

4TH CONFERENCE ON RECENT ADVANCES IN RETAILING AND SERVICES SCIENCE

THE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AS AN EFFICIENT BUSINESS ADVERTISEMENT: THE CASE OF SÃO PAULO

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PRESENTATION

The aim of this paper is to discuss the role of the architectural design in the real estate market, having as a case study the City of São Paulo ¹. In this way, it is highlighted the importance of the design as an advertisement of the business that is developed inside the building acting as its big shop window, and otherwise the lost of the meaning of the architectural design to residential buildings where other elements become more important.

This analysis can be made not only for the buildings itself but also concerning the city as a whole. Actually, what is being sold is the image that the building can transmit.

THE BUILDING AS A PRODUCT

There is a big difference between those who think the physical space (architects and planners) and those who sell this space concerning building or city. That is, planners don't think the physical space as a product, but as an element with a social and environment function. Another element that makes this understanding more difficult is the specific characteristic of this product. The building, includes in its price composition not only the physical aspects but also the location conditions. By phisycal caracteristes it is understood: size, plan, environment comfort conditions, construction materials, fittings finishings and so on. The location fators includes acessibility, the existence of many facilities, the quality of the urban environment, (air and sound pollution), traffic condition and the existence of open and green spaces.

Therefore, the selling techniques go beyond its physical aspects of the buuildings. They start using some location and some psychological values that try to reach the consumer wishes more than their needs.

It is in this context that the mechanisms of place marketing has been strongly acted , mainly concerning the residential buildings, where the consumer illusion is easily achieved.

¹ The city of Sao Paulo, capital of the State with the same name, lies on 750 metres above the sea level in the southeast region , with access by the Atlantic Ocean through Santos harbour, the main port of the country. The city of Sao Paulo has about 10 million inhabitants in a area with 1500 sq km. It is the main core of a metropolitan region encompassing 38 municipalities with a population of more than 16 million inhabitants.

Regarding the services and commercial buildings, the architectural design and its capacity of including the promotional elements of the business, become the most important thing for selling.

The use of the architecture, history and monuments, in the past, and the urban renewal that act as a touristical attraction, nowadays, has been highlighted in the city marketing policies, and start being used to promote the public management, with election intention.

Actually, in the competition process among cities, the good spaces, well designed, with the qualified architecture can be function as a big shop window of the city.

THE RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

It is possible to notice that these selling process of a specific space or building is being made by the divulgation of the image or by some psychological values, not more by the quality of the architecture or the urban space.

Despite the importance of the marketing discipline to better understand the place dynamics, and the possibility to use the existent facilities as an element of selling, what has happened is the illusion of the consumer

At the moment to buy a dwelling the way to induce the consumer is achieved by the valorization of some elements linked with status, technological performance, price, environmental quality, safety, as a substitute of the basic quality of the product- the dwelling itself (environment comfort, quality of the construction materials, size and layout.)

The reading of the advertisements in the newspaper in São Paulo city allow us to detach some elements that is being used as a selling strategy by the real estate sector concerning the residential use.

Some values as status, noble living style are offered by the selling of the architectonic style which are a reflection of a more cultural living condition.

The mention of a famous architect as the author, or a big known company as the builder, are another way to reach the high income class consumers.. They sell the condition of being unique and different. This social class can and want to pay for the brand. Tradition and history are other elements that they use for selling. Some undertakings sell technology and modernity, making an appeal to the necessity of safety.

The price has been one more selling factor. The famous cost price (very used in the past) is being substituting by the fabric price. It is making an analogy between a product coming directly from the industry, and then, cheaper, (quality by the fabric price). The low price is reached by a industrialized production of housing components, (process very depreciated in Brazil)

Other elements for selling are the location factors. That is, the road system, the existence of many facilities, the good environmental conditions and so on..

In this way, they sell the location. The emphasis is live close to the shopping "quartier" or the business "quartier" or the quiet "quartier". Pay attention to the french name "quartier" to say block.

They also sell the location near the more noble space in the city. They include in their projects, the public garden and parks, and become the owners of the landscape and the view.

