

## The Study of Flagship Store Design in Omotesando Street in the Context of Urban Studies

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### Abstract

Since people started exchanging goods and services for money, they have been going shopping for a multitude of reasons. Shopping activity first started out with khans and bazaars, which were later replaced by shopping malls and street stores. Today, there are store types that people can choose according to their socio-economic status, lifestyles, and many variables. Luxury brands and their stores are also included in this category. There are some marketing strategies that luxury brands in this category employ in order to be successful brand, strengthen their brand image, and keep customer quality at the highest level. In this sense, flagship stores are among the most significant aspects of these strategies. These stores also contribute greatly to the urban scale with their architectural characteristics. Within the scope of this study, the example of Omotesando Street, one of the pioneers of the luxury retail industry was examined. In this study, visual data analysis, which is a type of qualitative research method was used. Omotesando is a street in Tokyo/Japan known for its luxury brand stores. The contribution of luxury store designs – namely flagship stores – to the urban scale were examined along with developments in the Japanese retail sector in the context of Omotesando Street. The study is unique in that it offers a perspective on the contribution of luxury brands' flagship store designs to the urban scale.

**Keywords:** *luxury store design, flagship store, brand image, Omotesando Street*

## Omotesando Caddesi'nde Bulunan Flagship Mağaza Tasarımlarının Kent Çalışmaları Bağlamında İncelenmesi

### Öz

İnsanlar para karşılığında hizmet almaya başladığı dönemlerden beri alışveriş yapmaktadır. İlk dönemlerde hanlar ve pazar yerlerinde gerçekleştirilen alışveriş aktivitesi, zamanla alışveriş merkezi ve cadde mağazalara evrilmiştir. Bugün, insanların sosyo ekonomik kültürleri, yaşam şekilleri ve birçok değişkene bağlı olan mağaza kategorileri mevcuttur. Lüks markalar ve lüks mağazalar da bu kategori içerisinde yer almaktadır. Lüks markaların; başarılı marka imajını güçlendirmek ve müşteri kalitesini en üst seviyeye çıkartmak için bir takım pazarlama stratejileri bulunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, flagship mağazalar, en çarpıcı stratejilerden birisidir. Aynı zamanda, bu mağazalar mimari özellikleriyle kentsel ölçeğe de büyük katkı sağlamaktadır. Bu çalışma kapsamında lüks perakende sektörünün öncülerinden olan Omotesando Caddesi örneği incelenmiştir. Araştırma sırasında, internet sitelerinde yer alan görsellerden yararlanılmış ve nitel bir araştırma yöntemi olan görsel veri analiz tekniği kullanılmıştır. Omotesando Caddesi, Tokyo/Japonya'da bulunan ve lüks mağazaların varlığı ile bilinen bir yerleşkedir. Bunun yanı sıra, Japon perakende sektöründeki gelişmeler de çalışmaya katkı sağlamıştır. Çalışma, lüks markaların flagship mağazalarının kent ölçeğine katkısı konusunda bakış açısı sunması nedeni ile özgün olmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *lüks mağaza tasarımı, flagship mağaza, marka imajı, Omotesando Caddesi*

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## 1. Introduction

As people have been going shopping to meet their needs since they started exchanging money for goods and services, shopping areas have evolved. Retail spaces that started with bazaars, khans, covered bazaars have been replaced by shopping malls or street stores. Retail spaces vary according to socio-economic levels, lifestyles, and income levels. Although consumers' preferences vary according to their environment, shopping habits, and income levels, brand image is also an important factor. Today, retail spaces and brand image are much interconnected. It is not possible to position a luxury brand in an unknown shopping mall or on a remote street. Likewise, it is almost impossible to locate a low-income brand in a shopping mall with luxury brands or on a street famous for high-income brands. In this study, luxury brands on the street will be examined. The study will be on a famous street in Tokyo that is called Omotesando Street. In addition to being a retail space, many brands on these streets are thought to have contributed to the architecture of the city with their character of architectural structures. These stores are generally designed as exhibition spaces where brands also display their special products. The shopping spaces created with this in mind are called flagship stores. Almost all luxury brands have flagship stores, but stores in Omotesando are different from many other flagship stores due to their architectural characteristics. The aim of the study is to examine the flagship stores in Omotesando Street in the context of urban studies. Within the scope of the study; brand images and architectural characteristics of Prada, Hugo Boss, Tod's, Dior, and Louis Vuitton flagship stores were analyzed. In addition, the location of the stores in the city was indicated on a map in order to study the location of the flagship stores in the city context.

