

REPRESENTATION AND REALITY(S)

Exploring the Effect of Media on Place Identity

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ABSTRACT

Looking through the lens of an intersubjective framework, this thesis aims to explore the relationships between media representation, perception, identity, and branding; and how these elements function to impact a city's perceived identity. The media has the ability to privilege certain sets of ideas while neglecting others and it is often from media sources that expectations and models of behavior are formed. Essentially, the media helps to define world views and influence conceptions. These conceptions inform a city's perceived identity.

Utilizing the media of film, a study was conducted on the city of Detroit with the aim to uncover narrative trends that affect a place's identity. By analyzing conditions of environments shown within a selection of films, certain conditions came to light that had the potential to affect a place's identity either negatively or positively. In the case of Detroit, poor environmental conditions were showcased within the films, fostering a negative image of the city. Darkened color palettes/lighting conditions, deteriorating structures, and dirty streets were all found consistently within the films and used to propel less than desirable narratives about the city. While these films are not in themselves necessarily harmful, it is their collection and narrative monopoly that enforces the negative perceptions of the city of Detroit.

To counteract the existing negative perceived identity of the city, additional narratives need to be added that more accurately reflect the multitude of identities that the city of Detroit encompasses. Place branding was studied and chosen as a method to implement to Detroit, to offer alternative narratives that shift the city's

city's future desired image. Marketing strategies developed by Jonah Berger were analyzed and applied where appropriate at the scale of a city (rather than a product). These strategies are split into categories of social currency, triggers, emotion, publicness, practical value, and narrative. The main method of branding is through the use of intentional images, images that craft a positive narrative of the city by highlighting its assets. These assets include cultural assets, such as art, food, and shopping, as well additional assets such as parks, experiences, and events hosted within the city.

The application of place branding methods ultimately culminated in a website and promotional video targeted towards young professionals living outside of the city of Detroit. The goal of the branding campaign is to offer a counter narrative to what is typically showcased within the media, with the main purpose being to foster a positive perception of the city of Detroit.

THESIS STATEMENT

Looking through the lens of an intersubjective framework, this thesis aims to explore the relationships between media representation, perception, identity, and branding; and how these relationships ultimately impact a city's perceived identity. The medium of film was looked at to uncover narrative trends in both content and environment that affect place identity. This study is focused specifically on the city of Detroit and aims to uncover ways in which place branding efforts can improve the image or reputation of the city while being sensitive to existing perceived notions that stem from media sources (mainly film).

Life is saturated with imaging. Regardless of where one is, media sources filled with images; representations of people, places or things - are accessible. News articles, streaming services, and social media applications are constantly fighting for attention. Visual culture punctures into all aspects of life. This constant filtered exposure is continuously shaping the way in which individual and collective worldviews are constructed. The images and words that are curated through these media platforms inform the way in which we think about a vast array of matters, including the identities of cities. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall notes an important idea regarding media representation. He states: "Representation is a very different notion from that of reflection. It implies the active work of selecting and presenting, of structuring and shaping; not merely the transmitting of an already existing meaning, but the more active labor of making things mean." (Sturken & Cartwright 57) Here he identifies that the media is not neutral, but inherently has an agenda or bias in its nature. Media representations

influence how we perceive different places, and are a main contributor to how we create conceptions about certain places. Conceptions are internal thought driven processes that come from perceived experience (perceptions). These conceptions cultivate identity. This thesis focuses specifically on place identity, which is defined by Anssi Paasi as: "Those features of nature, culture, and people that are used in the discourses and classifications of science, politics, cultural activism, regional marketing, tourism, governance, and political or religious regionalization, to distinguish one place from others." (Paasi) While media sources have a direct impact on place identity, place branding campaigns can be utilized to combat negative associated imaging within a city's identity, and can be used as a means to create positive associations within a city. Place branding is defined as "the practice of applying brand strategy and other marketing techniques and disciplines to economic, social, political, and cultural developments of cities, regions, and countries." (Kerr 278) This thesis looks specifically at the scale of a city, and intends to use elements of brand strategy to improve the perceived image of the city of Detroit.

The identified research questions all aim to better understand the identity of a given place, and how its perceived identity can be influenced/changed. Additionally, this thesis looks at the implications of perceived identity on how space is utilized within the city by its residents and visitors. Is how people define the cities in which they live similar to how those cities are represented in the media? What narratives exist in the media that inform conceptions of Detroit's place identity? Which branding strategies (if any)

could be envisioned and implemented to cities to improve potential negative perceived identity?

The implementation of branding strategies has the potential to improve the image of the city of Detroit. When referring to branding a city, it is important to note that branding for a city functions slightly differently than it would for a product. For example, product branding generally includes a logo, color palette, and tagline (and stops there). As cities are far more complex than any given product, there are additional dimensions that come together to create successful place branding. For the city of Detroit, this thesis advocates for the creation of a messaging framework (as opposed to a tagline), curated social media and online platforms that come directly from the city itself, and small design interventions throughout the city that come together to create a desirable narrative for the city.

