & Garau (2015, 146-147) an appealing and enticing store atmosphere relies on the overall synergy between the different elements. The keyword is congruence, which concerns three characteristics:

1. The promoted product should be matched with the atmospheric elements. For example, a chocolate speciality shop can use a chocolate scent which creates a pleasant connotation between the scent and the delicacies
2. Harmony between all atmospheric elements, such as lighting, scents, music and colour should complement one another and also create a harmonizing concept. A cohesive atmosphere which is coordinated in such a way influences desired consumer behaviour
3. The store concept should align with its atmospherics. The atmosphere should coordinate internally with the products, and also with the store concept which caters for specific shopping motivations and, serves the needs of the target audience. No matter if the store is serving hedonic or functional shoppers, the store atmosphere should be deliberately altered with fitting environmental stimuli.

Miela Designroom is one real-life examples of effectively crafted congruence in the store design. Their dynamic concept was to bring popular Finnish brands available for everyone, whilst providing a flexible showroom for different brands' products. Their service model contained accessibility of high-demand locations for smaller Finnish brands, where Miela Designroom provides a rent space in their store for brands' products. Their goal was to become a trustworthy partner which offers consumers domestic alternatives alongside international chains and connects Finnish brands with consumers. (Perä-Rouhu & Saralevä 2018, 22.) The store design reflects their concept, product and values, with atmospheric elements such as a calming and neutral color scheme, natural materials, the combination of ambient and spot lighting, and calming background music which together relates to the high-quality design and fashion products of various Finnish brands.

5 CASE STUDIES OF FICTIONAL SHOPS

In this chapter, the author of this thesis analyzed the components of three different case studies: Gütiokipänjä -bakery from 2D animated film *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989), The Fireplace from 3D animated movie *Elemental* (2023) and The Kochi Dye Shop from video game *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* (2017). The chapter focuses on how the case studies portrayed experiential shopping experiences in fictional media, by examining different kinds of techniques, such as retail space design, spatiality, atmosphere setting space, world-building and characterization, aiming to find insights on how the experiences are conveyed to the audience or players.

The animation film case study's shops contain dramaturgic meaning since that is their original intent in these titles among other cinematography and storytelling elements. For instance, the bakery Gütiokipänjä bakery serves as a home away from home for the main character Kiki and a new place to start the path towards adulthood and agency for the young witch. Another example is resting in the peaceful Hateno Village, The Kochi Dye Shop which acts as a character customization spot for the player and a part of world-building in the game.

5.1 *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989): Gütiokipänjä bakery

In 1984 Studio Ghibli was founded by directors Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata, producer Suzuki Toshio, and Yasuyoshi Tokuma, the head of Ghibli's prior parent organisation Tokuma Shoten Publishing Company. The studio arose to be Japan's leading animation studio using hand-drawn feature-length animations. Studio Ghibli is located in the Koganei suburb of Tokyo and persists in altering the landscape of animation with continuous projects, consisting of many of its films directed by Hayao Miyazaki (Alpert 2020, 6). Hayao Miyazaki is the studio's prevailing animation director from Japan and his film *Spirited*

Away (2001) won an Academy Award which, demonstrates Miyazaki's global allure. The director's films alter and revive the principles of Shinto, and are contrasted with the inspiration of transnational cultures, myths and children's literature and together these elements create the "modern myth" available to post-industrialised audiences around the globe. (Wright 2005).

In the context of the topic of this thesis, experiential shopping in fictional media, Kiki's Delivery Service (1989) was chosen as one of the case study examples. In the film, the main character Kiki, a young witch, sets off their journey in a new city and settles at a bakery. Studio Ghibli would have had multiple other examples to choose from, like in Howl's Moving Castle (2004) the Hatter's Hat Shop where the heroine of the film Sophie works, the antique shop Chikyuya in Whisper of the Heart (1995) or the street market showcased in From Up on Poppy Hill (2011) among many more examples.

Majo no Takkyūbin (Kadono 1985), titled in English: Kiki's Delivery Service was a novel written by Eiko Kadono and illustrated by Akiko Hayashi which was later adapted by Studio Ghibli into an animated film that Miyazaki directed in 1989. Eiko Kadono is the author of nearly 250 published original works and has made a significant contribution to children's literature in various genres. The Japanese author has also translated into Japanese over 100 works by foreign picture-book authors, Kadono's influence surpasses different age groups and genres which has helped her achieve popularity across the globe. Kadono's novel of the little witch turned into a book series of six volumes and was praised in Japan and overseas. The imaginative storytelling and the rich world-building of vast realms together with the author's quirky and virtuous characters are the result of Kadono's creativity and experience. (Sundmark 2016.) According to Noralities (2021), the novel is practically a perfect selection for Studio Ghibli to make a movie adaptation of it. Noralities describes the reason for this as because the original work embodies a sweet spot of mundane fantasy which is the perfect blend for a Ghibli movie.

Miyazaki has stated how Kiki's Delivery Service was created that when they were creating the setting for Koriko city, the location where the bakery (Picture 5.) exists, the director modeled it intentionally after multiple cities and countries, such as Scotland, Stockholm, San Francisco, Paris, including even few Italian cities. The director furthermore describes their world-building process by stating "For a European viewer, they are a mixed landscape but for the Japanese, it is an ordinary European city. I deceived them beautifully. I liked this hooligan trick." (Sanakan Collection 2023.)



PICTURE 5. Kiki's Delivery Service (1989). Screenshot of Gütiokipänjä -artisan bakery street exterior.

Nestled on a hilltop, Gütiokipänjä (Picture 5.) an artisan bakery, rest at the end of a quiet paved street that leads the main character away from the busy city centre. The bakery's exterior has a blend of tradition and charm, with its half-timbered look which reminds of old Central European architecture, a technique rooted in German Gothic building techniques (Shkolna et al. 2021, 61). The building sits under a red gabled roof which is prevalent in colder climates, and the warm yellow exterior finish this colour combination hints towards a traditional Scandinavian pairing.

The hand-painted Blackletter-style bakery name over the entrance door and under a Dutch awning (Picture 6.) adds to the appearance a trace of a bygone era. This deliberate fusion of different elements creates a familiar yet unique ambience and portrays a quaint imagined shop of the 50s in the past. Miyazaki stated "I especially liked the uncertainty of the length of time when events occur." (Sanakan Collection 2023).



