

# Urban Identity Represented by Concept Stores

## *Converted from Machiya in Central Kyoto*

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### Abstract

The city grid plan of Kyoto gave birth to rectangle street blocks and long narrow land plots for the layout of *machiya*, a traditional townhouse. From the last two decades, many old buildings in Kyoto including *machiya* were restored for contemporary use as concept store which widely known for its distinctive design that can represent Kyoto's urban features. This research aims to clarify the relationship between modern concept stores and the traditional urban fabric of Kyoto by selecting nine concept stores as case studies to collect data on-site for doing content analysis from their spatial planning to physical design; from brand concept to urban context and from selling items to façade design. The study found that the relationship between concept stores and urban fabrics was created through visual connection from interior items for sale, to exterior design of building facade that blends with the context of the neighborhood.

**Keywords:** *Urban Identity, Kyoto, Machiya, Concept Store, Retail, Architecture, Japan*

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## Introduction

The period from the 1990s to the first decade of the 21st century, called “regeneration urbanism” (Daisuke Abe, 2012), is the period where urban spaces, especially the old core areas, were regenerated by a new group of people who moved in and adapted old dwellings for contemporary use that fit their urban lifestyles. The trend of urban regeneration has continued to the present day and is regarded as an alternative way of preserving and developing an old district in an urban area for modern use. The image of the district is enlivened by new usage of space inserting into the architectural fabric, recreating a contemporary identity upon the existing urban structures and elements. The urban elements typically involve road structures and both public and private community facilities and recreational space where its residents can indulge themselves fully determining the usage of such spaces in urban and architectural spheres as well as the process of regeneration. Some of these transformations are modern concept stores housed into the framework of the original building. “Concept store” is a retail business providing a variety of merchandise carefully selected in accordance with an overarching concept to offer unique value in the market. Concept store is initially appeared in Europe, where the stores offer specific sustainable products or handcrafted items of high quality with attractive background story (Rexhepi, 2014.). Careful selection of products makes the concept store different from general retail shop which generally sell goods of daily or ordinary use for the mass market. In concept store, selection of categories of items may vary according to the concept of the shop owner such as clothing, furniture, cosmetic, books, and food. At the same time, concept stores also specialised in cross-selling different products and services related to design, fashion, music, and arts in one integrated space (Popescu and Popa 2012). In this approach, for concept store, buying becomes more “leisure and pleasure” than “shopping for a purpose.” To create a consistent and harmonious experience, the store layout, products, services, and spatial environment have to be integrate combined according to the overarching theme of the store through product display and the store’s architecture and design. By this aspect, strategically creative design with consistent brand personality and visual merchandising to create successful and engaging retail spaces is very important. (Chandan and Lotterberger, 2013). Westernization had a strong influence on Asia countries, particularly Japan, while following the West in city development has an impact on the urban regeneration practice, including the phenomenon discussed above.

Kyoto is one of Japanese cities influenced by this phenomenon of urban regeneration from Europe, which is obviously visible in the core area of tourist district. As an old capital of Japan, Kyoto, a melting pot of Japanese culture is one of the most popular tourist cities in Japan by beautiful city grid plan, ancient shrines, grand temples and refined townhouses from its long history of more than 1,300 year. It is also one of the most ancient yet liveable cities in the world due to its consecutive inheritance. However, the city is undoubtedly modern at the same time, because many old buildings, especially *machiya* (townhouse) were renovated for new usage. This is the result of being influenced by the above-mentioned phenomenon. The benefit of building conversion for contemporary usage is not only that old buildings were preserved, but the physical features and livelihood of the quarters

where building located were also regenerated. Consequently, the recreation of these obsolete buildings is considered not only an architectural issue but also as a social challenge (Bie Plevoets and Koenraad Van Cleempoel, 2009). Kyoto is one of appropriate places to verify this assumption due to popularity in conversion of its old buildings into modern commercial spaces. One of these distinctively adaptive reuses is the transformation of old *machiya* located along the street of Kyoto grid plan into concept store which are apparently well integrated into the urban fabric of Kyoto.

Based on the above background and observation, this study aims to investigate the factors that generate a connection between contemporary concept stores and the original urban structure and identity of Kyoto. In addition, the study also aims to clarify the mechanism of these factors that contribute to modern images of concept stores, while linking the urban identity of old Kyoto, and to describe how contemporary spatial attribute and new lifestyle experience in building level can represent itself in the traditional atmosphere of urban level. The study selected 9 concept stores located in the tourist core area of Kyoto as case studies. Site survey by doing measure work and close inspection of their designs in both spatial and physical attributes from interior to exterior, from selling items to store façade were done. Simultaneously, information about brand concept and store design approach were collected from related articles and interview with shop staff.

### Kyoto's Urban Development: An Overview

#### The Transition From Commercial Districts To A Core Tourist Area

The grid city plan of Kyoto represents the standard defining form of *Kyo-machiya*, a traditional townhouse for merchants and craftsmen, used as space for stores and residences. *Machiya* first emerged during the age of Heian and had developed through the Edo and Meiji period. During the Edo period, *Kyo-machiya*, was ubiquitous and considered a commercial and service sector, which later became the main economic sector. Attempts to make the most out of the limited spaces were made: shops were integrated with living quarters in the *Kyo-machiya*'s narrow rectangular strip land plot. A typical *machiya* plot is only 5.4 m. to 6 m. wide but 20 m. long, extending to the depths of the block with one or several courtyard gardens, known as *tsuboniwa*. *Kyo-machiya* are one and a half or two stories high, built with earthen walls and baked bricks. The front of the building was usually used as a store space, called *misenoma*, with sliding or folding shutters that open to display products. Space behind the shop was divided into the living room, composed of divided rooms with raised timber floors, covered by *tatami* mats. *Kyo-machiya*, also featured a *toriniwa*, unfloored earthen service space, and served as the passage to the rear of the plot, where a storehouse called a *kura* could be found. The front of the *machiya* is replenished with wooden lattices called *goshi*. The second storey's facade is normally made of earthwork, with a unique opening called *mushikomado*. Due to its unique design, *Kyo-machiya*, is recognized as a significant cultural heritage of Japan. Moreover, Kyoto's landscape plan considers it as an iconic structural element and a future image of Kyoto, making it an indispensable part of urban Kyoto's grid plan.