## 2. Shopping as an Activity

### 2.1. Motivations for shopping activity

Shopping, as we all know has a common definition. According to the Oxford dictionary; "shopping is an activity of going to shops and buying things or ordering them online" (Url-1). Online encyclopedia Wikipedia explains "shopping is an activity in which a customer browses the available goods or services presented by one or more retailers with the potential intent to purchase a suitable selection of them" (Url-2). We all may have different reasons to shop such as spending leisure time, buying necessary goods, reviewing new products and etc... In the literature, there are different theoretical approaches to shopping motivation. Babin et al. (1994) describe shopping motivations as "utilitarian, social, hedonic, experiential and cognitive" (p.649). The cognitive and emotional aspects of shopping have been combined into a theory of shopping stated as " $P = (N4F+A) \times E2$ , where P is propensity to buy, N is need, F is features, A is affordability and E is emotions" (Danzinger, 2006, p.129). According to Westbrook and Black (1985), there are seven dimensions about shopping motivation such as "anticipated utility, role enactment, negotiation, choice optimization, affiliation, power and authority and stimulation" (p.95). According to Tauber, "shopping motivations can be defined as personal and social" (Patel, 2009, p.286). Personal shopping motivation can be identified by the need for role playing, diversion, self-gratification, the discovery of new trends, physical activity, and sensory stimulation (Tauber, 1972, p.47). On the other hand, social shopping motivation can be defined as experience outside the home, communication with others having the same interests, peer group attraction, status & authority, and pleasure of bargaining (Tauber, 1972, p.47). Consumer purchase preferences can change for each factor, but when shopping motivations are examined, we can say that socialization plays a big role in this situation.

## **2.2. Customer identities in literature**

Although the evolution of shopping motivations depends on many reasons, consumer categorization is the most important criteria in this regard. Customer types vary in different studies but we can list them in five types in general. These are loyal customer, discount customer, impulsive customer, potential customer, new customer (Url-3). Each one of these customers have different aims, socioeconomic statuses, personalities, and lifestyles, but what connects all of them is that shopping is a basic necessity for them. Consumers' buying behaviors are related to four major factors. These are cultural, social, personal, and psychological (Rani, 2020, p.53). Although these items are intended for customer purchasing preference, they are not sufficient on their own and a decision-making mechanism comes into play at the purchase stage. Consumers' purchasing preferences have six steps. The first step is problem recognition which is about consumers believing that they want a product, and the second step is information search where consumers start to search their needs. The third step is the evaluation of alternatives in which customers want to be sure about their decisions. The fourth step is the purchase decision and the fifth step is the actual purchasing. The last step that is called post-purchase evaluation is generally positioned in consumer purchase decisions but it is generally related to product and brand (Url-4). Although the customer types are different, their common feature is that almost all of them go through this decision mechanism.

## **3. Luxury Retail Spaces**

### **3.1. Luxury brands and their identities**

People decide on the brands they will shop for by being influenced by their habits, cultural backgrounds, lifestyles, income levels, and many more related factors. Brands are usually grouped into three categories that are low-income brands, middle-income brands, and high-income brands. Each brand creates its own customer base and determines its sales strategy according to its consumers. They put their own customer type in the foreground when deciding on the product, store location, advertising campaigns, retail store design and materials, and social media contents. Within the scope of the study, only luxury brands addressing high-income levels will be considered.

To understand luxury brands and their identities, we should first look at the meaning of the word luxury. All disciplines define the definition of luxury in a common way. Luxury is something that is more than necessary; it is characterized as a "non-necessity of superfluity" (Heine, 2012, p.41). The distinction between necessity and luxury is based on the availability or exclusivity of resources. While necessities are possessed by virtually everyone, "luxuries are available exclusively to only a few people or at least only on rare occasions" (Bearden and Etzel, 1982, p.184). According to Kemp (1998), the product becomes luxurious when the need for it is more the result of desire than willingness to get rid of discomfort. Often, functionality is not seen as an important factor in the choice of luxury products as the pleasure of having a luxury product is more important than functionality. Therefore, the ratio between price and functionality in the context of luxury shopping is often not within the framework of logic.