PICTURE 6. Kiki's Delivery Service (1989). Screenshot of the bakery's storefront window with baked goods displayed and customers inside and outside.

The shop's interior (Picture 7.) is composed of rustic beams in the ceiling, warm-toned perhaps Gustavian inspired wallpaper, wooden shelving where some have pretzel ornaments on top and boasting with fresh bread, jams, juices and other dainties, around a display cabinet which is filled with baked delicacies and serves as a sales counter. The shop space overall has a warm and positively busy atmosphere with retro decor details, such as an old cash register ringing nostalgic sound when a customer is cashed. The visual components where customers possibly sneak a peek of the busy artisan in the oven room where more bakery items are crafted to feed hungry customers, with the delicious scents of culinary delights and the smoke of an old wood-burning oven

floating to the shop floor, facilitate a romanticized appreciation for craftsmanship and add to the experiential shopping experience.



PICTURE 7. Kiki's Delivery Service (1989). Screenshot of inside the bakery with Kiki at the checkout counter and the pastry wreath that Fukuo made for the display window.

Gütiokipänjä is a consciously fused microcosm of world-building and also serves as a sound example of immersive storytelling. Captured in a way it exceeds the function of only a backdrop and acts as an important part of crafting a detailed environment and a character of itself, telling stories of Koriko's culture through its architecture, colours, and extensive detailing where every element narrates a story and invites customers to pay a visit. The bakery is strategically placed between a neighbourhood where locals live, at the end of a peaceful street which leads to a more busy city centre. This posting suggests that locals might have a daily ritual on their daily commute, where they stop by to purchase fresh pastries and baked goods from their local shop and catch up with neighbours. This amplifies the sense of a community-centric family owned business.

Showcasing the private quarters of the owners, which function under the same roof as their bakery adds a further layer of authenticity. The kitchen is filled with a homey appeal with its simple furnishings and a wood-burning stove with which Osono, one of the two owners and bakers, prepares some coffee for their quest in a fostering moment of stillness and connection, which resonates with how Miyazaki described such moments in their films "We have a word for that in Japanese. It's called *ma*. Emptiness. It's there intentionally." (Ebert 2002). The director lets his audiences to be absorbed in the moment, which creates a sense of time and place and who the characters are (Ebert 2002). By offering such inhale-exhale moments, where the story is not advancing but the viewers can take a moment to ground themselves and also relate to the characters on more human level, and also relate and immerse themselves to the very human action that takes place on the screen. This domestic setting reveals another layer of genuineness and highlights the down-to-earth core of *Gütiokipänjä* and prompt a feeling of a bygone world.

Kadono (2020) describes *Gutiokopänjä*-bakery as resting on a narrow street, which is lined with small houses that seem to tilt over the road. Kiki arrives in the book on the street at sunset, and she notices dishes clinking and laughter coming from inside the houses. Then she hears a woman's voice coming from inside a bakery that is about to close. The flour house sits right next to the bakery, which the author depicts to be a storehouse and it appears to be entirely coated in white flour with a sunny bay window. Osono tells Kiki that the bakery's flour house is small, but it has a bed for the little witch and running water on the second floor. In the morning the street underneath the flour house is busy with people hurrying past Kiki's bay window. (Kadono 2020, 36-46)

As the main character Kiki settles in the uninhabited bakery's attic where spiderwebs and flour mixed with dust has claimed the space, an opportunity arises as the viewer later witnesses how Kiki and Jiji settle in and transform it into a home, which can amplify a sense of place and connection to it via mundane tasks such as cleaning. Showcasing the surroundings of the building from the attic room, which has a view of the sea from the dormer window,

combined with seagull cries at the bay increases a sense of place and deepens the connection to the fictional world in this quiet moment.

An unextraordinary early routine unravels the next morning, as Fukuo, the other owner and baker, stretches in their backyard and makes his way to the core of craftsmanship, the oven room (Picture 8.). The day starts by heating a traditional-looking wood-burning baking oven. Equipped with wooden furniture including a modestly ornamented wall shelf with milk bottles of glass sitting on the shelves, the space continues forming a cohesive and inviting atmosphere. Offering a glance at the everyday life of the small business, the crackling of burning wood, freshly baked goods, with two overlapping chores infused with dialogue beds an entertaining setting to showcase the intricacies of bread making. In a humorous scene where Fukuo's baking takes centre stage, the baker skilfully spins oven trays as the familiar of the little witch, Jiji, watches in awe, whilst Kiki and Osono fill the shelves in the shop space with offerings of the day.



PICTURE 8. Kiki's Delivery Service (1989). Screenshot of the bakery's oven room where the owners Fukuo and Osono are working.

Gütiokipänjä's appearance reveals and connects with the bakery's two owners' personalities and characterizations. The aesthetic, warm tones and the use of down-to-earth and natural materials communicate to the viewer about the married couples Osono's and Fukuo's qualities. Together they act as vital supporters of their community, and Osono's warm, affirmative personality the co-owners consideration for customers seamlessly complement Fukuo's eccentric, quiet yet confident spirit possessing some qualities of a boaster who is proud of his craft and business. Also, the emphasis that the craftsmanship and creation process of Fukuo is displayed communicates the important part it has in the character's personality.

Yōichi Nishikawa started working at Studio Ghibli as a background artist after the release of Kiki's Delivery Service. Nishikawa was asked in an interview what were some of the most important things he had learned while working at the Japanese animation studio, Nishikawa stated: "the background should always recede and not overshadow or outshine the character. A painting should never look too "real" or too much like a photograph." (Gallerynucleus 2020.) The artist stated that once he had to redo a painting because Miyazaki felt it was "too perfect, too much like a photograph" and the Miyazaki suggested that Nishikawa could use more vivid colours to make it look more imaginative. Another key aspect of Ghibli's background paintings are the locations and the artist's emotional connection to them. Nishikawa stated that many of the background artist's paintings are based on places he has visited for leisure or while researching for a film to bring out the authenticity of the place, and even when he paints fantasy settings he often is inspired by aspects of reality. (Gallerynucleus 2020.)

Ultimately, this interview demonstrates how the emotional connection of artists to real locations plays a vital part in Studio Ghibli's works. This leads to the conclusion that the complex mix of reality and imagination of the artist acts as an essential component in creating the unique and fascinating locations that illustrate Ghibli's cinematic and memorable landscapes.