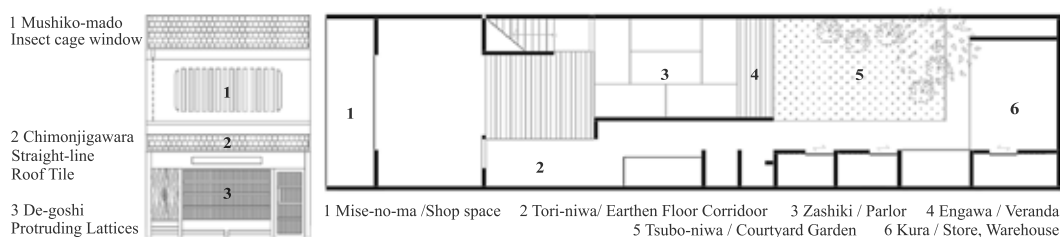


Figure 1. Elevation and Layout plan of Kyo-machiya.

Two decades ago, Kyo-machiya would not have much value at all; considering the practical and financial difficulties of fundraising, repairing Kyo-machiya was painstaking work. However, at present, Kyo-machiya are highly appreciated. The price of the areas in the vicinity of Kyo-machiya has increased for not only the properties that are located by a main road but also those nestled on narrow, isolated road. A number of machiya were renovated to be concept stores to reflect their value in a contemporary way and at the same time help shop owners draw attention to their design items. With integration of new usage into the old machiya, this allows people to live and work in the same neighborhood, contributing to a heart-warming sense of community that brings a Kyo-machiya to life again.

### Contemporary Use Under Kyoto Urban Policy

The iconic landscape district was established during the year 1930 to preserve its main roads and buildings. In fact, the nation's first decrees on the urban landscape were implemented in order to maintain the special territories, such as Gion, in 1972. A year after that, new height zone restrictions were passed and the height of construction is limited to 45 metres or lower. In 1996, the landscape district was expanded, and not long after that, in 2003, the Government of Japan implemented the Regional Preservation Law which is used as a guideline to achieve a scenic country.

### *The Current Landscape Policy of Kyoto was enacted in 2007 and Has Five Categories*

The first category lowers the height limits that were adopted in the 1973 urban planning policy, since the height of buildings is considered an important factor that shapes city landscape and environment. Maximum heights have been reduced – the commercial-residential zone is curtailed from 93 feet to 45 feet. The second category underscores building design and prohibition of the materials and styles used when constructing new buildings so as not to pose any harm to the scenic view of the city. For example, the policy requires that people use oxidized silver or copperplates roof tiles that are either plain or blue-green. The material of the outside wall must be matte, excluding glass and natural materials. The third category does not allow any constructions that would pose an impact on the surrounding scenery and views of the main landmarks resulting in the local government applied a strategy – the segmentation of Kyoto city into eight parts. The fourth category restricts outside advertisement. There are restrictions on where leaflets can be left outdoors, as well as their size and colors. Roadside signboards that protrude over roads near main roads are prohibited, as are all outdoor advertisements that use flashing lights and outdoor advertisements on roofs all over

the city. The fifth category emphasizes threats to the *machiya* by presenting financial difficulties regarding cost of renovation and maintenance. Despite the continued gradual disappearance of *machiya*, the government's decision to establish the *machiya* restoration fund demonstrates the government's belief that *machiya* are in fact an asset worth keeping for future generations to appreciate.

### Toward Contemporary Use Through Restoration of Historical Buildings

In terms of methods for differentiation, many shop owners seek old buildings to set up their stores. In order to avoid the potential degradation of the building itself and the cityscape it belongs to, people realized that they could enliven those isolated buildings that have lost their initial functions. Adaptive reuse for commercial purposes of those buildings is a solution and it became a proper discipline within the broader field of architectural conservation (Plevoets and Van Cleempoel, 2009). Considering an urban level, the fact that old buildings are now used for retail purposes probably leads to the optimized use of historic centres and may ultimately result in urban regeneration (Plevoets, 2009). Furthermore, Kirby and Kent (2010) also address how reuse of the city's architectural heritage can act as part of the city's image and branding. The transformation of architectural restoration of historical buildings, regardless of preservation, also plays an important role in urban development by enhancing a town's quality and creating a feeling of place both spatially and historically (De Arce, 2014). These enabled people for generation after generation to experience a sense of continuity in their physical surroundings. Restoration of historical buildings is so one of the utilitarian tools for the process of urban regeneration, which can bring new lively ambiance to the building and adjacent neighborhood, especially restoration of urban dwelling located in the old core area of the city for modern commercial use or service business. One type of outcomes of this conversion is the concept store, a new retail form that carefully selects and integrates selling items under a consistent brand identity or image according to "concept" of the store, a medium to convey its vibrant uniqueness to the world. Hence, entrepreneurs can create their own uniquely modern version of retail in the space housed in historical building.

Kyoto is well known for valuable traditional buildings and fine restoration of them for modern commercial use due to the status of the city as the premier centre of Japanese culture and tourism. Downtown Kyoto is full of retail stores selling both local and international products from antique items to modern objects. Some of these stores are converted from roadside *machiya* built from the Edo period, while some are detached buildings in the temple compound. The design of these stores represents the importance of consistency among contemporary shop design, urban fabric and cultural environment of the area where they are located. They try to utilise the existing unique characteristic of the architectural element and urban fabric of Kyoto as a medium in their stores design to enliven the atmosphere of their neighborhood which then will persuade clients to come to the area

and make a visit to their stores. The city grid plan and the elongated land plot give birth to the unique townscape of Kyoto, while new use in these historical buildings especially *machiya* keeps the old street lively.

Restoration or renovation of Japanese wooden structure may be different from the West which mostly built by stone or brick. However, in Japan there is no commonly agreed method of restoring or renovating *machiya*. Unless of 40,000 *machiya* has been designated a "cultural heritage" is carried out in such a way as preservation method of their historical value. This means that the vast majority of *machiya*, including many concept stores in Kyoto, which are not regarded as cultural heritage, can be freely restored under the supervision of store owners and designers to show the connection between their goods and context of the city.