In recent studies, research says that luxury and its consumption are related to postmodernism. In postmodernism, luxury consumption is a qualification and need in postmodern societies. Image, illusions, reality, and simulation had become popular these days, so people started to wish for things that they did not need, but just desire. As a result of the changing economy, different habits and living standards, luxury brand

perception began to shape, and developing luxury brand perception increased the quality, price, rarity, and aesthetics of the products (Atwal & Williams 2009). At the same time, many brands that have a luxury brand identity started to stand out with their core products. Knowing the importance of always making consumers feel special, these brands aimed to appeal to the highest level of income.

Today, many luxury brands still follow these aims. They are trying to form a distinct and respectable identity. Luxury brands, whose marketing strategies are very clear, care about keeping their products creative and unique closely to following global developments. Although all luxury brands appeal to the high-income group, these brands are also categorized among themselves. "The first group is entry-level luxury brands that are not even generally recognized as members of the luxury such as Hugo Boss (Heine, 2012, p.85). The second group is medium-level luxury brands that are a step behind the forefront of luxury such as Dolce Gabbana, Moschino, and Escada (Heine, 2012, p.85). The third group is top-level luxury brands that are established beyond doubt as to the leading luxury brands such as Armani and Louis Vuitton (Heine, 2012, p.85). The last and the highest group is elite-level luxury brands that are at the top of the top segment and determine the benchmark of the best quality and highest exclusivity within their category" (Heine, 2012, p.85).

### **3.2. Luxury retail store design**

Luxury brands aim to offer an atmosphere to their consumers where they can have a different experience. In many studies, we can see the importance of retail store atmosphere for consumer wellbeing. There are two different types of atmospheres in retail stores, namely the intended atmosphere and the perceived atmosphere. The intended atmosphere is the atmosphere that is created by designers and retailers taking into account many features such as brand perception, customer type, and product. On the other hand, the perceived atmosphere is one that is perceived by consumers, which is influenced by a customer's socioeconomic status, income, and lifestyle. Both atmosphere types have similar features such as the location of the store, interior design elements of the store -colors and lightning of the store-, scents and store display units (Kotler, 1974, p.51). In general, luxury stores try to create a luxury and unique atmosphere for their customers. Their location, interior design elements, visual displays, shop window designs, lighting and color selection, and even their architectural characteristics are the most important features for their retail spaces. Neutral colors are often used in the design of these luxury stores. Creating large spaces in the interior and the choice of lighting is another matter to be considered. Many of them also work on their shop window designs and facade of their stores. In this case, the perceived atmosphere and intended atmosphere generally move in parallel in luxury stores. They aim to bring together many spatial elements that appeal to their customers, and they offer them unique shopping experiences.

### **3.3. A brief overview flagship stores**

Today with the developing economy, retailers, especially luxury brands, create retail spaces called flagship stores to make a difference, mark their place in the market and build a relation with their consumers. One of the most important ways for luxury brands to join the retail network and engage in brand management are flagship stores. In fact, flagship stores provide a place "where luxury brands can improve their brand image and convey brand meaning" (Hollenback et al., 2008, p.348). Many luxury brands tend to open flagship stores only in the most lucrative countries. In general, they want to open especially just one flagship store in these countries because in this way they have the chance to uniquely transfer all of its new investments to the retail market. Furthermore, it can also provide full control of brand strategies in that market. Flagship

stores are usually located in large structures, thus aiming to have a great visual impact on their consumers. Although spatial features of luxury retail stores are applicable in flagship stores, in relation to the interior atmosphere and the service they provide, the goal is to create an environment where customers feel a unique shopping experience. Flagship stores, which are very important in terms of prestige, are generally located in prominent cities.