In Australia, the influence of Gūtiokipānjä affects a small real-life bakery, Ross, residing in Tasmania attracting multiple fans who flock to experience similar surroundings as one seen in the animated movie (Hooper 2015). These sort of small bakeries producing their own merchandise seems to be fading with time, but few of them still manage to persist. At the University of Tasmania, Dr Craig Norris has broadly studied why people visit film and TV locations and stated "When we go to these locations we get to live and be excited by a space through the fantasy of them," and continues "The bakery itself bears a really uncanny similarity to the bakery in Kiki's Delivery Service. The fact that you can see the oven cooking the bread from the counter is a really important part of it." (Hooper 2015.) This leads to the conclusion that Miyazaki's fictional bakery has illustrated experiential experiences that exceed the screen. Also, the fictional location has created an urge for many fans to blur the boundaries between fiction and reality, and that the Ross bakery offers comparable ventures.

A study by Kim and Oh (2020) explored the impact of nostalgia that is associated with Hayao Miyazaki's films on the motivation of tourists to visit theme parks that were inspired by his works. The study's findings indicated that people who experienced nostalgia for Miyazaki's characters, narratives, aesthetics, cultures, and traditions shown in the director's movies showcased a potent inclination to visit the theme park. Positively affecting individuals' attitudes and choices to visit the park in the future. There were limitations in the study, such as in sample representativeness and the lack of examining moderating effects exist, but it still provided useful insights into the multidimensional qualities of nostalgia and how important part it plays in promoting film tourism regarding the director's animations. (Kim & Oh 2020) This study has demonstrated that the films of Miyazaki evoke a desire to visit the locations seen on screen and so concluding that they also significantly impact audiences' mindsets and preferences regarding experiential shopping.

5.2 Elemental (2023): The Fireplace

For this study, and its research question "How does fictional media portray experiential shopping?" the second case study Elemental (2023) was chosen. The 3D animated film displays a shop space that has a pivotal role in the narrative and is based on an imaginative, fascinating and vibrant world. The film was created in the collaborative nest of animation giants, Disney and Pixar, the two studios that have long shaped the world of animation.

Walter Elias Disney was a visionary dreamer who shaped the Walt Disney Company's origins, which now features classic animated films and iconic properties like Mickey Mouse, Star Wars, Marvel and Avatar. (Causer 2019). Disney's over 50 animated movies supply a rich scope for the exploration of surrealist digitalisms. The core of the Walt Disney Company reflects the innovation of historic animation and its strategic family-oriented production approach has moulded its place as the world's second-largest media empire by revenue. (Ferguson 2017).

Pixar Animation Studios was founded in 1986 and they forever changed the digital era's animations by mixing innovation and tradition guided by John Lasseter, Ed Catmull, and Steve Jobs. The company focused on hardware and software tech like CAPS. Collaborating with Disney, resulted in Toy Story (1995) which was the first completely computer-animated movie and became a commercial sensation that paved the way for Pixar as it was becoming a world-class animation studio. A Bug's Life (1998) was created from a coproduction agreement with Disney, and while successes continued in 2004 a disagreement stopped negotiations between Pixar and Disney. After an all-stock transaction in 2006, Pixar was acquired by The Walt Disney Company and Pixar's leaders received principal roles in the enterprise. Lasseter and Catmull together supervised the separate entities, Pixar and Disney Animation, and they were driven by a shared vision to mend Disney's greatness. The following films by Pixar include Ratatouille (2007), WALL-E (2008), and Up (2009), which resumed the commercial and critical triumph of the studio. (Bendazzi 2016.)

These two animation studio pioneers possess numerous films with fascinating shop spaces, such as Wandering Oaken's Trading Post (and sauna) from the animated film *Frozen* (2013) where the second main character Anna supplies her gear needs before venturing to save her sister and where she also meets Kristoff and Sven. One of the main locations in the movie *Toy Story 4* (2019) mainly revolves at an antique store, Second Chance Antiques, where the lead Woody reunites with his old companion, Bo Beep.

In a documentary *Good Chemistry: The Story of Elemental* (2023) the director stated that *Elemental* (2023) was infused by the director Peter Sohn's personal experiences, and was particularly inspired by the profound impact of Sohn's childhood in his parents' shops when growing up in New York and his choice of pursuing animation as a career. The animated movie depicts the relationships between family members of first and second-generation immigrants, and the sacrifices parents made for their children, which Sohn pulls from his perspective as a second-generation Asian American. For the film, Sohn drew inspiration from two sides of his own life experiences: relationship with his parents and their shop, relationship with his wife who wasn't Korean and about the clash it created within Sohn's family. The core of the film is a love story and it is all about gestures of affection. *Elemental* is not just a love story of romantic devotion, but also parental love. Sohn (2023) stated "The best stories draw from elements of real life." in the documentary (2023).

Sohn (2023) stated that "This idea of two people from two different cultures coming together - fire and water - what would happen if they could get along? And that was stemmed off of I fell in love with someone that wasn't Korean." (National Public Radio, Inc 2023). In the making of documentary (2023) Sohn stated that his journey is threaded into the narrative of *Elemental*, a first-generation immigrant experience of his parents, the struggle of pursuing art as a career over the expectation of traditional career paths and taking over the family business. The story is not autobiographical, yet it retains Sohn's childhood experiences in New York and suggestive likeness of his parents'

shops'. Elemental embodies parts of Sohn's childhood, where all parts of their family's shops' became places for many activities, from doing homework to having meals in the store, playing with his brother in the shop isles, helping out their parents in whatever way they could and dreams within the family business.

The documentary (2023) reveals how the core of the film revolves around Ember, a fire girl and a dutiful daughter and a clash triggered by her and soon after meeting Wade, a water boy from privileged background. The story tacitly portrays xenophobia and racism, stemming from the director's own experiences growing up in Bronx, New York amidst societal challenges. Pulling inspiration from the diversity of New York the setting of the film, Element City, also contains global influences from cities such as San Francisco, Amsterdam, and Venice. The central hub of the film is their family's business, a convenience store that was built from scratch by Ember's parents and what started to run together, echoes Sohn's upbringing but also the main character's and the director's father's dream - a new life for his children.

