A Comparison of Perceived and Intended Images of Four Retailers in the Muncie Mall

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Purpose of Thesis

Retailing has become increasingly competitive over the last decade, and the image that a potential customer has fixed in his or her mind about a store can determine whether the store is patronized or not. Therefore, retailers must be extremely careful in choosing how they will present themselves to the public. This project included four stages. First, four stores in the Muncie Mall were chosen for study: Paul Harris, Sycamore, County Seat, and On Stage. My own personal observations and the image that I perceived from these stores are also included in this stage. Second, potential customers of these four stores were given questionnaires to complete to gain an understanding of the images that they perceived. Third, interviews with the management of these stores were conducted to gain an understanding of the image that is intended to reach the public. Fourth, the intended and perceived images were compared, and recommendations for change were given that could bring the intended and perceived images closer together using the social distance construct.

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In the competitive environment of retail merchandising, the image that a store relates to the public is very important. Retailers cannot try to be all things to all people, instead each must project an image to a specific target market. The purpose of this project is to compare the intended and actual store images of Paul Harris, Sycamore, County Seat and On Stage.

The project will be completed in four stages:

* Personal Observation
* Potential Customer Interviews
* Management Interviews
* Comparison and Recommendation

The first stage is my own personal observations of each store concerning the exterior and interior of the store. It is important to evaluate the exterior of the store because store windows can be one of the single most important and powerful selling tools because they are a strong reflection of the store within, and also a tip off to the store's personality and the kind of people that shop there (Joel, 1989). Specific attention will be placed on the floor and wall coverings, floor layout, merchandise fixtures, lighting, signage, and merchandise presentation style. Presentation style is important because effective visual merchandising allows a customer to see and react to the excitement created by fashion appeal involving all of the senses.

The kind of display used is also important. The two types of display are selling and prestige. Selling displays are meant to produce immediate sales, whereas prestige displays are designed to impress customers with the originality of the store (Winters, 1972). It is noted that it is not merchandise alone or price alone that fixes a store's image in a customer's mind, but the way that it is arranged, presented and displayed (Joel, 1973).
The second stage will be the completion of questionnaires by potential customers of each of the stores to gain an understanding of what they feel each store projects as its image. These perceived images will be contrasted to the results of stage three.

The third stage will be the completion of interviews with the managers of these four stores to gain an understanding of the intended image that their store is trying to project to its public.

The last stage is the comparison of the actual images discovered through the potential customer interviews to the intended images as relayed by the managers. Also, recommendations for change to bring the two closer together will be given to lesson the social distance construct, which will be explained in greater detail later in this paper.

**Personal Observation**

My education in both the fashion merchandising program and the marketing department has enabled me to observe things that the untrained shopper does not notice or realize is significant to the way he or she feels about any particular store. I am also the assistant manager of Maurices in the Muncie Mall, and have held this position for seven months. This experience, along with my part-time experience working in retail for two years has also enabled me to gain an understanding of retailing as a business and some of the psychology behind it. I have learned that everything that is done concerning visual merchandising has a purpose. Therefore I feel that I am qualified to make the following observations and judgments about each of the four stores being used for this project.

The following terms will be used in my observations of the four stores. There are two types of merchandise fixtures used, capacity fixtures and feature fixtures.
Capacity wall fixtures consist of garment rods and shelves. Large amounts of merchandise can be hung on garment rods, ranging from two to six feet in length. Rods longer than six feet give a heavy and mass-merchandised look which can be unappealing to the customer. Rods are attached to wall standards with either brackets or clamps. Shelves can be either of wood or glass and can be attached to wall standards by the same brackets used for garment rods or special shelf brackets.

Capacity floor fixtures consist of round racks, tri-level racks, bins and tables. Round racks, commonly called rounders, are used mainly for one of three things. The first is to stock basic items that are purchased in depth, like turtlenecks. The second is to stock broken merchandise assortments, that is styles that are left in only a few odd sizes or colors. The third is to stock markdown or clearance items that are sized. A tri-level round rack is one that has three adjustable levels. These may be used to house tops and bottoms that coordinate well, for example. The function of bins is to house tops or bottoms that are folded. Tables sell merchandise very effectively because the customer has been trained to head straight for tables when looking for good bargains.

Feature wall fixtures consist of waterfalls and straight arms. Waterfalls are sometimes called slant arms. Waterfalls consist of four to fifteen knobs and are used to face out merchandise so that the full front is visible. Straight arms also face out merchandise with the full front visible, and can be used for either tops or bottoms, where waterfalls are used best for tops and dresses.

Feature fixtures for the floor area are two and four-ways. Two-ways, commonly called t-stands, consist of one waterfall and one straight arm and are used to feature test items or fashion forward items. Four-ways consist of two waterfalls and two straight arms, and feature fashion forward items, as well as coordinates and separates (Bell, 1988).
Paul Harris

Exterior

Paul Harris utilizes a closed picture holder set into brick on one side of the store, and no window on the other side of the entrance. This creates an asymmetrical store front. The sides of the store exterior are peach and beige, with both colors on top as well. The store name consists of individual letters in white. From the soft exterior, a brighter, more vibrant merchandise presentation is seen. From the exterior alone, it appears that Paul Harris is conveying a slightly up-scale image.

Interior

Floor Covering. The store is carpeted throughout with beige carpeting. A wooden tile is laid in front of the cash wrap desk, creating a path to the accessories.

Wall Covering. The walls are all painted beige, with the accessory department having wood paneling with accessory fixtures attached. Standards are vertical and enable garment rods, waterfalls, and straight arms to be used.

Floor Layout. The layout is a maze, with the floor fixtures creating natural paths to follow throughout the store. The store is sectioned off by walls of different widths for departmentalization of merchandise.

Merchandise Fixtures.

Wall. As stated before, rods are used along with straight arms and waterfalls. The garment rods are not all consistent; some have end caps and some do not. Many of the crossbars holding the garment rods look old, dirty and rusty. Shelving is also used, with neatly folded merchandise contained within, and additional merchandise is housed below on rods.

Floor. Paul Harris uses the conventional rounders and two- and four-ways, but also has some unique custom fixtures. Three by three racks are used that appear to be a muted silver, differing from the shiny silver of the other floor fixtures. A big
wooden cabinet is against one wall used to display and house merchandise. The cabinet is made of the same wood used in the accessory and cash wrap area, so it coordinates well with the atmosphere of the store. No mannequins are used to display merchandise.