By beginning with an analysis of how different Detroit environments are portrayed in film, an understanding of common Detroit narratives emerged. Looking at the environments and content shown in 35 scenes across 8 films solidified a singular consistent narrative being showcased, which is: Detroit is a home to violence with built environment conditions that are less than desirable. From 8 mile to Robocop, Detroit is not showcased in a good light. Similar narrative trends also exist in new outlets and music. It is clear that these narratives negatively affect the perceived identity of the city, which in turn diminishes the health of the city itself (through financial means, tourism, resident satisfaction, etc.) In order to begin to shift the narrative surrounding the city, previous branding efforts from the city were studied. This

study included looking through previous taglines proposed by the city, city websites and social media, and independent Detroit marketing efforts (such as "Detroit vs. Everybody"). Certain items were identified for areas of improvement, and the proposed design strategy for the branding campaign is based upon critiques from current efforts, in addition with branding frameworks by Jonah Berger and case studies from CivicBrand.

When proposing a branding campaign or marketing strategies, it is crucial to identify a target audience. With every decision made within the branding strategies, a target audience has to be in mind in order for the marketing to be effective. This proposed branding campaign is oriented towards visitors of Detroit, mainly young professionals (22-40) currently residing in metro-Detroit. A potential critique of this approach could be the feeling that the marketing should be oriented towards residents of Detroit. This is an understandable notion, but metro-Detroit visitors were chosen specifically, as visitation from "outsiders" gives greater potential to improve economic conditions. Additionally, people living outside of the city are more likely to have a skewed perception of the city itself, one that results in a negative perception of Detroit (so often portrayed in the media). Another critique of this study is the idea that the proposed branding campaign is not, or could never capture "authentic" Detroit. This too is understandable, as a city of roughly 600,000 people cannot be accurately captured into a single promoted identity. Everyone has a unique story with different backgrounds, experiences, and expectations. No branding campaign would ever be able to capture the rich history and depth that is inherent within the city. That

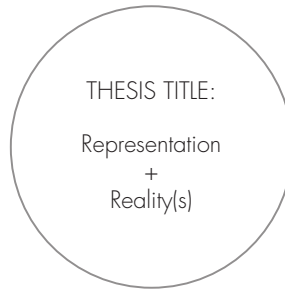
being said, the goal of the branding campaign proposal is not to perfectly capture the "authentic" identity of Detroit, but rather to simply create positive narratives surrounding the city to improve its overall image/reputation. This shift in perceived image (from negative to positive) would hopefully strengthen Detroit's identity as a place where people can work, live, and play.

The biggest limitation to this study is time. Ideally, there would be more time given to curate and photograph unique or essential Detroit experiences to add to the branding campaign. Not only would this create the campaign to be more diverse in experiences, it would better represent Detroit as a whole, as it would include a wider variety of what Detroit has to offer. Additionally, more time would allow for further community outreach, which would strengthen the branding campaign through the inclusion of a wider variety of voices.

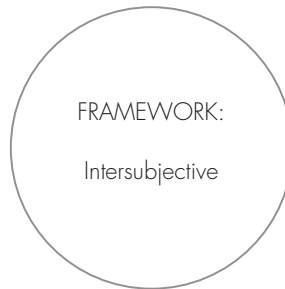
The way that a city is perceived matters for two reasons. First, the perceived identity of the city ultimately affects the health/vitality of that given city. Negative perceptions, whether it be from violence, cleanliness, lacking job opportunities, etc, have economic implications. Perceived identity is going to affect investor interest, tourist interest, and resident interest. Second, the perceived identity of a city is directly correlated with a sense of self. People are connected to the city in which they live, and negative perceptions of that city therefore ultimately have a direct impact on those people.