The story of Elemental begins when a fire-element couple, Bernie and Cinder, face discrimination after arriving in Element City where also other elements like water, earth and air live. Bernie and Cinder have left their homeland searching for a safer place for their growing family. After a hard first day in the unwelcoming land, the soon-to-be-parents find themselves in one of the vibrant districts of the city, Fire Town. They stumble upon a once-abandoned corner building that foliage has taken over and weathered neglect made its damage, even having massive holes in the structure and 'for sale' sign beckoning them. The building has a closed shop space on street level and 3-4 compact floors all wrapped up in a curvy and terrestrial architecture. Inside, nature truly has reclaimed the space, as moss grows on the walls and rubble is scattered across the flooring. The structure becomes the base for their dreams, as Bernie envisions possibilities in the worn shop space. The couple settles inside the deserted walls and soon after their daughter, Ember, is born.

Bernie works hard to transform the whole establishment into something that can house his family and create a way to make a living for themselves, and most likely the audience witnessing this effort and transformation of space provides enjoyment. The remodelled exterior has tall pipe-shaped ovens and a sign of their new neighbourhood convenience store 'The Fireplace: Wood Snacks - Lava Java - Kol-nuts' that the father and his now slightly older daughter, crafted together - a proud manifestation of their family's dream. The convenience store 'The Fireplace' (Picture 9.) places its roots into the neighbourhood.



PICTURE 9. Elemental (2023). Screenshot of the renovated shop front of 'The Fireplace' convenience store.

The Blue Flame that Bernie and Cinder carried with them in a lantern from their homeland symbolizes the cultural core of their traditions. Ember and her father place the flame in an open firepit in the back of the store, where its blue glow fills the space with mystical light. As they breathe new life into the old building the atmosphere transforms into a harmonious blend of eclectic elements, such as a mix of metalwork, brick, stone, and clay from inside and outside. The shop has evolved with time and endeavours into its presentable state since the rotting wood flooring has been replaced with rhombus-shaped tiling, a couple of cafe tables and seats that are inviting customers to linger and enjoy this 'second place' and its offerings, company of the owners and atmosphere, self-serve

machines with colourful beverages swirling inside and shop shelves filled with convenience store snacks and goods.

The sales counter (Picture 10.) becomes a focal point, the hub of the shop - display cabinets filled with their special fire-friendly treats, and on the back wall a wood-burning oven spreading comforting warmth. Bernie and Ember make to order the store's special 'Kol-nuts' (Picture 10.) and each treat is crafted in a striking manner and with care and tradition and Ember crafts in a similar manner 'sugarpops' (Picture 11.) for the young ones.



PICTURE 10. Elemental (2023). Screenshot of Bernie and Ember behind The Fireplace's sales counter and ready to be served 'kol-nuts'.



PICTURE 11. Elemental (2023). Screenshot of Ember giving freshly made 'sugarpop' to a little customer.

The entire nucleus resembles an oversized traditional pizza oven (Picture 12.) as it sits under a large hood. The earthy material choices, colors and the items inspired by multiple cultures add layers to the shop's and the owner's identity. Overall, the whole design contributes to the cozy and communal atmosphere where the family also honors their culture, and showcasing consideration to their clientele by picking only fireproof materials for the shop decor.

The story showcases how Bernie and Cinder make deliveries around their neighbourhood, Fire Town, introducing a wider view of their community. The metropolis of Elemental was inspired according to the director by different cultures of New York City, and greatly rooted in the city's immigrant neighborhoods such as Little Italy and Koreatown. (Blair 2023). As the shop acquires popularity, the interactions (Picture 12.) between the owners and customers extend beyond the counter where saucy banter thrives the casual atmosphere reflects the familiar bonds formed within the shop.



PICTURE 12. Elemental (2023). Screenshot of interactions between the owners and customers.

Bernie and Cinder warmly welcome each fiery visitor to the tiny world of their special merchandise, as Ember still learns how to deal with customer interactions. The atmosphere goes beyond their tangible products, The Fireplace nurtures a feeling of community. The convenience store becomes one junction of their community, where firefolk customers engage with each other in lively interactions.

The story unfolds and the store functions as one of the main backdrops and also as an additional depiction of the fire family's heritage, life and community. Bernie states that each item in their shop is authentic, which sets the stage for a unique shopping experience. A coffee machine which seems quite ordinary transforms into an extravaganza as the shop's offerings introduce an unusual twist to traditional hot beverages. The machine starts pouring 'lava-java' (Picture 13.) into the glass pot which resembles molten lava.



PICTURE 13. Elemental (2023). Screenshot of the shops hot beverage, 'lava-java'.

The vibrant animations of Element City's residents illustrating various elements adds visual appeal to the store. The family encounters struggles with water leaks that threaten The Fireplace's existence, and the store becomes a symbolic space where Ember fights to save their family business but also reconcile her dreams.

Behind a colorful beaded curtain which adds a mysterious touch to the back of the shop, unfurls Cinder's smokereading service (Picture 14.). When Cinder is performing for two customers, Ember enters the room and we can hear the sound that a beaded curtain leading to the space makes. The entire ceiling is rounded, and it feels like the characters are sitting inside a semi-sphere, which makes the space feel cosy and mystic. A stand outside reads 'Match Making Services - Find Love - Smokereader' adds a pinch of enchantment, and also mystical items such as an alchemist-type equipment perhaps some sort of chemistry set, crystals, spiritual chart's on the wall and other enchanting items the room is supplied with.



PICTURE 14. Elemental (2023). Screenshot of Cinder's smokereading session.

In the middle of the room is a round stone table (Picture 14.) where Cinder 'reads the smoke' from two sticks, whilst the customers are sitting on the opposite side of the table. The only light source in the room are the fire of the fiery members of the session, which emits 'ancient' feel into the place. Sohn revealed that Cinder's occupation pulls inspiration from Indian astrologists "who hold the power to approve marriages and make predictions based on celestial alignments" adding a link to the story's depth and authenticity (Dna India, 2023).

The Fireplace encapsulates a memorable destination in the world of animation settings, evolving alongside the narrative and leaving its mark on the characters and to the audience. Sohn (2023) stated in the making of documentary (2023) that the narrative shares a tight link of the director's memories as a child in these shop spaces and amplifies the importance of The Fireplace in the film's narrative. At the end of the movie, the shop bell rings, and Ember enters the shop with mixed emotions as the final scenes reveal a shift in ownership, reflecting the passing of time and the legacy of the tiny convenience store in the engaging story.