## 4. Retail Industry in Japan

### 4.1. Shopping habits in japan

Most economists say that the post-war Japanese economy has grown greatly and impressively. Although success is manifested in a great and clear way, the reasons are actually very few and clear. One of the most important reasons for this is the government and business partnership. The Japanese government and the Japanese industry gained strength because they supported industries located in Japan (Url-5). The Japanese government, which places a lot of importance on its economy, has been prominent in the world with its technology, cars, industrial machinery, and many other industrial products it produces. Although there were minor economic crises in the early 2000s, it is still an economically independent and self-sufficient country. As its economy is so developed and self-sufficient, its retail habits also show differences and flexibility compared to many societies. In their book *Japan- A Modern Retail Superpower* (2005), Larke and Clauston defined the retail industry in Japan with the following words:

*“ As recently as 1990, distribution in Japan was clearly organized and controlled at the behest of manufacturers and wholesalers. Retailers made their money from volume alone and from cooperating with the channel leaders. Rightly or wrongly it was a model that was very different to other advanced economies at the time. Today, however retailers make their own money through creativity, innovation, branding, marketing and simply through being better retailers. Their day-to-day operations are still based on the local Japanese culture, but their overall strategic goal is the same as in the West: make money. Moreover, the way they make money their money is also the same as in the west. Japanese retailing has modernized and there is no turning back. In fact it has now gone the extra step of expanding outside the confines of the domestic market with many of the best firms active throughout Asia and some even in Europe” (Larke & Causton, 2005, p.16).*

Finance in Japanese families has always been managed by housewives. Although there is an increase in Japanese women working in recent years, in traditional Japanese families, men earn money and women manage their money for their family finances. Japanese women are very careful when they shop. They do not purchase large quantities like the Americans because they do not have enough room for those purchases. In general, the Japanese live in small houses. Besides, when they buy something, they pay attention to the quality of the products. Because of this reason, they do not hesitate to pay too much for good products. Akemi Natsuyama, an analyst at Hakuhodo Research, told the Los Angeles Times that “female shoppers tend to be careful on how they spend... They also look at quality and shy away from reckless spending” (Url-6). Japanese consumer's expectations are very high in comparison to European and American consumers, and they like to go shopping in luxury stores. The biggest reason Japanese people buy highly expensive product is related to the Japanese economy. High incomes, standard expenses, and constant inflation make them more economically independent than many other nations. After the United States,

Japan is the second-largest market in the world. According to a new report by McKinsey & Co shared exclusively, Japanese consumers are now spending 3.6 trillion yen (about \$33 billion) each year on luxury goods (Url-7). Millennial shoppers are extremely keen on luxury brands such as Celine, Balenciaga, and Gucci. Furthermore, almost all Tokyo women in their 20s have a Louis Vuitton bag.

#### **4.2. Omotesando Street**

According to Yamagishi; the branding image of commercial streets is created by five elements such as the “landscape of the street, the accessibility to public transit, neighborhood land use, retail mix and structures and the history of the area” (Yamagishi, 2008, p.73). These features constitute the urban importance of public space. In this study, Omotesando Street in Tokyo is examined in the context of these features. Tokyo is a region where luxury brands have a lot of retail space. There are many shopping streets that attract tourists from other nations. The streets with luxury retail stores are the most touristic areas in Tokyo.

Omotesando is a boulevard in the Aoyama district which has cafes, restaurants, brand name shops for a more adult clientele. It also has different buildings that are designed with different architectural characteristics, and it is famous for zelkova trees. The station that reaches the street was opened in 1938 after considerable economic growth.

Omotesando Street surrounded by trees is described as Tokyo's Champ-Elysees by tourists (Url-8). It is the pioneer of modern architecture in Tokyo. People also go to this street to see these human-scale modern buildings. It has become a showcase for these buildings and international brands (Url-9). It is a key location for retail and features the Japan flagship shops of a number of fashion brands. Furthermore, several of these buildings are renowned for their innovative architecture. Omotesando is also famous for its cafes and restaurants. Approximately 60% of people go to cafes and restaurants on the street where almost 100.000 people come every day. According to a survey in 2007, “retailers thought the attractiveness of the district was attributed to sophisticated landscape with trees (%34), fashionable atmosphere (%24), and a vibrant street image (%7)” (Yamigishi, 2008, p.67). Today, Omotesando Street is still a popular destination for tourists with its luxury brands and design-oriented flagship stores.