Finally, the appeal of the dream to own their own house and live far from the necessity to pay rent.

In this way, we can ask about the concern with the design quality.

THE OFFICE BUILDINGS

In opposition of what is occurring in the residential sector, the office buildings have using the quality of the architectural design as an advertisement of their business.

This situation comes from many factors. Firstly, by the big offer of this kind of product- the office building. Secondly, by the concentrated offer in a few places with similar conditions and good advantages.

The great offer of office buildings is due to the fact that São Paulo is assuming, more and more, the condition of being a tertiary city as well the dismantling of the real estate credit mechanisms concerning the residential sector.

In a context of economic recession (although with an economic stabilization) the production of office buildings faces an enormous competition.

In this way, the real estate capital decided to adopt new formulas to guarantee the entrepreneurial market conquer of the city.

These new elements consider throughout the design, the aspects regarding the cultural insertion, the image transmitted, the flexibility, and the modernity. Everything search for a truly business architecture.

Having as a scenery the City of São Paulo it is possible to discuss which spaces are being created and how the architectural design is answering to the new demands of this tertiary city.

The importance of the architectural design

Considering that the building has to answer properly to the development of the activity to which it was conceived (taking into account the environmental comfort conditions, layout, safety, maintenance costs etc) , in the specific case of services buildings one has also to analyse the aspect related to their contribution to optimize the business involved. This means, to create an architecture that is concerned with reaching good levels of productivity, rentability and attractiveness of business and clients.

Therefore, the building has to be thought as a part of the business to be offered to clients. Surely, different kinds of business serve different clients and then, claim for different solutions.

Moreover, the big groups of buildings , capable of creating their own strategic locations, have to take advantages of the local potential in terms of unexplored activities.(VARGAS, 1992)

Despite of the big difference among the tertiary activities which ask for different architectural solutions, some common elements have to be considered to attract the

interest of the entrepreneurs in the building and to orient the architect design: the flexibility, the image and the cultural insertion of the design.

the flexibility concept

Concerning the flexibility, two aspects have to be considered: the frequent necessity of rapid changes due to the technological advances (work systems and equipments); and the necessity to diminish or to enlarge the office areas of the same enterprise due to the national economy instability, some times in recession, some times in expansion.

Regarding the former aspect, the better option has been the free plan.

According to Carlos Bratke (1985), the great question related to the functionalism is to define the functions of each theme correctly. The strong linkage among functions can lead buildings to a fast obsolescence. The function, many times, changes inside four walls.

Believing in these ideas, in the seventies, this architect started to design office buildings where the free plans are the main premise. The common services like restrooms, cafeterias and vertical circulation started to be concentrated and the area required by the structural elements and the walls started to be reduced in order to obtain bigger office floor areas. These areas are destined to receive carpet and are used as reference to define the selling prices.

The modulation of floor, ceiling, and frames started to be adopted searching for an increase in flexibility because it allows to recompose the modules and the rooms easily, and to modify the electric, air conditioning and telephone fittings.

Because of the plan and fitting building flexibility, where all cables and conduits are fitted under an elevated ground or inside a false ceiling and due to the condition of being an intelligent building, the functionalism of the design will depend, mainly, on the internal lay-out, where the possibilities of changes are greater. Then, the evaluation of the design in terms of functionalism becomes irrelevant.

Concerning the economic changes, the architecture design have to take in account the possibilities of the business expansion and reduction inside the building itself.

Therefore, the design have to consider some divisions to be used by different firms, with separated entrances with or without linkages among them, giving guarantees to the possibility to extend or to diminish the main enterprise, if it is necessary.

This concept of flexibility has the same aim as the flexible industrial production, which tries to diminish the fast product obsolescence. However, in the case of building the replacement becomes more difficult.

the business image

The building has to reflect all characteristics involved in its conception. The shape showed by the architectural and technical solutions and the material used have to be coherent with the intention of the design quality. The building has to reflect, clearly, the undertaking goals, showing an image containing many concepts and values.

In this way, the image represents an important aspect in terms of relationship between the enterprise and other entrepreneurs and between the entrepreneurs and their clients.