In the article conducted by De Santi, Gaberllieri, Mangano and Piana (2022) studied how Disney-Pixar's animated film Luca (2021) impacted the perception

of Cinque Terre in Italy, where the location film's was based upon. The reactions of its local institutions, residents, and tourists were analyzed through a 2021 survey that the authors conducted. The Destination Marketing Organisations' responses and the survey results indicated the film's positive impact on the town's residents and tourists. The study concluded how Luca (2021) managed to illustrate how the meaning of places can be shaped by animated films, and how they can affect the perception of authenticity, local attractiveness and notions of belonging. Impacting both residents and tourists this power highlights how animated features work in shaping perceptions. Luca (2021) portrays lifelike and locally distinguished representations despite being a cultural product rooted in real spaces that were re-imagined in the film. (De Santi et al. 2022.)

The study of De Santi et al. (2022) suggested that future research should examine how animations could be promoted by illustrating realistic destinations for sustainable tourism approaches. The analysis emphasised that potential risks of extreme commodification and loss of local identity must be monitored. The new generation of location-based films such as Encanto (2022) demonstrates how delivering opportunities for additional reflection adds on the effects of such cultural products. (De Santi et al. 2022.)

5.3 The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild (2017): Kochi Dye Shop

Nintendo is a Japanese multinational company based in Kyoto, Japan. Releasing, publishing and creating video games, Nintendo also makes video game consoles. The roots of the company began in 1889 when they started making hanafuda playing cards. (Nintendo & Nintendo of America Inc. 2024.) The company has multiple popular IPs ranging from Super Mario to Donkey Kong and of course The Legend of Zelda game -game series.

The recognised franchise in video game record, The Legend of Zelda achieved new heights with its previous game The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild (2017) which was a genre-defining open-world experience that introduced the

players to an expansive distinctive adventure at the time it was released. The story depicts the journeys of Link who is a brave warrior and Princess Zelda battling the sinister entity, Ganon's, enslavement of the Kingdom of Hyrule. While the narrative is straightforward the remarkable gameplay sets it apart potentially making it the greatest video game ever produced. (Robbins 2017.)

The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild (2017) adds to Nintendo's already reputable collection. According to the director Hidemaro Fujibayashi the game presents an expansive open-world concept which breaks away from the franchise's conventional norms. Wishing to embrace the craving for exploration among players, the game's developers, including Fujibayashi and the producer Eiji Aonuma imagined an extensive and interconnected game world with hidden mysteries waiting to be uncovered (Nintendo of America 2017; Nintendo of America 2017; Nintendo of America 2017; Nintendo of America 2017.)

Focusing not only on creating stunning and lifelike visuals the team leader of the design and art in the game, Satoru Takizawa, also designed a setting for the game that improves the player's experience (Nintendo of America 2017). The creation of the game included the consideration of the size of the world. The developing team tested before applying the scope and scale of Kyoto's geography to the open world of Hyrule based on what would be entertaining to play. The testing resulted in roughly twelve times the size of the prior Zelda title's world in Twilight Princess (2006) (Nintendo of America 2017.) The technical director Takuhiro Dohta highlighted the game's technological core focus: the interconnectivity of the surroundings which resulted in entirely new emergent experiences (Nintendo of America 2017).

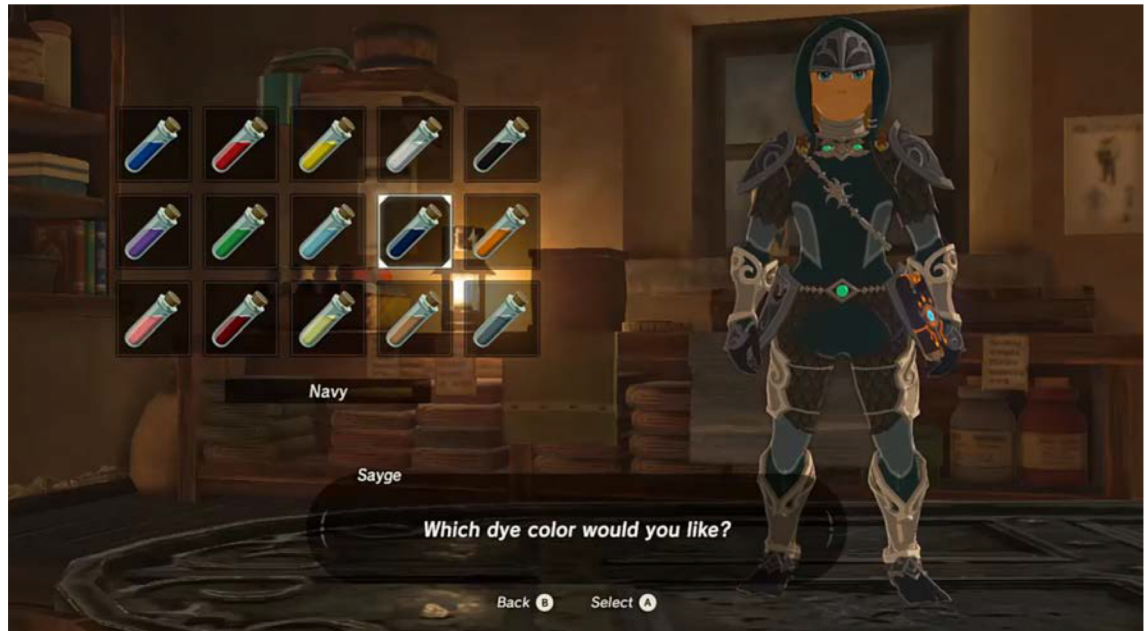
Furthermore, Hajime Wakai, the sound director of Breath of the Wild (2017) stressed the significance of the game's piano compositions which accentuate the ambient sounds, resulting in a more authentic experience of the game's environment and scenery. The game has a passing time system and the environmental and atmospheric distinctions separate day from night. The musical themes in townlets also alter and mirror this shift. (Nintendo of America

2017.) The trailblazing title that *Breath of the Wild* (2017) is to this day, redefined the gaming experience and offers players a wide world with hidden secrets waiting to be explored and immerse the player in the iconic realm of Hyrule.