Accessories are presented on brass, glass and wooden fixtures on the floor. The wall section for accessories is paneled in wood also.

**Lighting.** Both track and spot lights are used in the store and spot lights are used to emphasize the displays.

**Signage.** The signs used to price point and acknowledge sales are solid red with a white oval in the center. The lettering and numbering is done in red within the white oval. The signs are very simple, and suggest a big price-slashing sale one would find at a discount store. Hang tags are also attached directly to the price tag in the same red and white color scheme.

The signage does not seem consistent with the pictures in the store. Big pictures of women dressed in expensive looking clothing in various and extravagant settings are spread throughout the store, while the signs on fixtures are simple and direct. I also observed some of the plexiglass signholders being cracked or broken, which does not coincide with the up-scale image I first perceived.

**Merchandise Presentation.** A lot of repetition of color is used, with definite departments of trendy, classy, or dressy merchandise, for example, being evident by the color story used. Bright, trendy clothes are up front, and attract a lot of attention. The more subdued and dressy clothing, however, is in the back of the store.

No mannequins are used in the store, instead garments are hung directly in the standards or on three inch cup brackets to form outfits, which I refer to as “looks”. Elegant “looks” are put together, with many of the outfits seeming to be too trendy for the Muncie market. Folding is used to an extent, and all folding is very neat and organized.
Image Perceived. The message that I perceive from Paul Harris is that of someone who aspires to be rich, but is not. It is as if the store wishes to be up-scale with the physical layout and custom fixtures, but the signholders and wall fixtures look old and unkept. It seems that all of the merchandise is on the upper end with respect to price, but it all seems to be on sale. Everything seems to be a special because it is being sold for much less than the price ticketed. The term I would use for the merchandise, along with the custom decor is unique, yet the signage and upkeep of the store is not consistent with the up-scale image that the store is otherwise trying to project. I feel the store is trying to appeal to young at heart, career-minded women who both work and play hard.

Sycamore

Exterior

The exterior of Sycamore consists of two open and angled store front windows symmetrically placed on each side of the entrance. There are two marble pillars on each side of the entrance, leading the eye up to the store sign. The actual store name consists of individual white, lighted block letters raised from a sleek black background. It is apparent from the exterior of the store alone that the message projected is one of simplicity, suggesting the basic clothing items that are found inside. There are no mannequins in the windows, but there are four-ways showing put together "looks" to the outside of the store.

Interior

Floor Covering. There is beige carpeting throughout the store, with no walkways or paths created by the actual floor covering for the customer to follow.

Wall Covering. The walls are off-white to match the carpeting. There are no departments created by the wall covering alone. Wall standards are place vertically
on the walls into which merchandise fixtures are placed. There is, however, a section of wood paneling behind the cash wrap desk.

**Floor Layout.** The layout of the fixtures on the floor is a maze layout with aisles created somewhat by the positioning of the floor fixtures.

**Merchandise Fixtures.**

**Wall.** The wall fixtures consist mainly of garment rods of various lengths housing a large amount of merchandise. Waterfalls and straight arms are also utilized. All wall fixtures are silver, appearing shiny, with the exception of the actual garment rods, which resemble pipes because they have no end caps. Some of the fixtures, such as the garment rods, have a crude or unfinished appearance.

**Floor.** Rounders are used repeatedly, and a large amount of merchandise is housed on their silver frames with glass tops. Four-ways are also used to show related and coordinating merchandise. All of the floor fixtures are very basic and strictly functional.

The accessories are displayed on countertop displayers, along with floor fixtures designed to house accessories. The hosiery and socks are displayed on pegs by color on a small wall next to the cash wrap desk. A gift table is also set up by the desk with holiday gift-giving items and pre-boxed gifts.

**Lighting.** The store utilizes both track and spot lighting. Large track lights are spaced throughout the store, with spot lights used to accentuate certain wall and floor areas used for display. I did notice several spot lights that were burnt out and needed to be replaced.

**Signage.** Most of the signs are strictly functional for price pointing. Small plexiglass signholders, some cracked or broken, are used to hold the red, white and green signs. The only sign that I observed that was used for image was in the denim department. It was a large sign on the wall picturing three young people dressed very casually and laughing while having a good time. Hang tags are also used to
acknowledge special prices or sales on certain items not price pointed otherwise.

The signing of the store is all consistent and very basic. Price points are large, easy to read and serve to direct the customer.

**Merchandise Presentation.** Much of the merchandise is housed on the walls on garment rods rather than waterfalls or straights. All of the merchandise that is housed is colorized, using the ROY G BIV (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet) system. A limited amount of merchandise is folded on shelves on the wall. "Looks" are displayed on shelves above the garment rods using plastic tubes that are bent up and around to resemble shoulders and a head.

The wall fixtures are crowded, but related merchandise is put in the same section. The floor fixtures, however, house both tops and bottoms, which I found to be distracting. On all displays on the walls and four-ways, layering is used as the items would be worn, for example a coordinated turtleneck and sweater.

**Image Perceived.** The one word that comes to mind is value. The merchandise in Sycamore is relatively inexpensive but also very basic in design. Everything about the store is simple, and this gives me the impression that basic clothing can be bought there, but little emphasis is placed on fashion forwardness. Consistent with the retail premise that "you get what you pay for", the low quality of merchandise is consistent with the moderate to low price points.

The fact that some of the fixtures are crude in construction and signholders are broken, this reinforces the image of a store that is not trying to appeal to a wealthy or affluent customer. I think, instead, that Sycamore is trying to appeal to a younger market that does not represent a lot of disposable income.

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**County Seat**

**Exterior**

The exterior of county Seat consists of open windows on each side of the
entrance. The store front sign consists of individual white letters on a simulated granite-like background. There are no mannequins in the windows, instead props are used to “scarecrow” merchandise in the windows. From the exterior of the store the merchandise is colorful and the store looks exciting. Although no wood is used, the store has a rustic appearance, like the outdoors.

Interior

**Floor Covering.** There is a winding path created through the store by gray tile. The inner areas of the tile are covered by gray carpeting.

**Wall Covering.** The majority of the walls are gray slatwalls. Other walls are painted gray with a rough look, resembling stucco. Vertical wall standards are utilized for garment rods, waterfalls, and straight arms. Unlike Sycamore, a vast amount of the merchandise is displayed using straight arms and waterfalls, with less being housed on garment rods.