### Methodology and Scope of the Study

This study mainly based on the field survey of representative concept stores which nine case studies were selected for doing measure works and observing their spatial and physical arrangement from the brand items to the exterior façade of the buildings concerning attributes that create connection between interior space and urban fabric. Kyoto has *machiya* more than 40,000 units, thus this study is representative rather than illustrative approach. The nine case studies for conducting an in-depth study of concept stores were carefully selected by four criteria. Firstly, the store must be founded by local entrepreneurs with a unique concept for representing their modern blending with historical attributes of Kyoto. Secondly, the year of building renovation for new usage must be from the year 2000 onward - when the trend of adaptive reuse in heritage buildings is at a full stream. Thirdly, the distinctive location of the case studies must be varied - from along the main road, down to the alley and in the middle of the compound. Fourthly, the case studies must be located outside the preservation districts of Gion in central Kyoto and not regarded as Cultural heritage under the Law for the Protection of "Cultural Properties," so that the selected buildings are the stores freely renovated by architects or craftsmen following their own preferences and brand concepts.

Consequently, from the above - mentioned criteria, although *machiya* is the most common type of buildings converted into concept stores, however not only roadside *machiya*, but also detached building in the temple compound were selected as case studies. Their building types may be different, but they share the similarity of being traditional wooden structure of long narrow layout.

Relevant information of brand identity and design concept of the selected case studies were also gathered from design-related articles and websites, and interviews with store staff. The collected data will be arranged and categorized into maps, drawings and diagrams for classification and comparison to facilitate content analysis further.

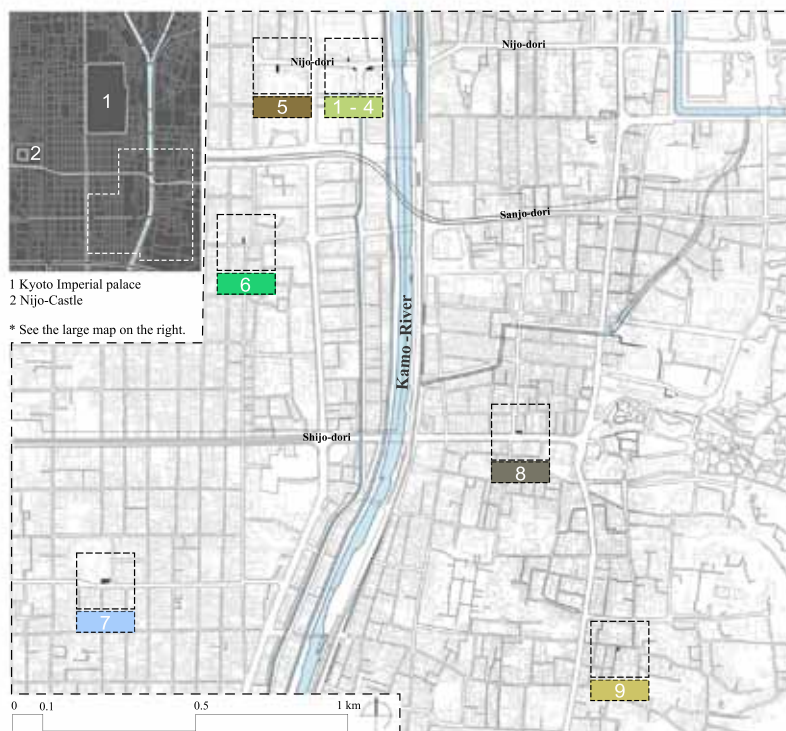


Figure 2. Location of nine stores. Source: Author, 2020.

### Design Product, Spatial Arrangement & Physical Characteristic of the Nine Stores

Each case study of a concept store has its own unique characteristics that reflect the essence and identity of that store. These characteristics can be described as follows:

#### Brand Identity and Image

Each selected case study is based on a flagship store of a specific brand. All brands are widely known in Kyoto in terms of art and design items. Their stores and brands are usually publicized in the magazines and other media, making the stores must visit places in Kyoto. All nine stores are nestled around central Kyoto, just along the Kamo River. Although both sides of the river are well connected to central tourist places, the image of each side is different. West of the river is a modern commercial and financial district mixed with international and local products and services for contemporary life while east of the river is a cultural and heritage district. Seven of the stores are located on the west side: five stores – &SHOP, HIN, CORNER, ARTS & SCIENCE, and yamahon – are located on the main street of Nijo Dori, near Teramachi Dori, a street full of art galleries and craft stores, and two – Yuni and D&DEPARTMENT – are located between the two main streets, Shijo Dori and Karasuma Dori. Yojiya and Otsuka Gofukuten, are located on the east side of the river in a famous tourist area of Gion.



Figure 3. Facts of nine concept stores. Source: Author Observations, 2020.





Figure 3 cont. Facts of nine concept stores. Source: Author Observations, 2020.

All nine stores are operated by local entrepreneurs and most of their items are products crafted by young artists for daily use. The products in &SHOP, CORNER, and ARTS & SCIENCE are selected by the owners and sold under their brands along with other products, such as clothes and accessories. D&DEPARTMENT uses the same method of distribution for a wide variety of their products, including ap-

parel, home furnishings, books, foods, and beverages, while HIN and Yamahon sell only handicrafts and homewares. Yuni and Yojiya are cosmetics stores, and Otsuka Gofukuten sells kimonos. These last three stores curate only products made under their own brands. Despite a variety of products, all stores share the same tendency to devise some local or historical attributes in their products in order to represent the connection between the high quality of their modern products and the old city of Kyoto.

In terms of the brand image, it was found that the location of each store is carefully selected. Yojiya, the oldest among the nine stores, has a strong brand image that reflects the traditions of skillful artisans in its products. Establishment of the shop in Gion, which has the distinctive image of being an old high cultural district in Kyoto, reinforces the positioning of Yojiya's brand and products. Located in the same neighborhood of Gion, a great shopping district for local souvenirs, Otsuka Gofukuten sells traditional products as well. The store specializes in kimonos; a traditional Japanese formal garment worn for important ceremonies and occasions. For this reason, the store attempts to bring kimono closer to people's everyday life with effortlessly modern and simple design.