Kochi Dye Shop was the third and final case study for this research on experiential shopping in fictional media which resides in one of Hyrule's pastoral villages, Hateno. The game's dyehouse creates delightful yet only cosmetic alterations to the players' in-game wardrobe and offers whimsy experiences. There was an abundance of choices to choose from in *Breath of the Wild* (2017), such as the travelling beetle-loving merchant Beedle, the Sand-Seal Rental Shop in Gerudo Town, Great Fairies residing in their flower dwellings, Kilton who owns the moving hot-air balloon shop Fang and Bone, merchants on the road and other small shops. The Legend of Zelda game series prevails in creating fantastic in-game shop encounters with its memorable merchants like in previous titles *A Link Between the Worlds* (2013) eccentric shopkeeper Ravio, the Bazaar in *Skyward Sword* (2011) and the little shops of peaceful Windfall Island in *The Wind Waker* (2002) to mention few.

The people of Hyrule, hyliaans, usually wear practical attire suitable for the climate and their activities. Mirroring this diversity are the availability of options in Link's range of clothing and armour, which can be found across the world from various merchants and as hidden garment treasures. Each armour serves a specific purpose, which allows the protagonist to endure extreme weather conditions, navigate hard terrains and defend against aggressions' of foes' (Nintendo & Thorpe 2018, 178). The ideology of the game highlights the player's freedom when selecting outfits. The senior lead artist, Yoshiyuki Oyama, stated that the purpose was to give the player a diverse selection of clothing, that could be mixed and matched without compromising the overall design. This enables players to decide whether to wear a matching set, choose according to the stats of the armour or create a personalized look by crossing different pieces. Including the dyeing mechanic (Picture 15.) in the game

additionally sweetens this freedom of choice, allowing players to create their unique styles within the game. (Nintendo & Thorpe 2018, 178).



PICTURE 15. The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild (2017). In-game screenshot of an armour dyeing process in the Kochi Dye Shop.

In Breath of the Wild (2017) players can opt to alter the colors of their armour and clothing, which offers a unique and personalized gaming experience. Hub for this customization opportunity, The Kochi Dye Shop allows players to experiment with various coloring choices for their garments with different dye ingredients sourced from the land. The open-game world shelters a diverse pool of creatures, like monsters, regional animals, fish, critters and sacred spirits and fairies (Nintendo & Thorpe 2018, 157).

Tapping into this diversity, the dyehouse utilizes materials that can be acquired from defeating enemies, parts like monster claws and wings, and these raw materials can also be sold in Hyrule. "Certain monster parts, like Chuhu jelly, can be combined with plants, minerals, and other materials to create dyes." (Nintendo & Thorpe 2018, 406.) Fuyibashi stated that in addition to their functional uses such as upping the stats of different armours, they serve as purely cosmetic components for creating vibrant dyes. Introducing the cooking

mechanics in the game stemmed from the developers' longing to break away from old Zelda patterns, making players think strategically about how different ingredients affect armour and clothing and delivering entertaining game mechanics (Nintendo of America 2017.)

The dyeing mechanic adds an extra layer of engagement similar to cooking where players not only think about the functional aspects of their armour but can enjoy the visual customization and appeal of their creations. Furthermore, providing this customization option reflects the dynamic and changing open-world environment of the game which allows players to immerse themselves in their surroundings. Kochi Dye Shop enables players to tap into this creative outlet and encourage world exploration, defeat monsters and collect and try different raw materials to craft personalized outfits to their preference and supply a sense of agency within the gaming adventure.

In the easternmost part of Necluda of the game world, resides Hateno Village which flourishes in their main source of living, agriculture and livestock (Nintendo & Thorpe 2018, 264) which are fitting for the town's cool and gentle climate. Spared from the Great Calamity's destruction the village embraces self-sufficient ways such as farming and traditional arts including "Hateno dyeing" a technique for dyeing clothes (Nintendo & Thorpe 2018, 99). The villagers wear colorful Nordic-inspired outfits fitting for the nippy climate (Nintendo & Thorpe 2018, 98). Link can visit many shops and services in the town, including the Dye Shop, offering dye services for his attire. (Nintendo & Thorpe 2018, 264).

The structural lead artist, Manabu Takehara, provided insights into the design of Hateno Village (Picture 16.), which aimed to work as the baseline village concept for the game. The homes in the village resemble the ones in Hyrule Castle Town and bear Hylian architecture with regional elements such as sparingly using stone. Around Hateno's focal point the Kochi Dye Shop, Takehara based the design of the rest of the village. The Dye Shop blends the essential core of traditional Japanese crafts resulting in a standout location that

seems like a real place. Furthermore, Takehara emphasises infusing the personality of the residents into the designs, apparent in locations such as the Hateno Ancient Tech Lab which reflects Purah's fascination with ancient relics and scattered documents and a Guardian on the lab's roof. (Nintendo & Thorpe 2018, 271.)



PICTURE 16. The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild - Creating the Champion (2018, 264-265). Concept art and design of Hateno Village and the Kochi Dye Shop.

Specializing in the art of fabric dyeing with various materials the Kochi Dye Shop resides in Hateno Village (Nintendo & Thorpe 2018, 97). The establishment is operated by the shop's eccentric owner Sayge, who is also known as Mr. Toothy. The mission-driven owner wants to prevent the disappearing appeal towards dyeing (Nintendo & Thorpe 2018, 97). The dyer has a peculiar appearance and he tends to use color-based vocabulary. The origin of Sayge's name alludes to the Sage plant, which is associated with spices and dyes (Zelda Wiki 2017). Mr. Toothy's family includes his wife Senna who operates as the reticent greeter of the shop and their curious child Sefaro,