Many of the pictures that are on the walls are what I will call “image enhancers”. These are pictures consisting of people dressed very casually outside having fun. Many of the pictures do not even show the entire outfit of the person in the picture, instead they try to capture the mood of the person or the kind of person that wears the merchandise in the store.

The dressing rooms, which resemble out-houses, are set side by side across from the cash wrap desk. A coordinated outfit is hung on each dressing room door. The cash wrap is also gray, resembling granite, and merchandise is displayed in between two pictures on the wall behind it.

**Floor Layout.** The layout of the store is a maze layout, but is very directed because of the tile pathway.

**Merchandise Fixtures.**

**Wall.** Short garment rods are used, either two or four foot sections. Waterfalls and straight arms are used extensively, however, and a lot of merchandise is shown
from the front view. Along with merchandise in the vertical wall standards, slat fixtures are used on small slatwalls which angle out and separate the store into different departments.

**Floor.** The fixtures on the floor consist of rounders, two- and four-ways. All of the fixtures have the same granite gray finish. The floor fixtures are very consistent with the total look of the rest of the store. I have never seen any fixtures made of this material before, and I like the uniqueness and the consistency with the rest of the design of the store.

The accessories are displayed on both countertop accessory displayers and accessory fixtures on the floor. The socks and hosiery are colorized on a small wall section next to the cash wrap on a silver grid, which resembles a chain-link fence.

**Lighting.** Both track and spot lighting are used in the store. As in the other stores, the store is very well lighted, and the spot and flood lights enhance the displays.

**Signage.** Small plexiglass holders are used on top of the rounders. The signs are also unique because they are muted pictures of country scenes done almost entirely in red. White lettering and price points are overlaid onto the pictures. The signs are very unique, because the price points stand out from the red pictures, yet the scenes of country life are visible in the background. Also, “The Jeans’ Store” is printed on the bottom of each sign. All of the signs are consistent, yet each scene is different.

Individual brand name signs are used to signify certain brands of clothing like Guess or Levi’s. Signage is very effective in this store because it directs the customer to both brands sought out and price ranges sought out, and yet reinforces an image of the store at the same time. Hang tags are used on clearance rounders with “NOW” written on top, creating a sense of urgency to buy the special deal.

**Merchandise Presentation.** Almost every wall set looks identical, with the the
same garment standards set in the same place on each wall. The merchandise comes off strong with a lot of repetition used in presentation style. The color story of the merchandise is strong along with the Aztec pattern of the clothing.

In the Levi's department, bins are used extensively and every item is folded exactly the same. The store is very neat in appearance, with all merchandise consolidated in areas that make sense.

The private label NUOVO is evident all over the store with signs on the fixtures and walls. All in all the store is very neat, clean, and organized, with repetition being used extensively to relate one consistent image to the customer.

**Image Perceived.** The word I think of when I am in County Seat is All-American. The merchandise is very sporty and casual and the fixtures enhance this image by seeming to be made of materials from the great outdoors. The rustic and casual atmosphere of the store, along with the signage and merchandise carried all work together to create one solid image that sends a very consistent message about what kind of customer shops at County Seat. It appears as though County Seat does an excellent job in targeting its customer: a young, middle-class All-American who enjoys looking good and likes to have fun.

**On Stage**

**Exterior**

The majority of the store front is glass. One side of the store is partially glass because the store sits in a corner position in the mall. This enables customers to see virtually all the store has to offer from the outside. The store name is made of lights of different colors spelling out the name on a black background. The sign looks very upbeat and contemporary.

Very abstract forms are used for mannequins in the windows. Merchandise is also laid out in outfits flat on platforms in front of the windows. This allows displays to
be viewed, yet does not block the view of the store behind it. From the exterior of the store alone it appears that the store carries very trendy and fashion forward merchandise.

**Interior**

**Floor Covering.** Carpet is laid throughout the store, with no path or walkway directing the customer through the store.

**Wall Covering.** The walls are covered with black and white tiles, creating a very modern look to the store. Some walls are all black, some all white, and some contain both black and white tiles.

**Floor Layout.** The floor layout is a maze, with small aisles created somewhat by the positioning of the floor fixtures. The store has many alcoves and sections for departmentalization of merchandise. The dressing rooms are set back in these alcoves also, and they resemble dressing rooms backstage at a theater, with big three-way mirrors by each section of dressing rooms.

**Merchandise Presentation.**

**Wall.** The black spaces between the tiles serve as the standards for the merchandise presentation. This creates a very clean look because the garment standards, consisting of straight arms, waterfalls and garment rods, blend into the construction of the wall and are not seen by the customer. All of the wall fixtures are very shiny silver.

**Floor.** Silver finished rounders, two- and four-ways are used to display and house merchandise. The fixtures are all very neat, clean and organized. A clear plastic bin fixture is also used on the floor, with merchandise folded neatly within. All accessories are on common accessory fixtures on the floor and in the display cases at the cash wrap desk.

**Lighting.** Both track and spot lighting are utilized in the store, and the spot lights
are used to accentuate the merchandise forms and wall displays.

**Signage.** The signage used by On Stage does not seem consistent with the image given off by the rest of the store. The signs are white, with "slice-of-life" pictures on them. The pictures show women in casual, somewhat classic clothes in outdoor settings. The signs also have price points above the pictures. What seems to be inconsistent is that the pictures convey an image of classic, timeless clothing and rural settings, while the rest of the store conveys a very urban, upbeat and trendy message. The point may be that the store offers the best of both worlds, but to me it confuses the message that the store is trying to relate. The signs are all contained in plexiglass signholders that are clean and neat. The signs are all consistent in the message that they convey, and each has a caption under the picture, for example, "Come home to American Classics". As stated earlier, however, it does not appear that the signage represents an image consistent to that of the rest of the store.

**Merchandise Presentation.** The store is very neat and organized. An equal amount of presentation is done between capacity fixtures and feature fixtures. Symmetrical full-bodied "looks" are displayed on the walls and the rest of the pieces are housed below. Smaller versions of the abstract garment forms are used to fill out the displays.

Folding is also used extensively to create impact as focal points of wall sets. Color is used very effectively in the folded sections to create impact that is vivacious and exciting. The merchandise is displayed as it would be worn, with layering that is not overdone. The presentation style is clean and neat, with repetition of styles if different colors used as well as repetition of color.

**Image Perceived.** I receive mixed messages from On Stage, as was previously mentioned in the signage section. If I had to choose one word, however, it would be contemporary. Both the trendy and the more basic styles are all modern. The color story and merchandise carried works with the physical layout and store sign to give the
customer a fashion forward and upbeat feeling about the store. It appears this store is trying to reach the late teen to early middle-age market who enjoys shopping and looking up-to-date.