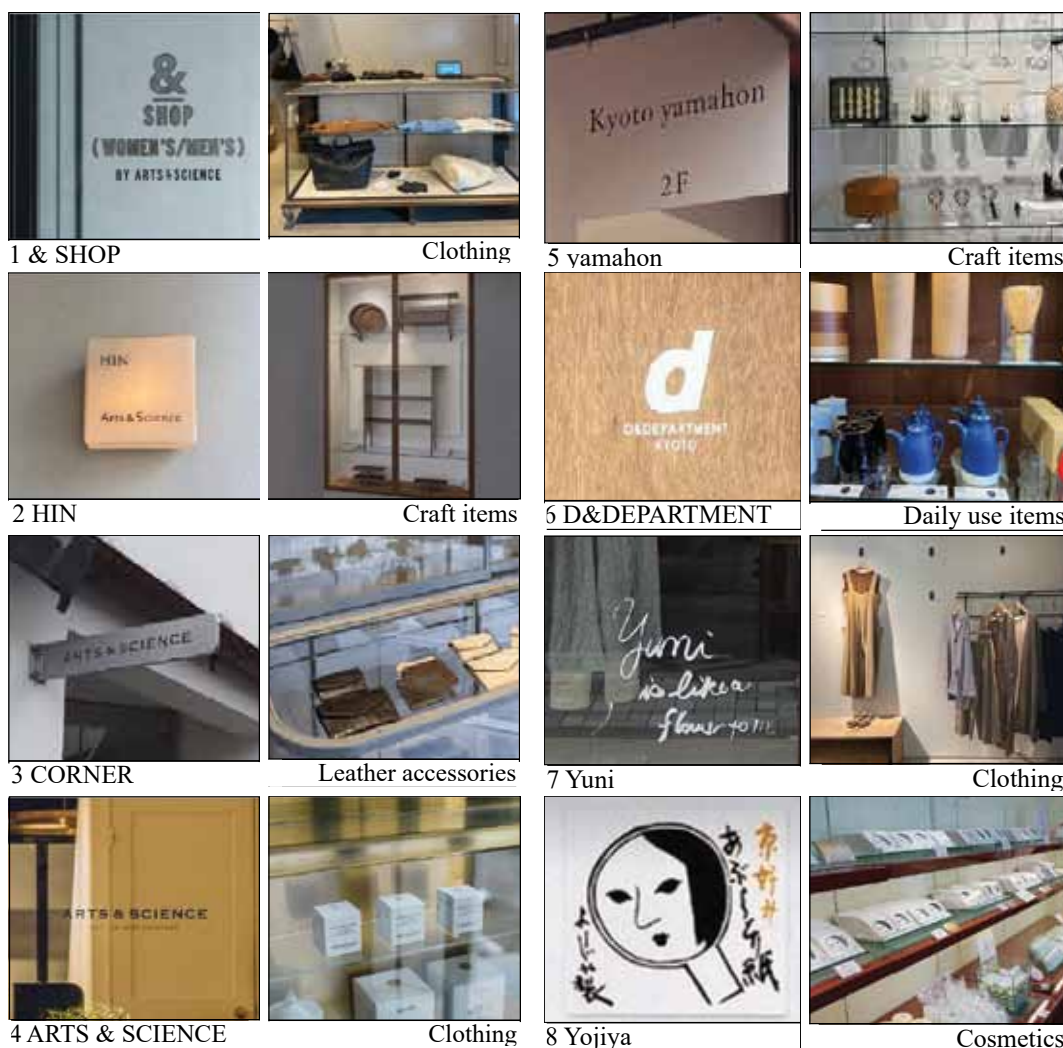


Figure 4. Store logos and product placements. Source: Author Observations, 2020.



9 Otsuka Gofukuten

Kimonos

Figure 4 cont.. Store logos and product placements. Source: author's observations, 2020.

The other five selected stores – & SHOP, HIN, CORNER, ARTS & SCIENCE, D&DEPARTMENT, and yamahon – are characterized by products selected by their owners. These stores are branches of stores from other prefectures of Japan. Yuni and Otsuka Gofukuten do not really have the air of Kyoto identity but still reflect the design architecture under the prime location of the city. The brand image uses the advantages of the location to enhance its appearance while maintaining brand image and identity. Within a city that has such a strong identity and culture as Kyoto, the point that makes brand image work is features of the city and location. These stores connect artisans, artists, and customers, using the architecture to represent them. Therefore, the stores combine the local and international aspects because Kyoto's handicraft products help attract more tourists than international brands. At the same time, bringing imported products can captivate both local people and tourists as they may wish to visit a storefront that looks different from its branches in other cities as well.

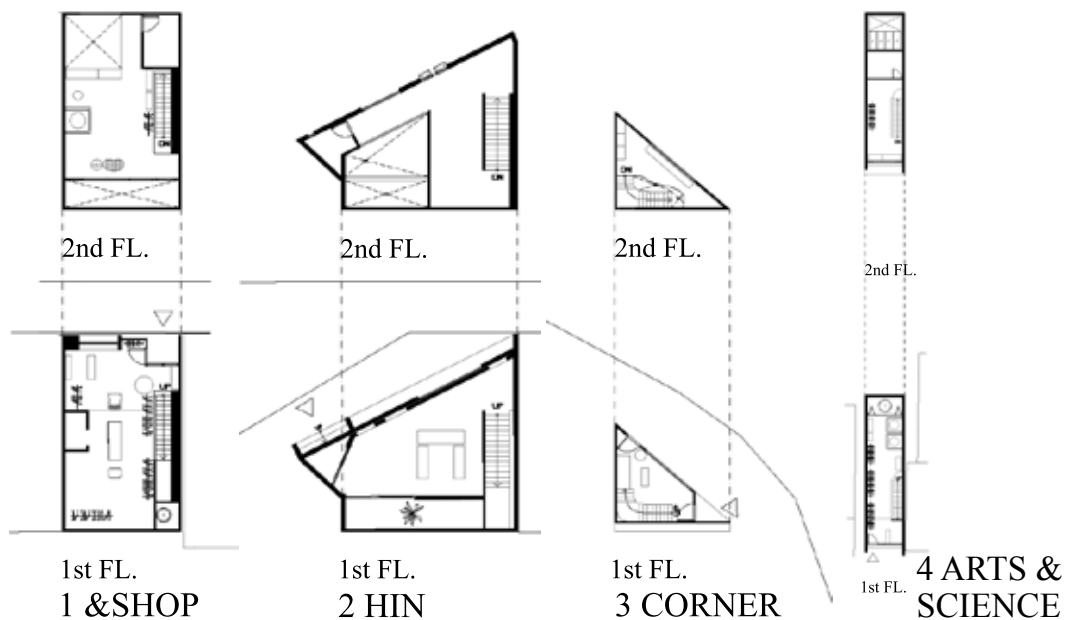


Figure 5. Layout plans of the nine stores. Source: author's observations, 2020.