Many other building designs had the intention to show the quality of the business through the architectural quality expressed in constructive, technological and shape terms. (PROJETO, 1989)

Some studies have showed that the condition of being intelligent has a meaning of advance, progress and safety, even in employees concepts. The refinement of the materials shows the solidity and sophistication of the enterprise to do business.

Finally, the architectural work in its shape aspect stamps and identifies the business and the building acting as an advertisement of the business itself in places where the great quantity of big undertakings is a constant.

Another aspect that the building image can transmit through its architecture refers to the concept of uniformity. This means that the similarity of the buildings in the same business, but in different cities can give the idea of the offer of standardized services, independently of its location. This was the case of the buildings designed to the Bank sector (PROJETO, 1989).

the insertion in the urban context.

Concerning its proper insertion in the urban context, other elements that have been considered in the tertiary building designs are their shape aspects and the incorporation of cultural aspects.

The former aspects are concerned with the appraisal of the new building without making a great contrast with the existent urban design. The latter aspects try to incorporate in the design some space destined to the traditional activities developed in the area.

In this way, the image of the city that changes every time, after a new construction, amplifies the discussion about the relation between the architectural design and the building, reaching to the city scale.

THE CITY AS A PRODUCT

The image of the city is the reflection of the society which lives there, and shows the social, economic and political relations that take place in.

Recently the great technological development of transportation and communication systems and the globalization, have made cities more similar and strengthened the competition among them, in order to attract the interest of the investors and “city consumers” and, consequently, to improve the urban economy.

In this way, the urban design and the image that it can transmit work as a big shop window to promote business and the city as a product.

From then on, the City Marketing policies starting acting as an important tool in the urban management, although, as mentioned before, with a big reluctance by the architects and planners.

The concept of “city marketing” included in the concept of place marketing, according to ASHWORTH e VOOGD (1994), is the result of the integration of three schools of marketing thought: not-for-profit marketing; social marketing and image marketing.

Due to these characteristics, this concept of “City Marketing” is, often, the responsibility of the government, itself, or joined with the private sector. (WARNABY, 1996) Besides the possibility of creating and selling the city or the place to the investors and tourists, the place marketing can also contribute to change the behaviour of some groups, trying to reach some social, economic and political goals.

Then the place marketing can work as a strategic tool to the management of a specific place when this place starts being thought as a product.

Many cities in Brazil have already noticed the importance of the place marketing to promote their government, mainly the cities with some touristic potential. Eco-tourism, for instance, is becoming a good alternative. In the Brazilian case, besides the fact that the environment is very interesting, the offer is almost unlimited.

Nevertheless, this appeal for selling the city, has been also used in the field of the urban tourism, including all kinds of cities.

Moreover, it is important to say that many of the design and construction developed by the government is used as an advertisement of its management, with election goals.

The more recent case in the city of São Paulo is the “Cingapura” Project. This project is a plan to eliminate the slums from the central areas, where the land price is high. The inhabitants build their own dwellings.

The project has a great political meaning, reaching many segments of the society: the low income class by improving their living conditions in terms of housing and income; the middle class by seeing to disappear the images of poverty from the urban landscape; the entrepreneurs by the possibility to construct new buildings and by the valorization of the urban land in the neighborhood.

If this was not enough, the way of this project has been developed and the place chosen to be settled, makes clear its use as a big shop window that tries to promote the government. This project has contributed to elect the new mayor, who belonged to the same party.

The places chosen to develop these projects had a good location in terms of visibility and high car flow. They are strongly coloured and built in front of the slums. Just in front, to be easily visible.

Another interesting example is the painting of the bridges that crosses the two main rivers in the city, with bright colour, without any criterion, starting a big debate about the image of the city and its government.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

As a conclusion, we, architects and planners are very worried about the ways that our cities are taking. It is difficult to control the transformation of the built space and the city as a consuming product when the citizens are not able to face the tricks of the place marketing.

We are concerned about the quality of the urban life which is under the levels considered acceptable.

Actually, the big question is: The city is for whom?

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