method diagram

Title + Framework



Research Questions



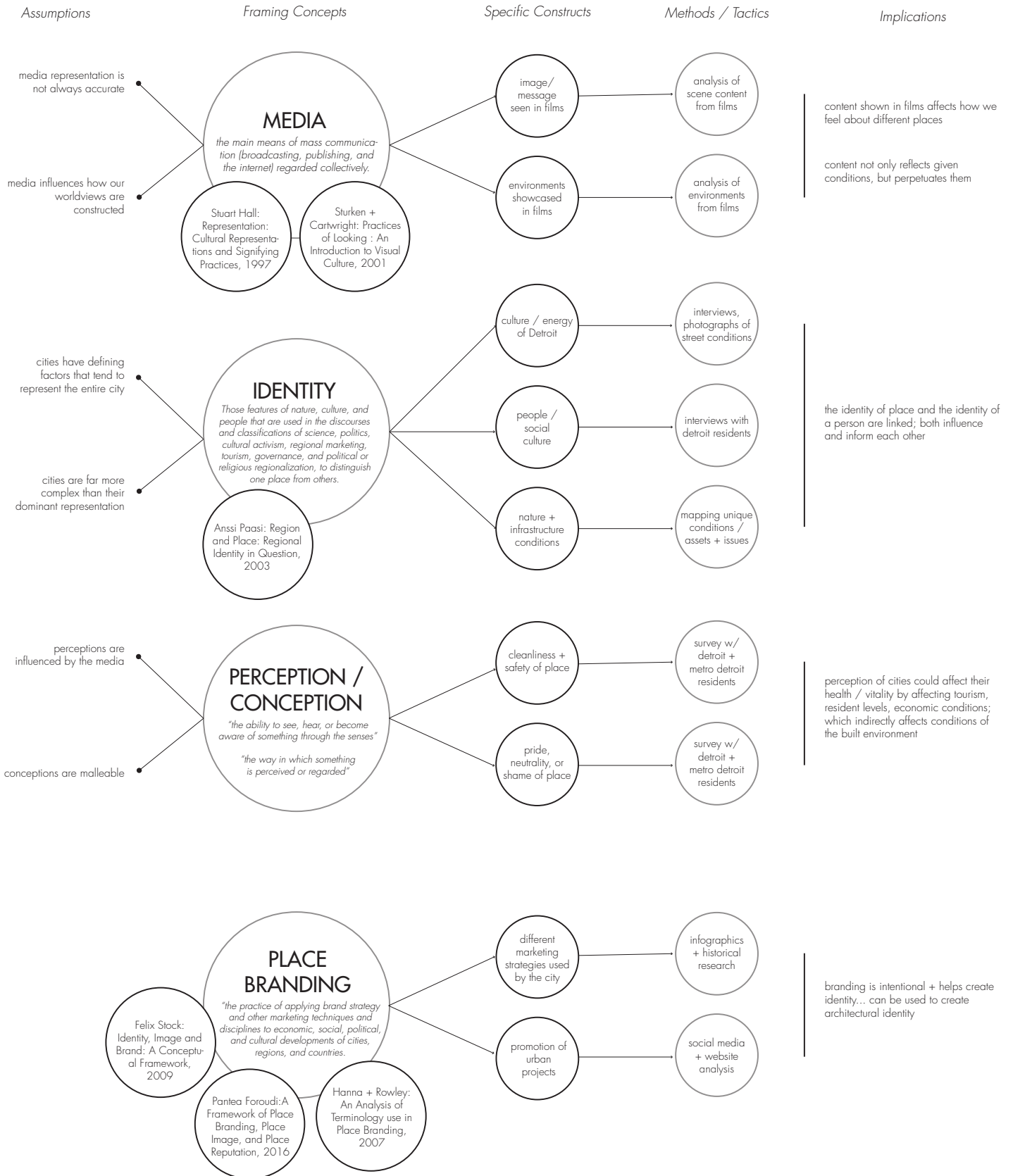


TABLE OF CONTENTS

01	INTRODUCTION.....	14
02	FILM ANALYSIS.....	26
03	PHOTOGRAPHY ENCOUNTER.....	56
04	DETROIT BRANDING ANALYSIS.....	78
05	DETROIT BRANDING PROPOSAL.....	84
06	CONCLUSIONS.....	122
	APPENDIX A - NYC FILM ANALYSIS.....	128
	APPENDIX B - NYC PHOTOGRAPHY ENCOUNTER..	148
	APPENDIX C - RESEARCH THROUGH MAKING.....	168
	APPENDIX D - FORM + PERCEPTION CHARRETTE.....	172

01

INTRODUCTION

MEDIA REPRESENTATION

Life is saturated with imaging. Regardless of where one is, media sources filled with images; representations of people, places or things - are accessible. News articles, streaming services, and social media applications are constantly fighting for attention. Visual culture punctures into all aspects of life. This constant filtered exposure is continuously shaping the way in which individual and collective worldviews are constructed. The images and words that are curated through these media platforms inform the way in which we think about a vast array of matters, - but it is of specific interest to understand how representations of places affect a person's perception of those places. These representations help to influence and inform a cities identity, or its sense of place. It is also relevant to understand the closeness of those perceptions to reality - and how those perceptions directly affect a persons expectations, understandings, and experiences of that specific place.