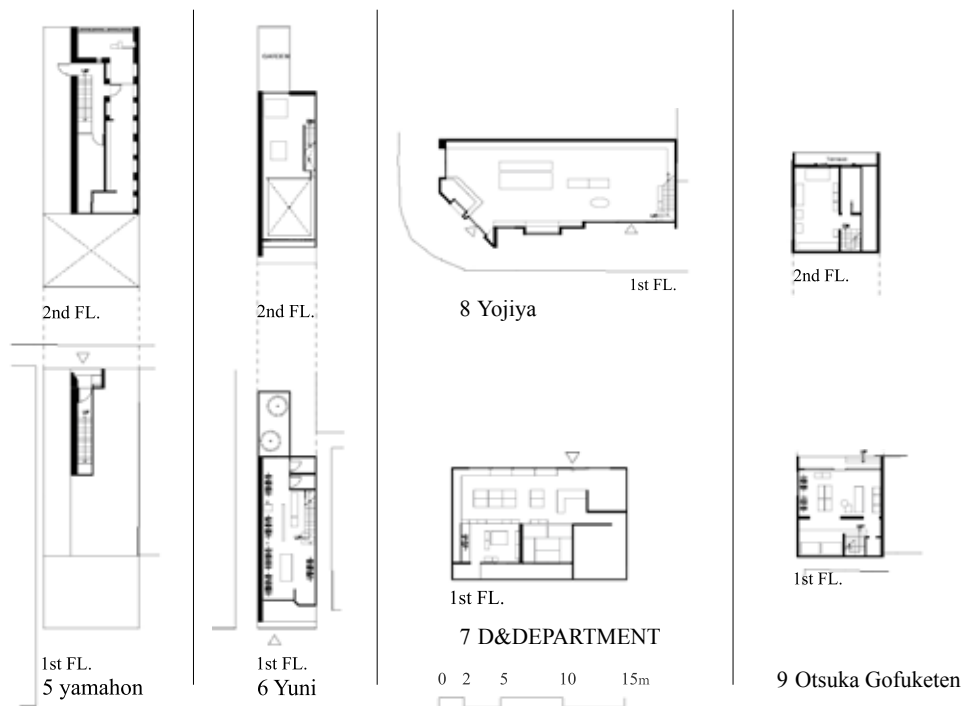


Figure 5 cont.. Layout plans of the nine stores. Source: author's observations, 2020.

### Layout and Planning

Although all nine stores are located in the heart of the city, access to the stores is often from alleys; for example, D&DEPARTMENT and Otsuka Gofukuten are not located on the main road, and most visitors use the front entrance. However, there are some stores, namely HIN and CORNER, that are located on a street corner with incomplete square planning. They maintain a point of view of access to curved walls and corners, rounded merchandise displays, and other curved fixtures to manage the customer flow. Four out of the nine stores still use the building's original long and narrow layout as the entrance model. It gives the sense of a modified *tori-niwa*, giving the building a straight layout, probably the most recognizable type of store layout design. Another common style is buildings with horizontal axial layouts, where the buildings are focused on access from the centre. The customer flow in this format is characterized by the loop layout, a route that leads customers from the store entrance to the payment area. This store preserves *tatami* and *shoji*. Although the traditional Japanese garden style is no longer available, stores such as &SHOP, HIN, ARTS & SCIENCE, and Yuni maintain order of access to the *machiya* building with a *tubo-niwa* section in the end of the building plan, which has been changed according to the new format: the floor is changed into concrete and some plants are put as a decoration to add a refreshing vibe to the building. Based on the entrance of the original building, the building plan is not the same. The front of all stores except Yuni and D&DEPARTMENT act as window display areas to display products. Products are arranged and the counter for payment

is often the first thing customers encounter when they enter the shop. However, there is another style where the counter is situated at the end of the layout plan. This style is found in stores that do not show window displays before entering. For example, Yuni, D&DEPARTMENT, and Otsuka Gofukuten, in addition to the aforementioned layout, use a free-flow layout which does not comply with common layouts and designs that are commonly used and affect customer behavior.

Layout and planning plays a very important role in the implementation of urban structure, the strongest identity of Kyoto, and also influences the relationship between both the building layout and the product placement in the store. People can still feel a sense of the city, starting by manipulating the whole approach to style so that it flows with the city plan with an entrance that still gives a sense of *machiya*. Although the product styles or the perception of the area have changed through time, certain elements of customer flow within the space have a story that guides the walk by aligning people's familiarity with the original building's layout. The merchandising area is on the first floor of the store, and new functions such as exhibitions are often set up on the second floor of the building, enabling efficient use of the old building.

### Spatial Quality

Within the interior space of *machiya*, there is a quiet and emotional atmosphere. The spatiality has a deep relationship with the typical Japanese mentality. Although all nine shops are located in the centre of the city, the shops are not so busy; rather, they are quiet and completely cut off from external disturbances. For example, HIN has designed a spacious double space, including a court in the middle to allow outside light to enter the building. At this point, the designers want users to get a sense of contrast between the interior and exterior by limiting the view of the outside and guiding the users to focus on the products and enjoy the different zones. Furthermore, Yamahon uses the natural element symbolically by taking the form of five river rocks stacked on the ground, expressing how our world is evolving and becoming more comfortable. The designer's respect for natural creation is reflected through these stones. Every aspect of a design has a story and contributes to the store's overall atmosphere.



Figure 6. Interior space of &SHOP, HIN, CONER, ARTS & SCIENCE stores.

The interior does not focus much on the customer-flow, concerns itself with how to effectively present the products despite the small space. Luxurious stores with relatively higher prices and more expensive items, like HIN and Yamahon, make use of indirect light, the same lighting used in museums, to enhance the product values. In addition, the shopkeepers are responsible for telling the history and the origin of products, which enhances a product's sales value and allows customers to fully experience the space. Other than that, customers are not guided through or distracted from the aesthetics of the stores, and they can fully enjoy themselves choosing a product.

Spatial experience is used to communicate a Kyoto identity. It is something that people can perceive through all senses, regardless of whether they have experienced the space and regardless of how the buildings look. Every shop uses the same technique to convey the differences between “Old and New.” The designers do not change the original structure much at all, reflecting how precious the old building is. In fact, new materials enhance the appearance of the stores. For example, Otsuka Gofukuten recreated a section of the interior design and then added value with the white tiles taken from the original tofu shop, expressing a characteristic aged effect from the historic edifice interior fabric. The selected layout is reflecting what a traditional building possesses. For example, an indoor garden recalls the features of *tsubo-niwa*, which conveys the changing seasons.