**Potential Customer Interviews**

In doing this project, I gave questionnaires to five females who were all potential customers of each of these four stores. The questions dealt with such topics as what catches their attention in a store, their attitudes on visual display, the frequency of their shopping habits, and the motivation for their shopping behavior. Following general questions posed to gain an understanding of the previous topics, questions were asked about each of the four stores individually.

When determining the methodology for these questionnaires, I felt that it would be appropriate to have females of differing incomes, occupations and lifestyles to complete the questionnaires. Upon this decision, I chose five females who differed in income, occupation, and lifestyle for my study group.

In analyzing the questionnaires, which are found in Appendix A, two distinct subgroups emerged with similar characteristics, those who enjoy shopping as a leisure activity and those who look at it as a chore. I will therefore refer to those who enjoy to shop as group A, and those who view it as a chore as group B. Group A stated the most important reasons for entering a store were that they had found good merchandise there before, attention-getting displays, and helpful sales associates. Group B stated the most important reasons for entering a store were sales or low prices, along with loyalty to certain stores. The majority of both groups stated that they usually look through the entire store for merchandise instead of looking in only certain departments. Members of both groups also stated that they shop in certain stores and avoid others, putting the social distance factor to work. It has been proven in studies
by Lessig (1973) and Sirgy (1982) that consumers’ loyalty is explained better by the stores which they avoid instead of the ones they patronize. Also, consumers will try to avoid shopping in stores to which they have attached a negative value.

When asked about window shopping, group A responded as if window shopping was an actual Olympic sport; where group B did not window shop, and only went shopping to look for particular items. Both groups stated that they put their own outfits together and tried things on as they were displayed, depending on their personal tastes, although group A tended to look around and put their own pieces together to form outfits more frequently than group B.

Moving on to the questions of individual stores, the first questions referred to Paul Harris. Members of both groups shop at Paul Harris, but rarely. The main objection to Paul Harris was the attitude of the sales associates. Rudeness and being ignored by the sales associates were both stated objections. These perceptions could lead to the customers feeling like the associates feel they are not worthy of shopping there. The two things that seem to be remembered most about the store are the use of repeating color in presentation and the attitudes of the sales associates. When questioned on price, members of both groups feel that Paul Harris is overpriced but has good sales. Also, members of both groups feel that the price is not compatible with the quality of the merchandise. Concerning whether the physical properties of the store are right for the merchandise carried, both affirmative and negative answers were given. One member of the study group stated that the store was too drab for the merchandise, because the colors of the design of the store are soft, where a lot of merchandise is vibrant, which creates a contrast. All of the younger members of both groups (twenty-five and under) felt that Paul Harris was trying to serve their tastes, while the oldest member of the group (thirty) did not feel Paul Harris served her style and tastes. The consensus about Paul Harris is that its perceived image is arrogant.

The next questions referred to Sycamore. Members of group A all said they did
not shop at Sycamore, while all members of group B did. A reason given for shopping there was good selection, and a reason for avoiding Sycamore was cheaply made clothing that looked very generic. The things remembered most about Sycamore are that the clothes look generic and mass produced. Also, members of group A felt that the clothes looked cheap, which could be in part because of the presentation style of housing vast amounts of merchandise like a discount store. All members interviewed felt that Sycamore was low in price and also that the quality of the merchandise was low. All members felt that the physical properties and fixtures are right for the merchandise carried. Most members of group A felt that Sycamore is not fashion forward enough to cater to their tastes, while members of group B did. The consensus about Sycamore was that the image perceived is cheap, which could also be stated as value-image.

The third set of questions referred to County Seat. Reasons for avoiding County Seat were that the merchandise selection is limited and the quality is not compatible to the price paid. The majority felt that County Seat has a very casual and laid-back atmosphere, which relates to the casual merchandise carried, mainly denim. Members of both groups felt that County Seat is mid-priced and the quality of the merchandise is low to medium quality. The two things remembered most about County Seat are that all of the merchandise looks the same or gives off the same attitude and the background music is good. Even though most members of both groups felt that County Seat appeals to a very select market, all felt that the fixtures coincide with the merchandise. Members were mixed as to whether the store was trying to appeal to them personally. It is evident that County Seat gives off a very strong image of casualness, whether or not the members of the study group felt that they are personally in the target market.

The final questions referred to On Stage. On Stage elicited the most positive feedback concerning merchandise assortment. Only one member interviewed had not
shopped there before. All others stated reasons for shopping there to be friendly, helpful sales associates and merchandise they felt suited their lifestyles. The two things most remembered about the store included liking the merchandise and the bright lighted store front sign. Members of both groups who shop at On Stage felt that it was in the mid-price range and the quality for price paid is very good. Physical fixtures of the store were said to be in agreement with the merchandise carried. On Stage was also said by members of group A to be neat and organized. The image that seems to be perceived from On Stage is trendy, which I feel is partly because of the physical properties of the store such as the glass front, store front sign, and merchandise forms.

Regarding the lifestyles of the members of both groups, all are career oriented and lead very busy lives. Those who worked in some aspect of the retail field did more shopping and belonged to group A. Those who did not work in retail related fields were in group B and did not enjoy shopping as much.

Management Interviews

All of the managers of each of the four stores received questionnaires, which were intended to be filled out and included with this completed project. However, only one of the store managers completed the questionnaires. Reasons for not completing the questionnaires were that they were too busy and that their district managers would not allow them to disclose any information. Finally the managers of Sycamore and County Seat gave me a few moments of their time to answer a few short questions. The manager of Paul Harris, however, would not answer my questions or disclose any information because she felt her District Manager would object to the idea.

Beginning with Sycamore, the manager stated that she does not have a lot of freedom deciding where to put specific merchandise in the store. She said that she
receives instructions as to where to place departments, but the individual pieces she uses for display are basically up to her. When asked about the image her store is trying to project, she stated that affordable, quality clothing is what she wants the customer to remember. Although she does not feel that her store intends to be high fashion in the customer's eye, she does feel that the fashions carried are fashionable and in style. A slightly younger customer is sought after by Sycamore, or at least those young at heart.