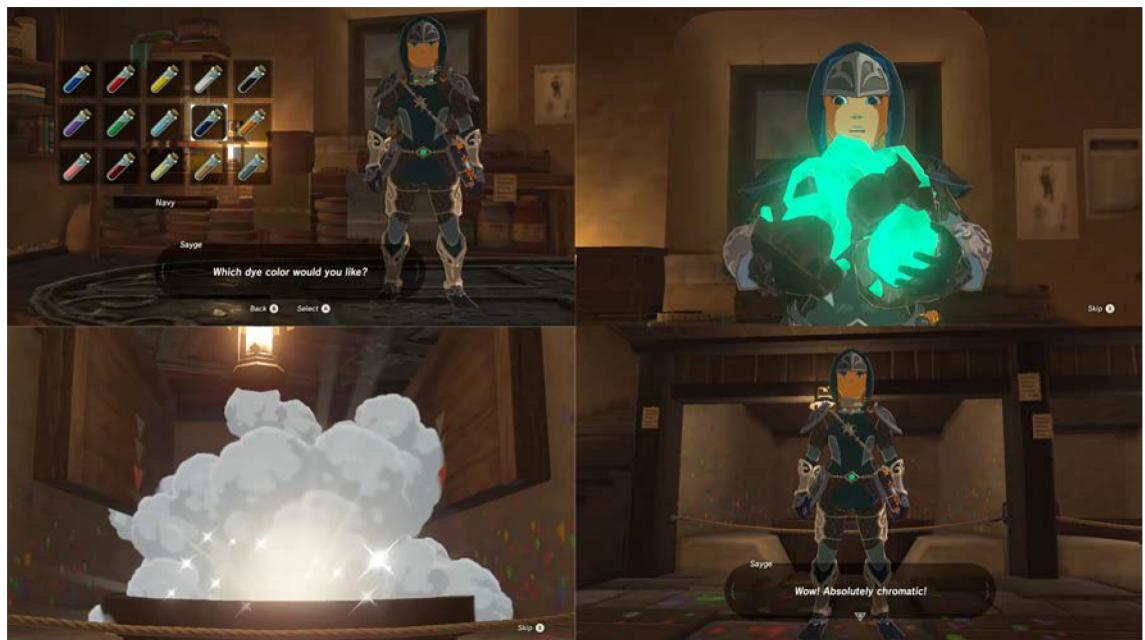
who also might have dye-related names such as saffron (Zelda Wiki 2017) and seashells. The dye shop is known for its unique atmosphere and its residents' colorful personalities.

The shop features a rustic brick and stone exterior with a saltbox roof with red unevenly placed shingles giving the building a charming character. Towering in the back of the roof, a wonky chimney (Picture 16.) adds to the shop's character and makes it visible from a distance. The tall chimneys' are common because of the region's cold climate where they face heavy snowfall in immense amounts (Nintendo & Thorpe 2018, 264). A tall banner is secured to the roof which rises alongside the chimney. On the roof deck, colorful fabrics are placed on a drying rack for any remaining moisture to evaporate. The facade is embellished with light yellow plaster and a couple of the biggest windows framed with blue shutters. Serving as part of the shop sign, giant glass vials which are individually filled with each of the four primary colors are displayed on top of a pergola surrounding the shop entrance, creating a distinctive and memorable look for the facility. Nearby the entrance fabric banners presumably shaded with Tyrian purple which was the most expensive real dye in medieval times, display the word 'colors' in Hylian (Wolf Link 2022).

The dyehouse stands at the end of Hateno's sloped shopping street and behind it streams a little river pool. A small riverside decking reaches a shy away from the riverbank and in the water flow securely fastened dyed fabric bolts', a technique medieval dyers used to rinse out chemicals and leftover dye from the fabrics (Wolf Link 2022). Near the building, colorful fabric shades nestle underneath them large stone tubs filled with different pigments extracted or made from natural materials. All of these elements add to the overall depiction of the dyehouse's typical practices, forming environmental storytelling and perhaps intriguing the player to explore the shop's surroundings and interior further.

Shaping the interior are the plastered walls with a similar hue as on the exterior, a wood-burning fireplace, dark wooden floors and simple and practical wooden

furniture which together create a cozy atmosphere. When entering the space, the first thing the player might notice is Sayge standing in front of his work desk filled with supplies such as a distilling flask and glass vials among many other items used to create various pigments. Showcased near the entrance are the shops' dyed fabrics waiting for their buyer, and the space is filled with miscellaneous items such as colorful yarn rolls, glass bottles likely filled with mordants, dyeing liquours and pigments, flowers, rocks and natural materials used for dye creation. On the walls are aged posters featuring dye ingredients resulting in different tints found in Hyrule.



PICTURE 17. The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild (2017). A collage of four in-game screenshots of the armour dyeing process in the Kochi Dye Shop (read from top left to right).

Also very evident in the space are two huge dye baths on the right side, sitting underneath a mezzanine and a staircase leading on top of the area. The actual dyeing happens here where the player can shade their armor to their liking. It houses more essential dyer equipment, pigments and chemicals. On the mezzanine's floor are two trap doors marked with little arrows the spot where to stand. Underneath the mezzanine, the left bath walls are sprayed with vibrant dye spots and the wooden bath is used for dyeing, while the right bath has more

faded spots on the walls and is meant for the removal of color alterations. The immersive surroundings reflect the game's commitment to realism and historical inspiration, mirroring the realistic and historical inspiration behind the game world design. Together they create a rich setting for a shopping experience, blending architectural details with inspiration from the past concocting a sense of realism and engagement in the fictional world.

Upon entering the Kochi Dye Shop the dyehouse's vibrant owner Sayge greets Link with a pun-filled welcome: "Greetings and saturations!" and the whole interaction with Sayge continues with wordplay related to dyeing "Welcome to Kochi Dye Shop where we live to dye!" while in the background plays Hateno Village's soothing theme music. Link can choose to add with color some personality to his wardrobe with a feasible price of 20 rupees, or remove the previous dye. Sayge directs Link to the left trap door on the mezzanine and the colorful conversation persists which adds depth to Sayge's character and enhances the experience. The player can choose from 15 vibrant dye (Picture 17.) options to alter their whole outfit at once. Materials the player collected from Link's travels add an engaging layer since now particular ingredients produce the desired hue, and they can be mixed from different components such as monster parts to flowers.

When the player has chosen the necessary items and Link holds (Picture 17.) them in his arms, Sayge proceeds to bill the customer and a delightful sound of rupees exchanging hands plays informing a successful trade. Unsurely standing (Picture 17.) above the looming trap door and afraid of what will happen next, the pivotal moment arrives when piano music initiates an ambience of tension and gasping Link falls into the dyebath. A cloud (Picture 17.) sparkling from Link's whereabouts appears accompanied by a 'POOF!' sound effect, and as the cloud evaporates, Link appears (Picture 17.) with freshly dyed clothes.

Link briefly examines the new hue of his clothes, as a glittery sound effect signals of successful dye procedure. With his whimsical and excited voice, Sayge says "Wow! Absolutely chromatic! You look dashing! Do you find this

palette-able? If you'd like to do a redye, just let me know!" and so the dyeing experience is finished leaving Link with a new look. Crossing Crafts (2023) captures the crux of this moment whilst building a dye shop miniature in their video just before they start to build the dye baths, stating "...the most integral part of the dye shop, which are the dye baths, possibly my favourite part of the build just because this is where Link is unceremoniously dumped into a bath of dye, iconic."