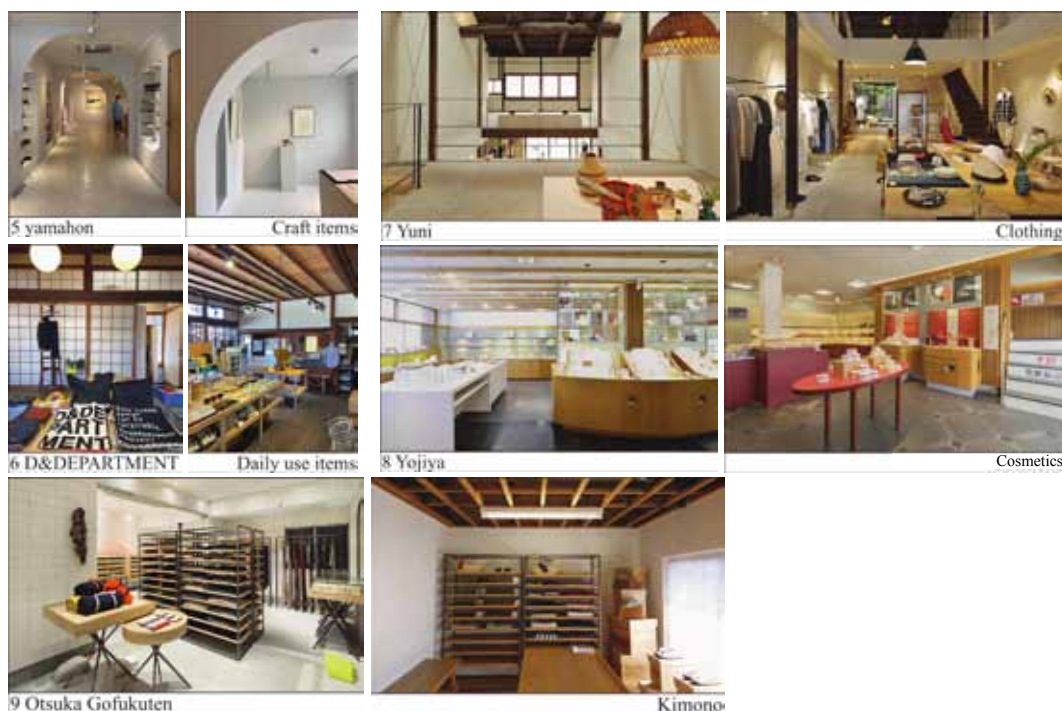


Figure 7. Interior space of Yamahon, Yuni, D&DEPARTMENT, Yojiya, Otsuka Gofukuten stores.

### Facade and Elevation

In all nine stores, the first thing that grabs people's attention is the facade of the building. The front of a *machiya* features wooden lattices called *goshi*, now rarely found in the front section, the styles of which are an indicator of the type of shop the *machiya* held. Only the D&DEPARTMENT preserves the facade of the old

building inside the temple, retaining the original wood and the details of the slats and creating a new functional difference in the form of a room added using glass panes. Otsuka Gofukuten preserves the original materials of the building such as the tiles and the original proportions of the frame openings in the front to represent the history of the building and uses new materials such as steel or concrete to differentiate between the old and the new. However, the rest of the seven stores have transformed the facades into a modern style or glass window. Though the appearance has changed, the proportion of width and length remain the same as the original windows.

The first floor of Yojiya, a large white building towering over the corner of the street in the Gion district, also uses a facade style with a large glass pane opening that allows people to see the activities and products in the store and is blended with corridors and lines of Shotenkai. HIN and CORNER use the building’s facade as to emphasize the openings, eliminating the traditional style but still maintaining the initial proportion of the composition. The opening has a unique form characterized by a slightly tall rectangular shape and a gap that at eye level, allowing people to look inside. In fact, the facades of &SHOP, ARTS & SCIENCE, Yuni, and Otsuka Gofukuten appear to be a large and transparent opening used to showcase products according to their collections or the products that the store wants to feature during different periods of time. At present, the designer tends to use openings of different forms and sizes, but these still function as window displays, serving as a main facade to attract attention, which is different from the traditional purpose, to emphasise utility.

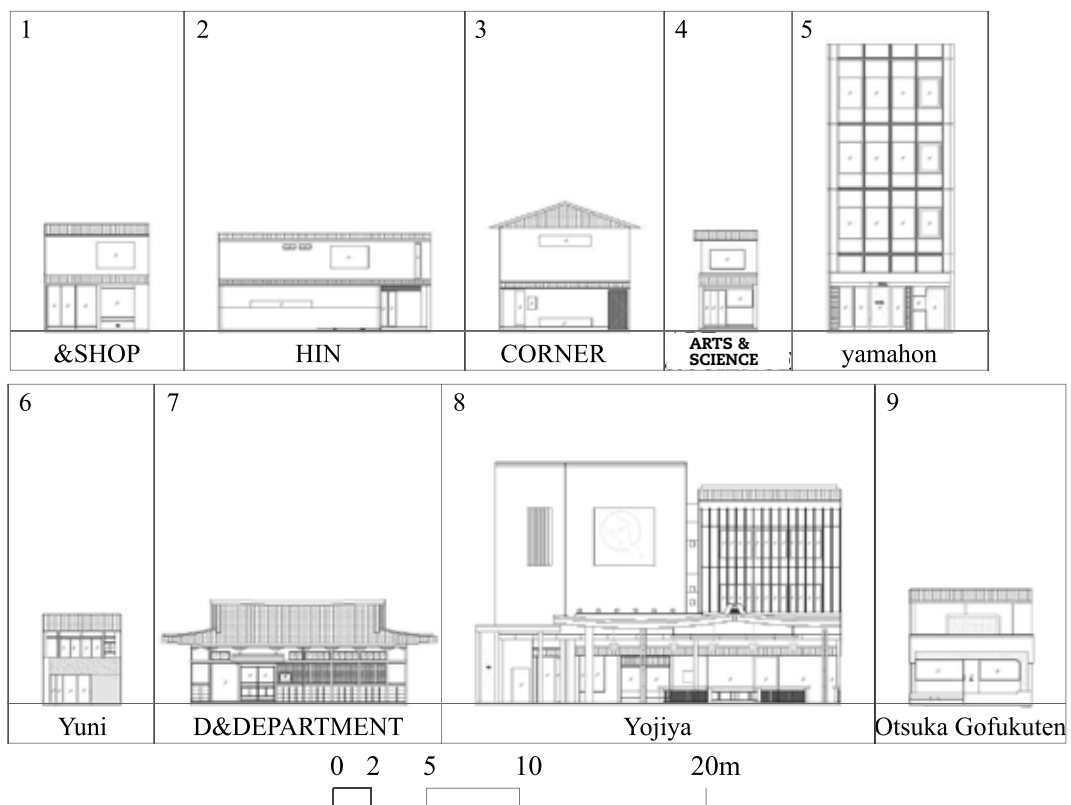


Figure 8. Elevation of the nine stores. Source: Author’s observations, 2020.