When looking into the idea of representation, it is crucial to outline specific definitions of the term, as well as some important notes about the construct. A simple definition of the term can be found in *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, which defines representation as "the use of language and images to create meaning about the world around us" (Sturken & Cartwright 12). This definition is quite simple in its nature and focuses on representations' ability to communicate through the process of meaning making. A closer look into the understanding of representation can be seen from cultural theorist Stuart Hall. He says this about representation: "Representation is a very different notion from that of reflection. It implies the

active work of selecting and presenting, of structuring and shaping; not merely the transmitting of an already existing meaning, but the more active labor of making things mean." Again, this very much has to do with the idea of meaning, but this explanation looks more closely into the essence of representation; or more specifically, the way in which representation is very clearly dependent on its maker. All representations from media sources are purposefully constructed with intended messaging, and while not always constructed with the means of an agenda, media representation is never neutral. It is inherently biased one way or another, as it is constructed by people with the intention of creating or giving meaning. This not intended to be a criticism or evaluation of media representation, but rather an understanding and acceptance into the way in which representation operates.

As it has been established that representation is a process of meaning making, it is important to distinguish different ways in which this meaning can be received. There are three positions (denoted as "readings") proposed by Stuart Hall that are outlined in *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. These three "readings" include:

1. *Dominant-hegemonic reading*
2. *Negotiated reading*
3. *Oppositional reading*

In a dominant-hegemonic reading, audience members "can identify with the hegemonic position and receive the dominant message of an image or text in an unquestioning manner" (Sturken

& Cartwright 57). There is some argument by theorists that this reading cannot actually exist in the real world, as people always use their own experience as a reference point, and no piece of media produced will perfectly align with even a majority, and therefore it would be impossible to receive messaging without any level of questioning. Even with this in mind, it is safe to say that this reading exists, at least from the viewpoint and acknowledgment that people are able to agree or relate to the dominant messaging that is curated by its makers. The degree to which viewers are passive in the process of receiving the dominant messaging is a complex topic in itself, but in the purpose of this exploration, it is enough to agree that one way in which people receive the messaging/representations from media sources is by simply identifying and agreeing with the dominant message.

Negotiated readings are different however, and do not call for the receivers to be in a passive role. In a negotiated reading, audience members “can negotiate an interpretation from the image and its dominant meanings (Sturken & Cartwright 57). In this reading, the receivers take a more active role in how meaning is formed in the messaging/images that are produced within the medium. They use their own experience and cultural understanding to either accept or reject aspects of the presented messaging. Here, their own experience or belief of something can in a sense override dominant messaging, in a way in which the intended dominant messaging is in some way altered and not received exactly how its makers intended it to.

In oppositional readings, receivers have an active role in the reading and how meaning

is derived from the messaging. Here, receivers “can take an oppositional position, either by completely disagreeing with the ideological position embodied in an image or rejecting it altogether” (Sturken & Cartwright 57). When trying to understand the nuance and real life application of these readings, it is important to note that while there are only three identified readings, the real world works more as a gradient. Each of these readings can blend into one another, and there are varying degrees of active and passive roles. The most important item to understand from all of this is that while messaging from media sources has the ability to create dominant meanings and dominant ideologies, media sources are never able to force these ideologies or narratives onto people.

However, these ideologies created by media sources certainly have the power to influence people’s thoughts and behaviors, but it is not a simple act of transferring curated meaning from media source to media consumer. There are a lot of factors that go into shaping people’s thoughts, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about themselves and the world around them; media consumption is just one of many factors.

IMAGES

Let’s talk about images - their purpose, implication, and how they work. The majority of images are used to transfer information. They are used as a format to give and receive messaging from its maker, through the means of representation. All images try to capture or make meaning of something that is either existing in the real world, or is used to showcase a thought or conceived notion.