The manager of County Seat answered the same few questions for me concerning her store. She stated that she receives very specific instructions on where to place merchandise, especially certain brands like Guess. She also stated that she is evaluated heavily on cleanliness of her store and a neat appearance at all times. She described her target customer as a younger, very active and fun-loving individual. The fixtures and props, together with the kinds of pictures hung in the store all work together with the merchandise presentation to create one solid message that County Seat is trying to send out to its customers. She stated that the image that County Seat is trying to send out is casual and very fun. The kind of merchandise carried is not trendy, it is more in tune with stores like The GAP, basics with a current twist to look fashionable. The clothing is stylish, yet will not be out of style next year.

The most cooperative manager that I had the pleasure of working with was the manager of On Stage. Kelly filled out the questionnaire, which is found in Appendix B. As one can see from her answers on the questionnaire, she receives specific instructions about where to put merchandise from her company's visual department. Because there are four prototypes of stores in her company, she must adapt the plan sent to her to suit her store in particular. When she must decide where to put merchandise, she puts it into departments like denim, sportswear, or dressy merchandise. The responsibility to carry out these merchandise plans is delegated to her Assistant and Co-Manager, and to a lesser degree her sales associates.
Once a month she is evaluated by her District Manager according to her personal tastes as well as how well she carried out the instructions sent. She said that the image her store is trying to relate is basic quality clothing at reasonable prices. This is accomplished by not overdoing presentations, and displaying merchandise as it would be worn. She also explained this practice is carried through by the physical fixtures of the store by not having elaborate fixtures or mannequins. Kelly feels that her store successfully relates its intended image to its customers by being merchandised with basic quality clothing that is not overly trendy or that will go out of style in a short period of time. She also does not feel there are any misconceptions about her store concerning value for price paid or quality of merchandise. When asked to describe her store's target customer, she described her as a women between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five who enjoys clothing that is fashionable, comfortable and affordable. She also stated her customers like to work hard as well as play hard.

**Comparison and Recommendation**

It is interesting to compare the results of the intended images stated by the managers to the actual images perceived by the customers. Because of my experiences with the manager of Paul Harris, it is almost fair to say that the rude and arrogant image that is perceived by the members of both groups may be what Paul Harris is trying to relate to its customers. It appears that Paul Harris is trying to appeal to a customer who is of a slightly higher social class, and alienates potential customers who do not fit that image. Social scientists have found that people prefer to interact with people of their own social class, and will to a lesser degree interact with those of a higher class, and finally would rather avoid those in a lower class (Dickerson, MacLechian, 1990). This is termed the social distance construct. It seems that this is
evident in two of the four stores under study. Members of the groups felt that Paul Harris was intended for those in higher social classes because of the merchandise carried and the attitudes of the sales associates. Because I could not get the real intended image of Paul Harris, it is hard for me to ascertain whether or not it is successful, therefore I cannot make recommendations for change.

The social distance construct also applies to Sycamore, and the image of cheapness that is perceived by the customer. People construct perceptions of the social class of the typical shopper of a given store by everything from the physical environment to other shoppers (Dickerson, 1990). People feel a lot more comfortable patronizing stores where the environment reflects their own personal lifestyle. The image of affordable clothing comes through as intended by Sycamore, but to the extent that customers feel the quality of the merchandise is also cheap, because the majority of people are taught that you get what you pay for. It appears that Sycamore should pay more attention to the cleanliness and basic upkeep of the store. The cracked plexiglass and burnt out spot lights I observed, along with the mass-merchandised presentation style of using garment rods almost twenty feet in length bring the image of a discount retailer to mind. If more attention were paid to making the merchandise look more unique by creating more departments within the store I feel the customers would not have such a generic image of Sycamore.

County Seat is very successful in relating its intended image to the public, although people in my specific study do not feel that County Seat is merchandising for them and to their personal tastes. I think that the granite looking fixtures, along with the private line titled NUOVO and presentation style are all very consistent with the signage and atmosphere of the store. It is evident that the reason that my study group does not shop at County Seat is not because of the social distance construct, but because they simply do not like the merchandise carried. My only suggestion there would be to broaden the buying patterns for the store. However, that would give up
some of the uniqueness of the very specific target market. Making such a move would be a major decision by the company and could alienate some existing customers who do feel that the store was created just for them.

On Stage is also successful in relating its intended image of basic quality clothing. Members of my study group, along with myself, felt that the physical fixtures and merchandise created an image that they perceived to be one that they can associate with. The greatest frequency of shopping by my study group occurred at On Stage. A proven hypothesis is that the greater the distance between a person and his or her perceptions of the social class of a store, the less frequently he or she will shop there (Dickerson, 1990). This translates into the conclusion that my study group most closely related with their perceptions of On Stage. The only problem that I perceived with On Stage is its signage, as stated earlier in my personal observation section of the project. As I also stated, however, the difference between the images portrayed by the pictures used on the signs contrasting with the other physical properties of the store like wall coverings and store front sign may suggest that On Stage has both to offer. This could also reflect a change in direction from the time of store design to today's market image.

Dickerson and MacLechian also suggest that stores should be careful not to present models too high in status that may alienate some potential customers who do not feel part of that social class (Dickerson, 1990). Of all of the stores that were under study, it appears that Paul Harris is the only one guilty of doing this.

The basic idea of each store's intended image is related to the public, but I feel that a closer look could be taken to pinpoint an exact niche for each store to pursue in the increasingly competitive world of retailing.

Today's customers are leaving their traditional shopping grounds and beating a path to specialty stores that possess an image and personality that they can relate to. Stores must choose a specific market and appeal to their lifestyles, values, and
aspirations (Irish, 1990).

The most successful retailers moving into the year 2000 will be those who know exactly to whom they are targeting, and make them feel as if the store were created just for them.
NOTE: The first three questionnaires make up group A, while the last two make up group B.
1. When you go shopping, what makes you go into a certain store? (i.e. the display in window, loyalty to store, reputation, sale)

There are certain stores I like to go in because I like the clothes, but if I see sale signs I almost always go in even if I rarely shop at that store.

2. Do you enjoy shopping in specialty stores that are departmentalized or do you always look at all of the merchandise in all departments? (i.e. do you trust the merchandiser to put the correct merchandise in departments you would expect to find them in?)

I usually look all over a store, because a worker might put something in a department that I wouldn't otherwise be looking in.

3. Do you go into every store when you are looking for a particular item, or do you have favorite stores that you frequent and those that you avoid?

When I knew exactly what I want, I will search every store on the planet to find it before I give up, but when I'm just looking or window shopping I go to my favorite stores and avoid those I don't particularly like.