Echoing the success of Super Nintendo World which opened to Universal Studios Japan in 2021, now Nintendo enthusiasts in the U.S. can also immerse themselves in the world of Super Mario Bros. which opened in 2023 at Universal Studios Hollywood. Offering a memorable and captivating experience the attraction features themed dining, shopping and Mario Kart: Bowser's Challenge the most notable ride of Super Nintendo World. It incorporates augmented reality (AR) and head-mounted AR goggles a pioneering feature in theme park attractions, and visitors can collect coins while racing on iconic Nintendo tracks. The park is not just for gamers, and its interactivity, merchandise, and inventive culinary experiences, together with the star ride make it enjoyable for even people who are unfamiliar with Nintendo characters. Visitors can enhance the experience by buying optional Power-Up Bands which allow the guests to trigger different elements and collect digital coins in the park. Universal Orlando Resort is about to unveil its version in the summer of 2025 offering Nintendo fans more chances to visit the immersive Mushroom Kingdom, and the anticipation exceeds the gaming fanbase. (Davis-Friedman 2023.)

The main notion expressed in Davis-Friedman (2023) article is the success of Japan's Super Nintendo World and the international expansion and the popularity of the company's characters and fictional worlds, where The Legend of Zelda series also belongs. Despite the game line success, the series does not appear in any of the parks, although rumours of attraction based on the series exist. (Gamesradar+ & Bailey 2024).

6 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

You might have experienced that you have been transported into a cozy bakery or a bustling market simply by watching a film since entertainment media is brimful with examples of compelling shopping experiences, intertwined with the narratives. These experiences in fictional media could not exist without their imaginary owners and their establishments. The phenomenon known as experiential shopping goes beyond the mere physical act of purchasing items which engage our senses and sentiments.

Passionate individuals often run small independent shops showcased in fictional media. The spaces act as more than just backdrops, containing spirited components of their owners' personalities, prominent from meticulously chosen trinkets to the background harmonies composed to arouse precise emotions in their audiences like in *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989). Crafting environments that pay attention to each detail creates an authentic and personalized atmosphere which draws audiences into the little part of the world where the shop resides, much like in *Kochi Dye Shop*. These successfully carefully crafted visual features in shop environments stimulate specific emotions in the viewer and go beyond just creating a pretty picture for the audience. The inclusion of dialogue and actions offers glimpses of the shopkeepers' lives and personalities, adding a human touch and so transforming the spaces even more intriguing is precisely how *The Fireplace* is portrayed. In many cases, the surrounding neighbourhood is showcased which acts as a grounding component to shops' existence and enriches the understanding of the location context, as in all three case studies of this thesis.

Often highlighting the skills and creativity of the products sold in the shops of these fictional shops, the audience can witness artisans crafting their beloved designs, learn how a shopkeeper acquired the unique items in their stock, and understand the cultural, personal and functional values these articles harbour within. By using this method, the exposition of engaging in-store browsing adds

another layer of fondness towards the shopping experience. Uplifting the immersive feel of these ventures, sound design and background melodies and even the portrayal of weather conditions play a crucial role in moulding the feel of the experience. In video games, the active involvement of the player such as gathering the ingredients for the artisan deepens their connection to the emerging moment of creativity and honed skill.

Audiences can conclude their own storylines by observing the surroundings of these brick-and-mortar stores' by piecing together scattered environmental clues about merchants and their daily lives. The joy of discovering and making connections based on their conclusions, creates a potent bond to the world, locations and its characters. The combination of engaging visuals, relatable characters and intriguing stories can spark curiosity and even inspiration to look for similar experiences in the lives of viewers. Although, all of these ingredients should be holistically displayed, to initiate a lasting impression to the audience.

While fictional media frequently acquires inspiration from the real world the creation of engaging shopping experiences often can be difficult or impossible to present due to budget or safety limitations. Proceeding beyond the limits of reality, fictional media can explore the prospect of these fantastical scenarios. It is important to remember that fictional media often portrays the positive aspects that come from running small businesses and could acknowledge that usually there are challenges which appear along these endeavours. Narrating a more balanced picture, Pixar's *Elemental* (2023) showcases the struggles many small shopkeepers face, painting a more realistic point of view of both aspects of entrepreneurship. The experiential shopping experience in *Kochi Dye Shop* showcases how imaginative and fun dyeing garments can be, and *Gütiokipänjä* especially depicts the shrouding mysteries that go into baking delicious bread and how intriguing it is to take a look inside the living quarters and crafting room can be.

The spaces where individual family businesses and skilled craftspeople practice their trade, play a noteworthy position in fostering connections within

communities. The personal interactions between the customers and merchants nurture a sense of togetherness and community spirit, a crucial aspect in the era of more and more digital lives. One can speculate, that depicting fictional purchases with a conscious intention can counter excessive consumption. There might be benefits to portraying small businesses and highlighting the positive impact of deliberately choosing to support them. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that not everyone has the financial means to do so often, but even once in a while doing so might have a positive effect.

In this research, the author explored many techniques in how these experiences were portrayed. This research focused only on how fictional media depicts experiential shopping, and now in the closing thoughts, emphasises the importance of further research on the exploration of ethical considerations and a more diverse representation of these themes. The study did not compare fictional aspects to real-world examples. Besides, the thesis only analysed three examples, and this limited scope possibly missed variations in how different media titles portray this theme.

In today's world, where the value of craftsmanship and skills can often be disregarded, the topic of experiential shopping on a small scale deserves further exploration. Possible areas to investigate are a wider coverage of media, such as live-action films, TV series and novels. The research on ethical considerations and how fictional media portrays small businesses and their owners could include an analysis of potential biases and misrepresentations. Also, how the fictional examples of experiential shopping affect audiences' shopping patterns and their view of small businesses. The stories of fictional independent businesses are valuable and ingraining experiential shopping into the mix, can edify intrigue towards them.

This thesis succeeded in identifying and analysing many techniques used in fictional media to portray experiential shopping, including how unique shop environments are created and how they mirror the character of their owners and can convey specific feelings to the audience. This research highlighted the

potential for fictional media to present fantastical shopping experiences in small shops, beyond the limitations of the real world. Overall, experiential shopping portrayals in fictional media not only entertain but can also inspire audiences to further value small businesses, craftsmanship and human connection.

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