### Connection with Context

Despite the fact that none of the nine shops are in preservation areas, the characteristics that unify the neighborhood include certain elements that define the proportion of the buildings; for example, along the main street of *shijo-dori*, there is an orderly roof line or the ridge line of an old building or buildings that has the same fixed height. As the city developed, a number of new types of buildings emerged. There might be some interfering buildings, classified by their different colors or the materials of their facade. Therefore, these concept stores are bringing the same context back, but in a new perspective.

### Interior Connection

Eight of the stores are enclosed by a city planning condition, causing the rear and sides of the buildings to be surrounded by neighboring buildings. Thus, most of the buildings are enclosed by shops. There is only one store in the case study – D&DEPARTMENT – in the temple compound, a detached building. Interestingly, while the merchandise section is a closed space, the exhibition area is an open space with a large pane of glass connecting and giving the experience of the interior to the context of the temple. Some techniques allow a building to use the view outside as a part of the interior, such as &SHOP, where a scenery cut out in the large window on the front brings the atmosphere of Nijo-Dori into the store. The exterior view becomes a part of the interior of the store where customers can enjoy themselves while shopping.



Figure 9. Connection from interior to exterior. Source: author's observations, 2020, except: &SHOP.

### Exterior Connection

Although the storefronts of eight of the stores are different from the neighboring buildings, the entrance characteristics of the buildings still have the same proportions as other buildings of similar scale. The proportions of the adjacent buildings are maintained either in vertical or horizontal lines, including the proportions of the openings. This represents the existing form, though function is different from the others in the area. Various architectural elements of the surroundings such as replacing the steel and wood lattice by the shape and the edge of the opening that contrast with the surrounding buildings.

Accordingly, this store stands out against the rest of the buildings, reducing details from the surroundings. The yamahon store, for example, can be distinguished by the design of the window display in the entrance that is distinct from the other stores in the area.



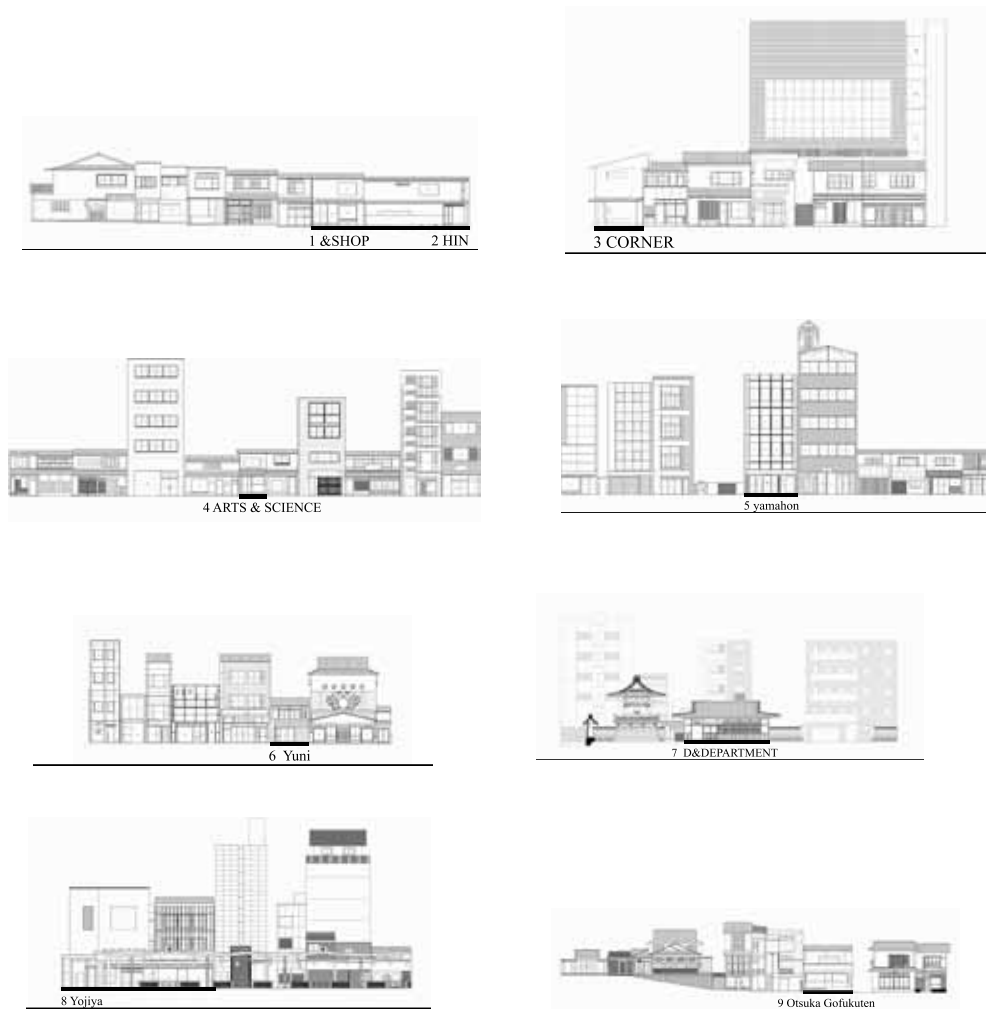


Figure 10. Concept stores among urban contexts. Source: author's observations, 2020.