4. Do you go window shopping to see new trends and fashions, or do you only shop when you are seeking a particular item?

I constantly window shop - I love seeing new trends. I subscribe to two fashion magazines because I like to know what's in, whether I buy it or not.

5. When in a store, do you usually try on outfits as they are displayed, or do you enjoy putting your own pieces together to form your own outfits? Both.
6. Do you shop at **Paul Harris**?

   Why or why not?
   I go in and look, but I usually don't buy.

   Do you remember the last time you shopped there?
   Yes

   How often do you shop there?
   About once a week.

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?)

   Smelly

   Why?
   Because the salespeople are rude - it seems you are a big bother to them when they have to stop what they are doing to help you.

8. What do you remember about that store?

   Land clothes, too trendy - like they will all be out of style next year.

9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price?

   Too expensive for quality - but they do have good sales sometimes.

   Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there?

   Quality seems too cheap for the price - things do not seem made very well.

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried?

    No - the store is sometimes messy.

    Some racks are broken and merchandise facing opposite directions, etc.

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?)

    Somewhat, I think Pause is almost too trendy, and Paul Harris seems too old - I'm somewhere in between.

Do you remember the last time you shopped there? I don't remember.

How often do you shop there? Rarely.

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?) Cheap.

Why? Clothes look very mass produced. Like what you could get at Walmart or Kmart.

8. What do you remember about that store? Just that I don't like the merchandise.

9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price? Cheap, inexpensive.

Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there? Yes.

Yes - the fixtures are very basic.

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried?

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?) No.
6. Do you shop at County Seat?
   No.
   Why or why not?
   I don't buy clothes for my boyfriend unless he is with me and I don't like the women's clothes.
   Do you remember the last time you shopped there?
   No.
   How often do you shop there?
   Hardly ever.

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?)
   Rusty.
   Why?
   I don't know - all of the pictures are outside and the racks are not silver but grey.

8. What do you remember about that store?
   All the clothes look the same.

9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price?
   I don't really know. Average I guess.
   Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there?
   ?

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried?
    Yes - they are not silver and the store seems like it is decorated in an outdoor-style.

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?)
    No - I think they are going after a younger market.
6. Do you shop at __________?  
   Yes.  
   Why or why not?  
   I like the clothes and the salespeople.  
   Do you remember the last time you shopped there?  
   Yes.  
   How often do you shop there?  
   About once a week.

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?)  
   Fashionable.  
   Why?  
   The clothes are basic pieces but stylish because of the way they are styled, and the fashionable colors. You can mix and match a lot.

8. What do you remember about that store?  
   The sign on the front - very bright and exciting.

9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price?  
   Reasonable - not too cheap so you wonder if the quality is good.  
   Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there?  
   Yes - I think the quality is very good considering the reasonable prices you pay.

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried?  
    Very abstract mannequins - I think that fits with their image of fashion-forward.

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?)  
    Yes, very much.
12. Please provide a brief description of yourself in terms of age, income, occupation and your lifestyle. (career oriented, trendy, classic, etc.)

I am 25 years old, a part time student, I work full time for an advertising company. I make between $12,000-14,000 a year. I would like to think I am fashionable and somewhat trendy, but not enough to be weird. I think I will wear more classic clothing when I am older, like my mother. I probably spend about 50% of my money on clothes - I love to shop!
1. When you go shopping, what makes you go into a certain store? (i.e. the display in window, loyalty to store, reputation, sale)

The way the store is merchandised, if I have had luck finding merchandise before, the sales associates, sales.

2. Do you enjoy shopping in specialty stores that are departmentalized or do you always look at all of the merchandise in all departments? (i.e. do you trust the merchandiser to put the correct merchandise in departments you would expect to find them in?)

I almost always look at all the merchandise, unless I am in a real hurry.

3. Do you go into every store when you are looking for an particular item, or do you have favorite stores that you frequent and those that you avoid?

For the most part I shop only my favorite stores or the ones that I've had luck at before.

4. Do you go window shopping to see new trends and fashions, or do you only shop when you are seeking a particular item?

I shop all the time.

5. When in a store, do you usually try on outfits as they are displayed, or do you enjoy putting your own pieces together to form your own outfits?

I usually put my own pieces together.
Note: For questions numbered 6-11, please answer first for Paul Harris, then Sycamore, then County Seat, followed by On Stage.

6. Do you shop at Paul Harris? NO
   Why or why not? The staff for the most part are very rude and the clothes are not my style.
   Do you remember the last time you shopped there? YES
   How often do you shop there? VERY RARELY

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?)
   Rude
   Why? Because the manager and associates will talk about you very pretty in front of you, and totally ignore you.

8. What do you remember about that store?
   That I am not in a hurry to go back anytime soon.

9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price?
   VERY OVERPRICED
   Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there? NO

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried?
    NO

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?)
    NO
6. Do you shop at Sycamore? No
   Why or why not?
   I really don't care for the merchandise

   Do you remember the last time you shopped there?
   Yes

   How often do you shop there?
   Very rarely

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?)
   Cheap
   Why?
   The merchandise looks very cheap & generic

8. What do you remember about that store?
   They did not have anything that I would have bought

9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price?
   Cheap

   Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there?
   Yes

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried?
    Yes

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?)
    No
6. Do you shop at County Seat? No
   Why or why not?
   I never wear down and I don’t have any males to buy for.
   Do you remember the last time you shopped there?
   Yr
   How often do you shop there?
   Very rarely

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?)
   Nice
   Why?
   The merchandise with story never changes.

8. What do you remember about that store?
   They have great music

9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price?
   Medium priced
   Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there?
   Yr

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried?
    Yr

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?)
    No
6. Do you shop at On Stage? YES
   Why or why not?
   Because I like the merchandise & the staff

   Do you remember the last time you shopped there?
   YES
   How often do you shop there?
   Often

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?)
   Neat
   Why?
   Every time I am in that store, every Sunday, well set up, table is very neat & organized.

8. What do you remember about that store?
   I can almost always find what I need when I shop On Stage.

9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price?
   Reasonable
   Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there?
   YES

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried?
    YES

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?)
    YES
12. Please provide a brief description of yourself in terms of age, income, occupation and your lifestyle. (career oriented, trendy, classic, etc.)