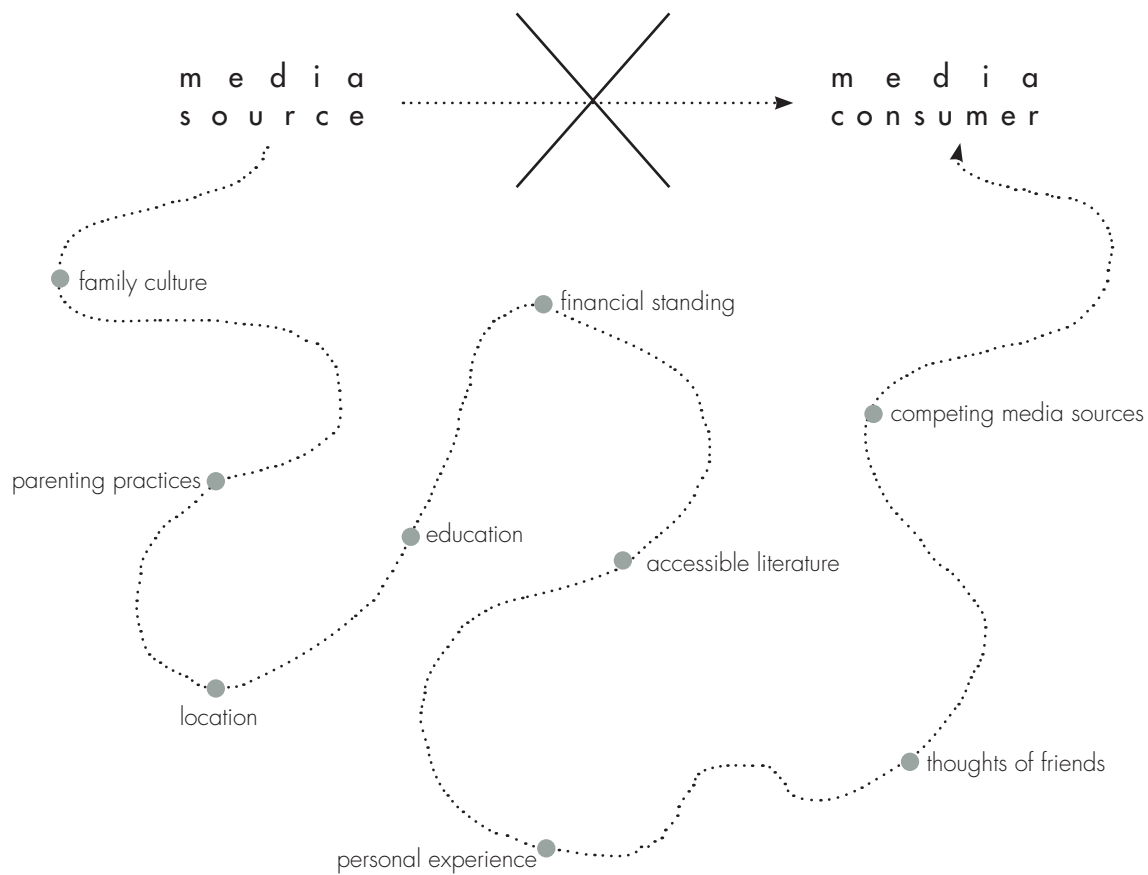


Figure 1.1: Media source to media consumer pathway.

Charles Peirce argues that there are three types of signs that work within images, including: iconic signs, symbolic signs, and indexical signs. Iconic signs resemble an object in some way. The simplest example of this would be through photographic portraits. A photograph of Albert Einstein is an iconic sign, because it resembles the way in which he physically appears. A symbolic sign does not bear an obvious relationship to its object. Language is the best example of this. The word "cat" bears no resemblance to an actual cat, but the letters of the word "cat" (essentially an image in itself) creates and transfers meaning to all those who can read English. The third type of signs, indexical signs, involve an existential relationship. One example of this could be symptoms of disease. If I have a fever, my cheeks may become quite flushed. You cannot actually physically see my fever, but my flushed complexion shows that the fever exists. (Sturken & Cartwright 140)

Additional image theory is proposed by Roland Barthes, and he argues that all images have two types of meaning; denotative and connotative meaning. Denotative meanings are literal descriptive meanings. For example, if an image of Snow White was read through a denotative lens, its meaning/message would be: Girl holds an apple. However, its connotative meaning would be: Snow White holds a poison apple. Connotative meanings are culturally specific, and therefore understood only by certain audiences (Sturken & Cartwright 19).

Why is this important? When working with images, whether it be in newspapers, social media posts, or film, those images provide the opportunity to communicate various messages

in a visual format. In order to most accurately communicate intended messaging, it can be beneficial to understand these qualities that are contained within images.

PERCEPTION + CONCEPTION

Perception is a word that is used quite often in relation to architecture. Depending on the context, its meaning can vary, so it is necessary to clearly define the term in the context of this study. Often, perception is understood as "the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses" (Oxford Languages), but it can also be defined as: "a way of regarding, understanding, or interpreting something; a mental impression" (Oxford Languages). This definition is quite similar to a definition of another word: conception. Conception can be defined as "the way in which something is perceived or regarded" (Oxford Languages). On the surface, these two terms seem to be very similar, and they are often used interchangeably in everyday speech - so where is it that they differ?

Both terms relate to understanding, but the way in which this understanding occurs is what differentiates them. When referring to perception, understanding of something is always going to occur from information received from the senses. An example of this could be as follows: *when I entered into my favorite patisserie, I smiled as I saw the decorations that had been put up for the holiday season. Paper snowflakes had been hung from the ceiling, string lights framed each window, and a large Christmas tree had been decorated at the center of the space. I could feel my body relax as I stepped out of the cold, dark winter night and into the warmth of the space.*

Immediately, I could smell the sweetness of the desserts that were being created and could hear White Christmas playing on the radio. I always feel joy when I am in this space.

In this scenario, this person perceives directly from first hand experience, but perception is not exclusive to first-hand experience; it can also come from a film, story, or photograph, etc. But here we can clearly see that this person is able to create understanding about the place around her from information from her senses. She has a positive perception of the space due to her sensorial experience.