### **5. Reflections of Luxury Flagship Retail Stores**

Today, we see luxury flagship stores in economically developed areas. In this study, luxury flagship stores in Omotesando are examined in the context of urban studies. For this section of the study, five stores were selected. The stores that were chosen all had different materials and architectural forms. These stores are Prada, Hugo Boss, Tod's, Dior, and Louis Vuitton (Figure 1). All of these buildings are located on the same street in a row. Like many buildings with different architectural styles on Omotesando Street, these structures are among the important architectural elements on the urban scale, and they stand out with their designs as well as their products. All these flagship stores were analyzed in terms of their brand image, customer types, and architectural characteristics in this part.

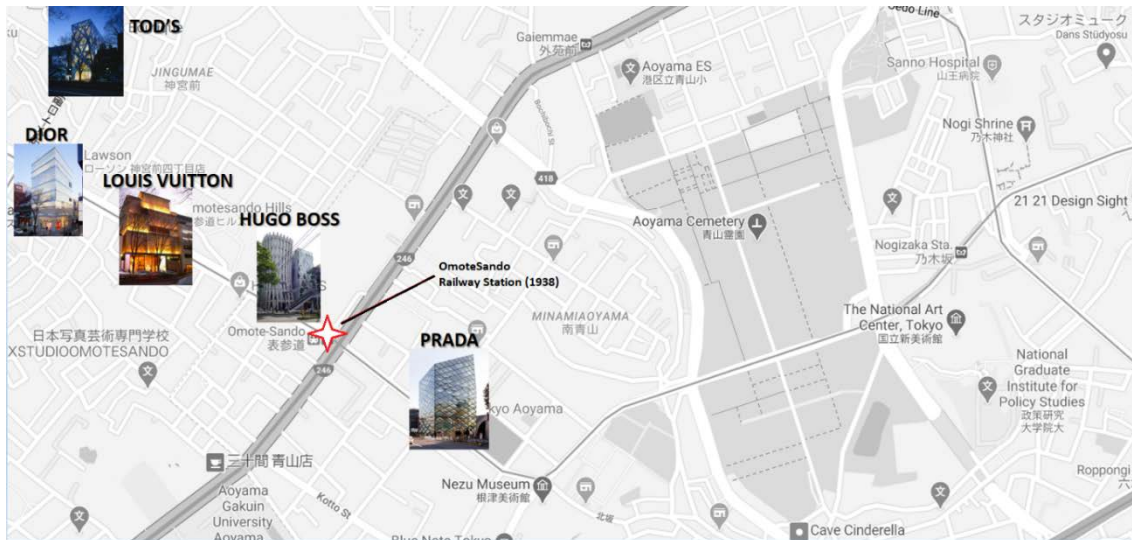


Figure 1: Flagship Stores in Omotesando Street

### 5.1. Prada

Prada Company started its retail life in 1913 in Milan. Mario Prada opened his first exclusive store in Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II and sold beauty cases, handbags, travel trunks, accessories, jewelry, and other luxury items. Thanks to Mario Prada's innovative, creative and unique designs, the brand soon became popular with aristocrats and bourgeoisie in Europe. Prada, which opened its second store in 1983, launched its first textile/clothing collection in 1988. After the brand moved to clothes, it started to open in New York, Madrid, London, Paris and Tokyo. In 2001, Prada's first flagship store that was designed by Rem Koolhaas opened in New York, and then the second flagship store opened in Tokyo. Today, Prada still exists with a top-level brand identity.

The Prada building was completed in 2003 by Swiss architectural firm Herzog & Meuron in Omotesando amongst all other luxury boutiques. When they started to design this building, they were influenced by the local culture's tastes and preferences (Figure 2). It has long-shaped transparent green glass panels on the façade, and these are designed in a concave and convex manner (Figure 3). These shapes are like diamond bubbles. Depending on where people stand in the building, the perception of the crystal ambient changes. When you try to look inside the store, you encounter an optical illusion due to glass panels. The structure itself shines during the day and in at night, the building is illuminated by artificial lightings. Floors, elevators, and other connecting interior elements are linked continuously and smoothly because one of the main reasons customers have a fluid shopping experience. Today, the Prada building is one of the most iconic buildings in Tokyo. Architects Herzog and de Meuron describe the building as *"an interactive optical device"*. *"Because some of the glass is curved, it seems to move as you walk around it. That creates awareness of both the merchandise and the city—there's an intense dialogue between actors. Also, the grid brings a human scale to the architecture, like to display windows. It's almost old-fashioned"* (Url-10). They also use contrasting materials such as hyper-artificial, like resin, silicone, and fiberglass, or hyper-natural, like leather, moss planks of woods.