I am a 30 year old single parent, I manage a women's retail store in Illinois. I earn between 17,000 to 21,000 annually, I consider myself career oriented.
1. When you go shopping, what makes you go into a certain store? (i.e. the display in window, loyalty to store, reputation, sale)

First experience of friend, potential who enjoys the beauty of shopping and connecting,
Sale signs,
Not many merchandise displayed
If I notice the salespeople are not putting around, cleaning, and talking to customers, I feel like I'm not dining

2. Do you enjoy shopping in specialty stores that are departmentalized or do you always look at all of the merchandise in all departments? (i.e. do you trust the merchandiser to put the correct merchandise in departments you would expect to find them in?)

I look at all merchandise, even though the item I am looking for is hidden until entering department. If I ask salesperson, I still manage to find it after the salesperson says they don't carry it, etc.

3. Do you go into every store when you are looking for a particular item, or do you have favorite stores that you frequent and those that you avoid?

I have favorites that I always go into and those I avoid depending on mood.

4. Do you go window shopping to see new trends and fashions, or do you only shop when you are seeking a particular item?

I go window shopping excessively!!

5. When in a store, do you usually try on outfits as they are displayed, or do you enjoy putting your own pieces together to form your own outfits?

Put my own pieces together!
6. Do you shop at Paul Harris?

Why or why not?
Sometimes, Price & Lack of Friendly Service.

Do you remember the last time you shopped there?
Yes.

How often do you shop there?
Occasionally.

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?)

Why?
Sheety & Haggard

8. What do you remember about that store?

Carcass & Red!

9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price?
Reasonable

Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there?
Yes.

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried?

No. Too dark.

Although it is reasonable, it is fairly more expensive compared to other specialty stores.

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?)

Yes.
6. Do you shop at **Sycamore**?
   Why or why not?
   **No**
   Their clothes are too cheaply made & girly.
   Do you remember the last time you shopped there?
   **No**
   How often do you shop there?
   **1x yr.**

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?)
   Why?
   Teeny Pep
   Everything is pastel, the clothes look cheap and wear out quickly. Not fashion forward at all. Always late on trends.

8. What do you remember about that store?
   **Pants & Sweatshirts**

9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price?
   **Cheap - Inexpensive**
   Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there?
   **Yes**

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried?
    **Yes**

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?)
    **No**
Note: For questions numbered 6-11, please answer first for Paul Harris, then Sycamore, then County Seat, followed by On Stage.

6. Do you shop at County Seat?
   Why or why not?
   No.
   It looks like they only have one item. All aztec stuff in the same colors.

   Do you remember the last time you shopped there?
   No.

   How often do you shop there?
   Never.

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?)
   AZTEC
   Why?
   Premises spectacular.

8. What do you remember about that store?
   The same clothing items.

9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price?
   ?

   Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there?
   Yes.

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried?
    Yes.

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?)
    No.
6. Do you shop at **On Stage**?

Why or why not?

**Yes.

Do you remember the last time you shopped there?

**Yes.

How often do you shop there?

Weekly or bi-weekly.

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?)

**Fashion

**Why?

They always have a trendy look (for Indiana)!

for a reasonable price.

8. What do you remember about that store?

**Cut clothes.

9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price?

**Fairly reasonable.

Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there?

**Yes.

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried?

**Yes.

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?)

**Yes.
12. Please provide a brief description of yourself in terms of age, income, occupation and your lifestyle. (career oriented, trendy, classic, etc.)

24 yrs. old
Female
Student $900 a month
Retail worker
Very quiet, career-oriented, business-like atmosphere
Trendy with some reservations
not a jean & sweatshirt person
not a sequin glam gal either somewhere in between!!
1. When you go shopping, what makes you go into a certain store? (i.e. the display in window, loyalty to store, reputation, sale)
   
   reputation, loyalty
   low prices

2. Do you enjoy shopping in specialty stores that are departmentalized or do you always look at all of the merchandise in all departments? (i.e. do you trust the merchandiser to put the correct merchandise in departments you would expect to find them in?)
   
   I prefer shopping in departmentalized specialty stores because I don't like to waste time looking for something in particular.

3. Do you go into every store when you are looking for a particular item, or do you have favorite stores that you frequent and those that you avoid?
   
   I usually go to the same stores a word stores that I know are "too expensive" or "too cheap."

4. Do you go window shopping to see new trends and fashions, or do you only shop when you are seeking a particular item?
   
   Usually only when looking for a particular item.

5. When in a store, do you usually try on outfits as they are displayed, or do you enjoy putting your own pieces together to form your own outfits?
   
   Both
6. Do you shop at Paul Harris? Yes
   Why or why not?
   a) Has quality merchandise that is affordable when on sale.
   Do you remember the last time you shopped there?
   No
   How often do you shop there?
   Rarely

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?)
   Quality.
   Why?
   They have very nice things.

8. What do you remember about that store?
   Snobby salespeople

9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price?
   A little expensive but affordable when on sale.
   Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there?
   Yes.

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried?
    Yes.

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?)
    Yes.
Note: For questions numbered 6-11, please answer first for Paul Harris, then Sycamore, then County Seat, followed by On Stage.

6. Do you shop at Sycamore? yes
   Why or why not? Good Selection

   Do you remember the last time you shopped there? no
   How often do you shop there? rarely

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?)
   Why?

8. What do you remember about that store?

9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price?
   They are pretty reasonable

   Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there? yes

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried? yes

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?) yes
Note: For questions numbered 6-11, please answer first for Paul Harris, then Sycamore, then County Seat, followed by On Stage.

6. Do you shop at County Seat? Not really
   Why or why not?
   It is over-priced for quality and selection.
   Do you remember the last time you shopped there?
   Yes.
   How often do you shop there?
   Very rarely.

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?)
   Why?
   Said - Bock, Sycamore not disinterested at it seems.

8. What do you remember about that store?

9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price?
   It's not too expensive.
   Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there?
   No - too high for its quality.

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried?
   Yes.

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?)
   Yes.
6. Do you shop at On Stage? 
   Why or why not?
   I've never been there

   Do you remember the last time you shopped there?
   N/A

   How often do you shop there?
   N/A

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?)
   Why?

8. What do you remember about that store?

9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price?
   Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there?

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried?

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?)
12. Please provide a brief description of yourself in terms of age, income, occupation and your lifestyle. (career oriented, trendy, classic, etc.)

Age = 21
Income = $10,000/year
Full-time student
I am very career-minded and would like to spend a lot of money on clothes but can't really afford it now.
1. When you go shopping, what makes you go into a certain store? (i.e. the display in window, loyalty to store, reputation, sale)

   Sales! Sometimes I'll catch displays that stand out that grab my attention.