Conceptions however require deeper thought and are not constructed based solely on sensorial experience. They occur in one's mind; they are internally driven, as opposed to externally driven. An example of this could be as follows: *It seems hard to think of a better patisserie. After reviewing all of the pros and cons of each patisserie in this area, it is to my understanding that patisserie X is the best due to its reliability, tasty desserts, and cozy seating areas.*

Here, this person conceived that this is the best patisserie due to their internal thought process. Some of their reasoning might be on items they perceived, but their conclusion (or conception) stems from an internal dialogue, which results in a clear understanding through a proposed concept.

So what does this have to do with representation? As discussed earlier, representation is a form of meaning-making and part of that process includes perception and conception. When presented with a media source (whether that be a film, song, or news article) audience members

(receivers) perceive different information presented in the source, and from that in turn can form both perceptions and concepts about anything and everything.

As stated previously, the focus of this study is on the representations, perception, and conceptions, of different places at the scale of a city. This process started with a sketch exercise, hoping to be able to have a clearer understanding of how different cities manifest in people's minds. I asked 63 individuals to sketch however they envision three different cities, which included New York, London, and Paris. Through their sketches, I was able to see how each individual conceptualized the built environment of each city; albeit through the means of simple sketches. Through this process, they had to use both perceived notions they had about each city, and use an internal thought process to communicate what they thought/felt best represented each city as a whole. Very simply, each participant communicated personal conceptions that related to the built environment of each city.

IDENTITY

Identity is a big topic to tackle. Its meaning can vary depending on the context in which it is used, and this study will focus on two types of identity: identity of a person, and identity of a place. Both of these identity types are interconnected, with identity of place often having a direct impact on the identity of a person. A person has a direct connection to places in which they have lived (or possibly even visited), and this connection can seep into their own personal identity. It is because of this that the identity of a place becomes very significant. There are varying definitions of personal identity, but most

will echo the sentiment of “a person’s sense of self, established by their unique characteristics, affiliations, and social roles” (Yilmaz).

Another important characteristic of identity has to do with the concept of continuity, or more simply, that a person’s characteristics stay relatively constant over a long period of time in which circumstances may change. (Yilmaz) There are a plethora of dimensions that are often used to establish a person’s identity and some of those items include: gender, race, ethnicity, social class, profession, religion, values, appearance, etc. These characteristics of a person often then extend to the way in which they behave and fit into the world around them.

When looking at the identity of a place, a more descriptive definition is needed. Anssi Paasi, a Finnish geographer, gives a detailed definition that highlights different aspects that encapsulate what creates a place’s identity. He defines a sense of place as: “Those features of nature, culture, and people that are used in the discourses and classifications of science, politics, cultural activism, regional marketing, tourism, governance, and political or religious regionalization, to distinguish one place from others.” (Paasi).

More simply, a place’s identity can stem from a vast variety of things, and it is the combination of all of them that creates a singular, recognizable identity. When looking at the scale of the city, it is important to identify the dimensions that are most applicable and suitable to this typology.

The first dimension can be seen by looking at the physical built environment itself. The built environment of a city can be broken down into

five main elements, described by urban planner and author Kevin Lynch. These elements include nodes, paths, districts, landmarks, and edges. More information on each element can be seen in Figure 1.2.

All of these elements describe certain aspects of the built environment, and help to further define different parts in a city that may or may not contribute to a city’s identity. It is easy to see how landmarks would contribute to identity, as they are the most recognizable aspect and it is easy to think of examples. The Eiffel Tower contributes to the identity of Paris, the Statue of Liberty contributes to the identity of New York City, and Big Ben contributes to the identity of London. The other elements may be less easy to quickly identify, but they all contribute to each city’s personal identity. Some elements may be stronger in some cities than others. For example, Venice has very unique path conditions, but New York has very unique district conditions.

While physical built environment conditions are an important identity indicator in cities, there are other conditions that contribute to each city’s unique identity. These conditions can be referred to as soft conditions, as they are more transitory in nature and have the ability to change over time (but they generally stay consistent long enough for it to be associated with the identity of a specific city). There are endless examples of what could be considered a soft condition, but all tend to fall into four different categories, which include: cultural characteristics, social characteristics, built heritage, and climate/landscape conditions. (Anastasiou, et al).

ELEMENTS OF THE CITY

NODES

"the strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter and which are the intensive foci to and from which he is traveling"

PATHS

"the channels along which the observer customarily, occasionally, or potentially moves."

DISTRICTS

"the medium-to-large sections of the city, conceived of as having two-dimensional extent, which the observer mentally enters "inside of" and which are recognizable as having some common, identifying character."

LANDMARKS

"a type of point reference, but in this case the observer does not enter within them, they are external."