Figure 2: Prada, Tokyo, 2003 (Url-11)



Figure 3: Prada, Tokyo, 2003 (Url-12)

## **5.2. Hugo Boss**

Hugo Boss Company was founded in 1924 in Metzingen by Hugo Boss and operated during World War II. During this period, it provided employment for 140 prisoners, most of them women. However, they apologized for this situation years later because the



prisoners were making Nazi uniforms. The brand, which the heirs took over after the long war years, started to become an international brand in 1969. The brand started its classical men's collection production in 1970 and presented its classical women's collection to the world in 2000. Today, Hugo Boss has 388 stores, 531 shops, and 122 outlet stores in the world. Hugo Boss is still in the first luxury brand group called entry-level that was described earlier.

Hugo Boss building was completed in 2013 by Japanese architect Norihiko Dan and Associates in Omotesando. "They wanted to imbue not only the structure but the streetscape with an imaginative and dynamic atmosphere" (Url-13). It is an eight-story building that is in a corner and surrounded by Tod's L shape building (Figure 4). Half of the building is not visible as it is located at the back whereas the visible part intersects Omotesando Street (Url-14). The architect aimed to differentiate from Tod's building next to it with its design. Dan, the architect of the building, explained that "this is to maximize the corner lot feature of the premises and to accentuate the inner vertical façade of adjacent Tod's building, in order to create certain symbiotic synergy" (Url-15). He designed the façade like multiple leaf-shaped columns, and he used a lot of reinforced concretes (Figure 5). For the concrete to be similar to the wood texture, a wooden formwork was used. Façade openings of the building are supported with steel, and these steels are illuminated from the inside by led lights. Hugo Boss building, which is one of the pioneers of contemporary architecture in Tokyo, differs from other examples in that it only sells men's products. Although, Omotesando in general appeals to women with high economic status, Hugo Boss manages to bring male customers to this street.



Figure 4: Hugo Boss, Tokyo, 2013 (Url-16)



Figure 5: Hugo Boss, Tokyo, 2013 (Url-17)

### **5.3. Tod's**

Tod's was established in Marche/Italy by Filippo Della Valle in 1920. The brand, which first started as a leather shoe repairer and manufacturer, later became famous thanks to its visionary grandchildren. In the 1970s, their shoes were worn by celebrities in television shows. It was officially branded in 1983. In 1996, they organized a promotional campaign with Audrey Hepburn. The brand, which is mostly known for its shoes, started selling bags in 1997. Today, the brand has a lot of stores and boutiques in the world as it has been continuing its image as a medium-level luxury brand.

Tod's building was completed in 2004 by Japanese architect Toyo Ito in Omotesando. It is an L Shaped and eight-story building. The architect used concrete, aluminium, and green glass on the façade (Figure 6). The organic shapes were inspired by zelkova trees when the building was designed. The exterior of the structure is utterly unique with its transparency and opaque balance. As a result of being affected by nature in its organic shapes, the architect tried to establish a strong relationship with the environment in the building that he designed. The façade, which is illuminated by daylight during the day, resembles a forest at night with its illumination from inside. Concrete pieces that represent the shadows of trees outside, allow the façade to create a visually impressive perception (Figure 7). Tod's building, which is one of the pioneers of the luxury flagship store trend that started on Omotesando Street, has also been an innovator for other flagship store designs. Especially, Hugo Boss's architect was impressed by Tod's facade when he designed the Hugo Boss flagship store and did not want to design a project that was not compatible with Tod's.