2. Do you enjoy shopping in specialty stores that are departmentalized or do you always look at all of the merchandise in all departments? (i.e. do you trust the merchandiser to put the correct merchandise in departments you would expect to find them in?)

   I usually look through the entire store.

3. Do you go into every store when you are looking for a particular item, or do you have favorite stores that you frequent and those that you avoid? It depends on what I'm looking for, which usually I don't have a clue so I go in multiple stores.

4. Do you go window shopping to see new trends and fashions, or do you only shop when you are seeking a particular item?

   Usually only when I specifically need something.

5. When in a store, do you usually try on outfits as they are displayed, or do you enjoy putting your own pieces together to form your own outfits? Both
Note: For questions numbered 6-11, please answer first for Paul Harris, then Sycamore, then County Seat, followed by On Stage.

6. Do you shop at Paul Harris?
   Why or why not? Sometimes - because it's there.

   Do you remember the last time you shopped there? No.

   How often do you shop there? Not often.

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?) It doesn't.
   Why? I can't say it makes me feel anything because I don't remember it.


9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price? Probably average.
   Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there? Yes.

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried? Yes.

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?) Yes.
Note: For questions numbered 6-11, please answer first for Paul Harris, then Sycamore, then County Seat, followed by On Stage.

6. Do you shop at Sycamore? **yes**
   Why or why not? 
   
   *Do get free eye shadow*

   Do you remember the last time you shopped there? **yes**

   How often do you shop there? **not often**

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?) **country**
   Why?
   *I don't know. It just gave me a sort of country (rural) feeling*

8. What do you remember about that store? **get free eyeshadow**

9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price? **OK**
   Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there? **probably**

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried? **I suppose so**

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?) **I'm not sure**
Note: For questions numbered 6-11, please answer first for Paul Harris, then Sycamore, then County Seat, followed by On Stage.

6. Do you shop at On Stage? No
   Why or why not? Who knows.

   Do you remember the last time you shopped there? Yes... never.
   How often do you shop there? Not very often!

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?) Not
   Why?

8. What do you remember about that store? The sign in front (lettering against black)

9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price? ?
   Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there?

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried? Yes

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?)
Note: For questions numbered 6-11, please answer first for Paul Harris, then Sycamore, then County Seat, followed by On Stage.

6. Do you shop at County Seat? No
   Why or why not? No reason, just never did.
   Do you remember the last time you shopped there? Never.
   How often do you shop there? Never.

7. What is one word that comes to your mind when you think of that store? (How does the store make you feel?)
   Why?

8. What do you remember about that store?
   [Note: Partially visible, likely a handwritten note or diagram.]

9. How do you feel that that store is in terms of price?
   Do you feel that the price is right considering the quality of merchandise that you get there?

10. Do you think that the physical properties of the store (fixtures, decor, etc) are right for the merchandise carried?

11. Do you feel this store is trying to serve your individual tastes and lifestyle? (Do you think you fall into its target market?)
12. Please provide a brief description of yourself in terms of age, income, occupation and your lifestyle. (career oriented, trendy, classic, etc.)

- I'm 20 yrs old
- Dirt poor (wrote $2,500.
- I work "down on the farm"
- I have no lifestyle
- I'm anything but trendy.

"Trendy" makes me comit
APPENDIX B
1. What is your level of responsibility in the visual presentation of your store? (i.e. Do you have creative freedom as to where you put items, or do you get specific instructions as to where merchandise should go?)

1.a. If you receive instructions on where merchandise should go, please comment on the following questions.

- Are all of the stores in the chain set up the same way? 
  - No, some stores are set up differently than others.
- Who decides where the merchandise is presented?
  - My company has a visual merchandising department.
- Does your company have a visual department? 
  - Yes.

Can you alter the plan (and by how much) if you feel it will be better suited to your customers presented in a different manner?

1.b. If you have creative freedom in your presentation, please comment on the following questions.

- Do you receive any handbooks or guides from your company? 
  - Yes, every time.
- My store has a visual merchandising handbook with pictures and creative direction.
- Does your company have a visual department? 
  - Yes, our department.

- How do you decide where to put merchandise? Do you have specific departments for denim, dressy merchandise, etc?
  - We put merchandise in certain areas depending on its color and its department, denim, sportswear, and dress merchandise.

- How much of your visual merchandising responsibilities do you delegate to your employees, and to whom?
  - I delegate equal amounts of responsibility to my co-managers and assistant managers. I also try to get my sales associates involved in visual merchandising.

Name: [Handwritten: Billy Mills]

Store: [Handwritten: On Stage (Brookstone)]
2. Do you get evaluated on your visual presentation? Please make reference as to how often, by whom, and the criteria used to evaluate. (i.e. Is there standard criteria used throughout the company, or is it just what related to personal tastes of the evaluator?)

My District Manager evaluates my visual presentation once a month. The evaluation is based upon my District Manager's personal tastes, and if the presentation was carried out according to the instructions of the chief store quitter.

3. What do you feel that your store is trying to relate as its image to your customers?

My store is trying to create the image of value quality clothing at reasonable prices.

4. How do you feel your store accomplishes this, as far as overall presentation style is concerned?

We display our presentation with a lot of accessories and layering of our clothes. We try to present the merchandise in a way in which the customer would actually wear it.

5. How do you feel that the physical properties and characteristics of your store relate to the image that you are trying to convey to your customers? (i.e. lighting, fixtures, layout, decor, etc.)

I feel the physical properties of my store create the image my company is trying to create relate to the customers by not being overwhelming. For example, my store does not have elaborate fixtures.
6. Do you feel that your store successfully relates its intended image to your customers? Yes, because my store is merchandised with basic clothing, not trendy clothing that will only be in style for a short period of time.

7. If not, how do you feel that your store could change its current presentation style and standards to successfully relate the intended image to your customers? N/A

8. Do you think that there are any misconceptions relating to your store by your customers? (i.e. concerning price, value for their money, quality of your merchandise) No

9. What do you think should be done to correct these misconceptions so that your customers perceive the intended image when they think of your store? N/A
10. Write a brief description of a profile of a member of your target customer group. Please include some reference to age, income, and occupation. Also make a note as to what kind of lifestyle they lead.

My company's target customer is a woman from 18 to 35 who enjoys quality comfortable clothing at prices she can afford. Our target customer is middle class who works hard, but also plays hard.
WORKS CITED

Bell, Judith, Silent Selling. ST Publication, Signs of the Time’s Publishing Co., Copyright 1988, p. 43-98.