EDGES

"the linear elements not used or considered as paths by the observer (the boundary between two phases)."

Figure 1.2: Elements of the City, Kevin Lynch.

SOFT CONDITIONS

CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

- language
- religion
- ethnicity
- family structure
- food customs

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

- personal experiences
- social interactions
- beliefs/perceptions
- feeling of security

BUILT HERITAGE

- historical buildings
- historic districts
- urban conservation practices
- history - community - economy interface

CLIMATE / LANDSCAPE

- climate conditions
- landscape conditions
- topography conditions

Figure 1.3: Soft Conditions by Anastasiou.

All of these factors affect the perceived/conceived identity of different cities, and each relates back to media representation, as the way in which the media chooses to represent these factors ultimately affects the way in which people understand these places as a whole.

While identity is a complex topic, it is an important one to cover. Identity is so closely connected to the human condition, which makes it so valuable to try to better understand, in relation to personal identity, as well as identity of place. Both affect each other, and ultimately affects the vitality of the city itself.

BRANDING

The term branding typically refers to and relates to a product. In this context, the definition of a brand is "a name, term, symbol or design, or a combination of these intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors." (Kotler 469) While this definition clearly works for and is geared towards products, it does not transfer over one to one in the case of cities, as cities are far more complex than any particular product. That being said, a new definition of branding is needed when referring to the branding of a city. This is specifically known as "place branding", and is understood to be "the practice of applying brand strategy and other marketing techniques and disciplines to the economic, social, political, and cultural developments of cities, regions, and countries." (Kerr 278)

Due to the city's complex nature, especially in comparison to a product, it is necessary to outline brand dimensions that drive place

branding. These dimensions include: culture (gastronomy, sports, film, literature, music), industry, agriculture, heritage, and tourism (leisure + business). (Hanna + Rowley 65) In the case of a city, a logo or motto is not enough to create a strong brand identity. All of these factors need to be taken into account to create a strong brand identity that feels and is believed to be authentic to the ethos of the given city, Branding - while typically not associated directly with architectural practice, is becoming more and more relevant in regards to a place's identity. Every district, city, or region has a perceived identity - and this can be somewhat influenced by intentional branding efforts. Branding essentially gives the opportunity to present a desired future image for a place, whether that be at the scale of a district or country even. (Stock)

Within the discourse of place branding there are several identified terms that need to be outlined. Each term (below) describes a specific type of image in place branding.

construed image: Construed image refers to 'what a nation's people believe about how their nation is perceived by others (Stock 122)

actual image: Actual image refers to the real image of a nation held by another nation (Stock 122)

current projected image: The projected image includes the efforts of nations in forming and communicating their image to an outside audience (Stock 123)

desired future image: the visionary perception the nation would like other nations to have of it sometime in the future (Stock 123)

Place branding essentially offers an additional method for content creation. While media

sources create content that could potentially affect a city's perceived identity (as discussed previously), place branding offers the same opportunity, but it gives city planners and urban designers a voice in curating the type of story or message they would like to communicate about any given place to an outside audience. It provides a sense of agency and structure for cities to be able to begin to define and communicate a desired identity of their city.