Figure 6: Tod's, Tokyo, 2004 (Url-18)

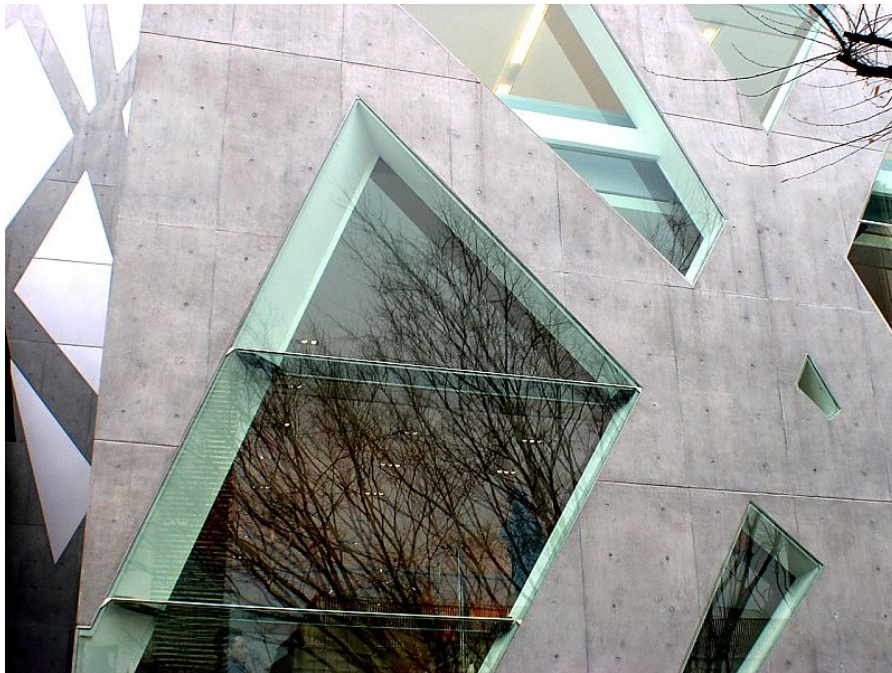


Figure 7: Tod's, Tokyo, 2004 (Url-19)

#### **5.4. Dior**

Dior started as haute couture in Paris in 1946, but its official brand was established in 1947 by Christian Dior. The first collection launched in 1947, and it created a new look. Journalists and fashion designers of the period thought that Dior had revolutionized the fashion industry at that time. Dior, which has designed for everyone from Hollywood stars to the royal family, has become one of the most elegant and successful brands of fashion. The journey, which started with clothing, continued in many areas such as accessories, bags, shoes, glasses, cosmetics, and perfumes. Today, Dior has well-designed boutiques in all over the world with its elite level brand identity.

Dior flagship store building was designed in 2004 by Toyo Ito's student Kazuyo Sejima in Omotesando. Like Tod's and Prada, this building is one of the oldest contemporary architectural structures in the region. The building is thirty-meter high and consists of eight floors (Figure 8). The architect, who tries to continue the architectural language used by Ito, created an elegant design. Designed just like a simple box, strong shapes or impressive light features are not used in the Dior building. White transparent glass and aluminium are used on the façade of the building (Figure 9). The most important feature of the building is the acrylic façade design. Sejima also influenced Dior's pleated skirt design when she created the façade of the building (Xie & Shen, 2013, p.2357). Dior building, which is one of the simplest designs in Omotesando Street, has an aesthetic and impressive appearance.



Figure 8: Dior, Tokyo, 2004 (Url-20)



Figure 9: Dior, Tokyo, 2004 (Url-21)

### 5.5. Louis Vuitton

Louis Vuitton was founded in Paris by Louis Vuitton Malletier in 1854. It is believed that the first customer was Oyama Iwao who was from Japan, and the first sale was a luggage set. The company opened its first store in London Oxford Street in 1885. In 1893, it became an international company and presented its collections in fashion fairs. During World War II, they collaborated with the Nazis and increased their wealth from their business relationships with the Germans. The brand started with a suitcase design and today sells many products such as clothes, bags, and accessories. As of 2016, it is still considered the most prominent luxury brand in the world with 27.3 billion dollars in revenue, and it is defined as an elite-level brand.