### Urban Identity Represented by Concept Stores

Above analysis of the nine concept stores ranging from products to urban contexts reveals that there is a relationship among product display, interior arrangement, façade design, and adjacent urban structures. It is the relationship that allows products arranged inside the stores to connect with the original shape of the buildings and structure of the areas, which is the key that connects to the identity of the city. This connection can be described by two aspects:

#### Coherence of Space and Form from the Smallest Element to Urban Context

Due to its roadside location, a concept store can be regarded as a small-scale store that directly connects with the city. Therefore, the connection between the store and the neighborhood can be multi-level, from the smallest element in the store, product sale, to building exterior design. Basically, in terms of concept, product sale is designed and manufactured under the image of the brand, with stories that forge a connection with target clients, people, communities, and cities. There are some cases where objects are made from local materials, preserved colors, tex-

ture, and other initial characteristics to express the richness of original and natural essence of those materials. That is a fundamental means by which stores make sense of belonging to their setting. In some cases, even though product sales may not obviously represent characteristics of local Kyoto, their arrangement in the interior space still maintains the connection with the city grid plan and surrounding buildings. Therefore, it gives the impression that the area is not totally separated from the city. Eventually, the location of the store is also an element that further enhances the store's image, making the concept stores visible and therefore a part of the city.

### From Tradition to Contemporary: Simplification of Spatial Form and Elements

Under the concept of the establishment of this type of store with a contemporary utility, the original charm of the *machiya* is still lurking. Although the products are not directly related to the city, product distribution under the architectural elements of the city makes no sense for these modern shops, and neighborhood identity and the boundaries between the shops and the city itself are not so clear, it is still important that the two are seen as somehow connected. It was found that there is a blend between modern and traditional aspects through the use of techniques that reduce simple elements and achieving a balance between the two things, making perception easier on every level.

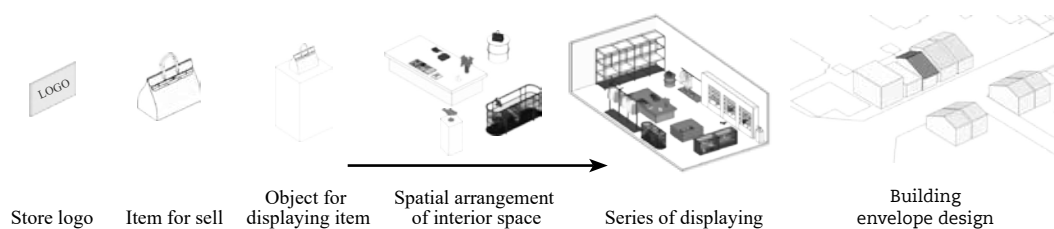


Figure 11. Relationship from products sale to urban contexts. Source: Author.

The new element of the district enhances the image of the area, and people's perspective of using the space changes. For example, the store in the temple compound coexists with the original remains and the traditions that have not been lost or destroyed overtime but have been adapted in a way that preserves the original context. However, the building layout is not as complicated as the old building was traditionally. It has been transformed into a simpler open plan while maintaining the existence of spatial composition that makes the building appear uniform and outstanding. Whether a store has a layout in the corner of the street or is a single building in the temple, the view of every shop is controlled by the angle and thus every shop has to be built on the same axis of the district. The goal is to retain the front of the road as much as possible. Apart from the historical value, it is also a logical layout.

The concept stores are built by employing traditional construction methods. The interior of the building is the original structure, made of wood. At present, it does not only depend on the use of original material, but is also selected to maintain

the original building structure as much as possible, and the extensions with new materials are just additional elements. The simplicity and orderliness that represent the “newness” are blended with the imperfection of the old structure. From the research it was observed that the old items were no longer replicated and completed as originals. Each store uses various techniques and approaches, but they have the same aim to maintain the *machiya* original materials. The repurposing of original materials is a key aspect of the improvement of *machiya*, not only the physical perceived qualities, but also the surrounding environmental and technical characteristics: the transmission of natural light through the window, spatial elements, and using the local materials. It is indeed an advantage that people can appreciate the building’s old designs that don’t feel old anymore. A *machiya* sliding door, for example, which in the past was opaque or lattice and gave physical privacy, has been removed. Today, the sliding doors are maintained but modified to glass material that uses wood or aluminium frames that are easier to use. In fact, the products in the store radiate a modern vibe because the structure and selections of furniture are still of the old design with perhaps a small glimpse of contemporary air in it.

### Conclusion

Kyoto was selected as a city to attest the connection of concept stores, where modern usages were combined with traditional spatial and physical structure of old buildings, with the rigid grid plan of the city. Kyoto is also a good city to demonstrate how concept store comes to play a significant part in city development process by its restoration. This study shows that concept stores can represent urban identity by creating a connection from the concept of the brand which represents through logo and selling item, to the layout of the store on the land plot of grid city plan. This connection from item scale inside to urban scale outside the stores is generated through visual communication by simplifying traditional characteristics for uncomplicated communication with clients. This simplification can be observed in building structure, interior planning, and building envelope design. As illustrate in Figure 11, every element is not separated but represents a connection to each other at different levels towards the goal of being part of an urban identity. Hence, concept store is not just space for selling or displaying products but a physical manifestation of local history and culture along with the brand's philosophy which grows with the city as well. Multi-level connection among various elements of the stores from interior to exterior also distribute an urban identity to other traditional stores in the neighborhood helping clients understand their brand personality and instantly get a sense of what the brand is about. This indicates that the grid plan has contributed to the effective atmosphere and infrastructure of store location, which is mainly cluster between the old Kyoto imperial palace and the western city edge, or the Kamo River in the smaller frame. These stores are established as standalone rather than in the commercial center or business complex in order to express the meaning of their locational establishment in Kyoto city. It is noticeable that concept stores contribute the value of urban identity by enhancing attractive image of Kyoto which relates to the city grid plan.

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Fig 6. Interior space of &SHOP store: [pressreader.com/Japan/casa-brutus/20210201](https://pressreader.com/Japan/casa-brutus/20210201); Interior space of HIN store: <https://arts-science.com/en/shop/hin/?exNum=1>; Interior space of CONER store: [https://www.instagram.com/arts\\_and\\_science/](https://www.instagram.com/arts_and_science/) and Interior space of ARTS & SCIENCE stores: [pressreader.com/Japan/casa-brutus/20210201](https://pressreader.com/Japan/casa-brutus/20210201).

Fig 7. Interior space of Yuni: <https://aplan.jp/works/yuni/>.

Fig 9. Connection from interior to exterior of &SHOP store: [pressreader.com/Japan/casa-brutus/20210201](https://pressreader.com/Japan/casa-brutus/20210201).