The Louis Vuitton flagship store opened in 2011 in Omotesando Street. Its official name is called The Escape Louis Vuitton. This store is distinct from all other Louis Vuitton stores. The store is also used as an exhibition center, and it is one of the most important contemporary arts and fashion spaces in Tokyo. Like Dior, Louis Vuitton is designed with simple multi boxes by Japanese architect Jun Aoki. The building height is 31.9 meters and consists of irregular rectangular units (Figure 10). The architect of the building explains that "the columns and beams are all made from wide-flange steel members 20 centimeters by 20 centimeters in cross-section. The exterior finish consists of two types of metal mesh, polished stainless panels, or two layers of glass ornamented with patterns. The LV Hall on the seventh floor has a triple-height ceiling and is wrapped in a three-layered screen of metal mesh, glass, and white lace embroidered with white ribbons" (Url-22). The façade is illuminated with daylight during the day, and artificial lighting is used at night. Especially in the evenings, the image creates a visual feast (Figure 11).



Figure 10: Louis Vuitton, Tokyo, 2011 (Url-23)



Figure 11: Louis Vuitton, Tokyo, 2011 (Url-24)

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

Today, there are many venues with luxury brand identities in many parts of the world. These brands pay attention to many details from product quality to architectural design in order to have a prominent and unique place in the market. One of the most important aspects of these details is that they have flagship stores, especially in economically advanced countries. Flagship store designs of luxury brands are always significant and meaningful to consumers. In addition to being a retail store where quality products are displayed, they also serve other purposes such as exhibitions, concert venues, collective workspaces, and much more. Besides their unique experiences, these stores strive to be an icon in their location, and they have a prominent place in the urban scale due to their designs and their scales.

The reason why flagship stores exist in economically rich countries like Japan with great potential for luxury shopping is that they actually evolved in parallel with globalization. Namely, these stores are located in cities that have a high influx of foreign tourists. They address the global world, not the local one. Due to the fact that the location of the flagship stores in the city is directly proportional to the customer base, it addresses with the globalizing world. Tokyo is such a city, and its Omotesando Street is a very popular destination for foreign tourists. Apart from being a famous shopping venue, this street is also an area where people come to experience structures of different urban scales and designs. This is one of the most important reasons why flagship stores have been built in this part of Tokyo since early 2000s. At the same time, the flagship stores in Omotesando Street have also become a meeting point for people. Architects have built specially designed buildings not only for shopping but also as an urban space where people will meet up.

Importantly, luxury brands have to improve themselves day by day in order to achieve elite level brand status and to offer their customers unique experiences. In this context, luxury brands try to be innovative. They offer a variety of experiences to the customer, such as using the store interior as an exhibition area, displaying a minimal number of products for the season, or overlaying all communication materials digitally inside the store. All brands are in a continuous development process in accordance with the dynamics of the customer base they address. Flagship stores in general aim to present a unique experience by creating unique spaces. A brand's flagship store design is one of the most popular unique experiences in recent times. Luxury brands, which are located in remarkable structures at the urban scale, aim to define their image with a distinctive experience. These brands, which generally work with world-famous architects, pay attention to structure design as much as its interior atmosphere. The design of the place where the product is sold is as valuable as the product.

In addition, brands also employ sustainable designs. Apart from using sustainable materials in their designs, these sustainable buildings are among the most important examples of sustainable design planned at the urban scale. The trees and other natural elements in their respective store locations were not damaged during the construction of the buildings and the flagship stores were positioned according to these natural elements. In several instances, their façade designs were inspired by zelkova trees in Omotesando Street. In this context, flagship stores not only employ sustainable designs but also protect the natural aspects of their city.

Luxury brands, while trying to define and enhance their brand image, also contribute to architectural design in the context of urban studies. While strengthening their brand image and their position in the market, they also create iconic structures in their respective regions. Flagship stores, which are attractive to local populations and tourists due to their eye-catching structures, also contribute to their location with a sustainable approach. Omotesando Street in Tokyo is an example of such a location that was studied with the help of visual data analysis in this article. Over the years, this street came to be defined by the presence of these unique structures that give life to it. Today, many countries with rich economies feature flagship stores of luxury brands, with many perhaps trying to build an Omotesando street of their own. In this study, flagship stores in Omotesando Street were analyzed in the context of urban studies. In future studies, some areas of interest may be the interior design of these flagship stores or materials used which can be examined in the context of sustainable architecture.

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