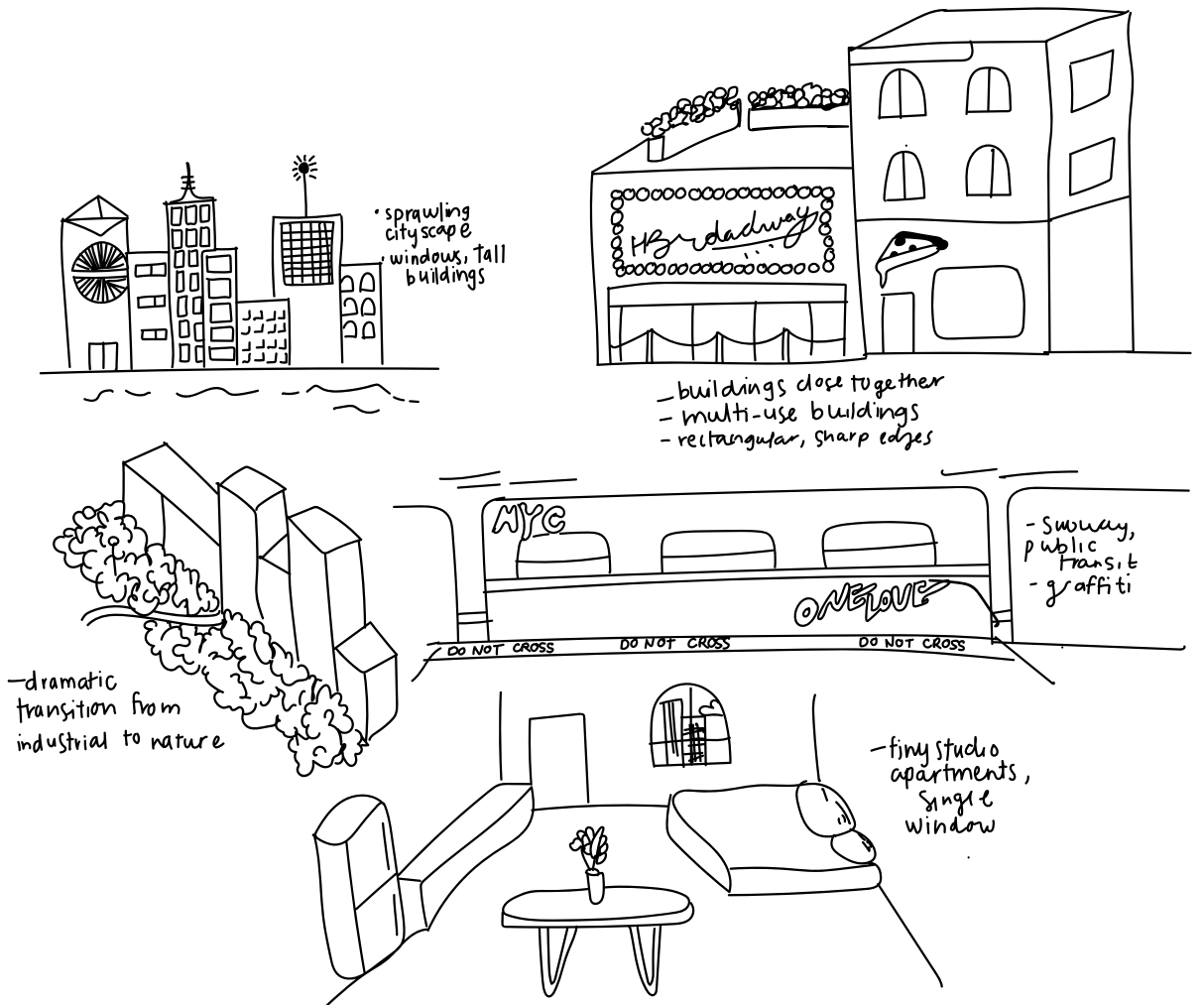


Figure 1.4: Sketches from Perception of Cities Activity

02

FILM ANALYSIS

WHY FILM?

The medium of film was chosen to study due to its influence in pop culture, its visual nature, and its ability to show and represent environments (and how people are active within those environments). New York City and Detroit were the two cities chosen for analysis, as both cities have a film presence, albeit at differing scales. Additionally, both cities tend to have strong conceptions and beliefs regarding characteristics for each place. The purpose of the study was to learn if any trends would emerge (either content driven or environmental trends) from the films chosen for analysis.

A disclaimer needs to be made that this in no way intended to be a comprehensive overview in which either New York City or Detroit is represented through the medium of film. Rather, it is intended to be an in depth look at some of the content that exists and contributes to the overall collective conception of New York City or Detroit as a place. The goal was to see if any trends would emerge from the films, whether that be through content presented or environments that were showcased. Regarding content, there were clear dimensions in which the films were analyzed. Content was identified as being either desirable (worth having and wanted) or undesirable (not worth having and not wanted). Environments were also analyzed, looking at factors such as lighting conditions, weather conditions, maintenance levels of streets and buildings, coloring, amount of nature, etc. The following sections will further detail both dimensions of analysis.

NEW YORK CITY FILM ANALYSIS

Out of all of the cities in the world, New York

City has one of the greatest media presences. Its global reach through newspapers, films, television, music, and now social media, has made the city easily recognizable. Nearly everyone in the world has their own perceptions/conceptions of New York - of its architecture, the people who live there, its work culture, or food, etc. Overall, people tend to have a very distinct understanding of New York City as a place, and current day conceptions tend to view New York City in a positive light.

New York City is the second most filmed city in the world (after Los Angeles) and each of these films contribute to the overall understanding of New York City as a place. For this study, 8 films were chosen based on a variety of factors. Those factors include: genre of film (see Figure 2.3 for overall genre breakdown of all NYC films), release date, gross income, and amount of time spent in the city. Based on these factors, these films were chosen: *In the Heights* (2021), *When Harry Met Sally* (1989), *Annie Hall* (1977), *Enchanted* (2007), *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961), *Goodfellas* (1990), *Maid in Manhattan* (2002), and *a Bronx Tale* (1993).

Overall, the content presented in these films showcased a lot of variety. There were a wide range of stories told within the 8 selected films. There was a lot of desirable content showcased; this being scenes that demonstrated things like friendship, generosity, or joy (to name a few), but there were near an equal amount of scenes present within the films that clearly demonstrated undesirable content. This undesirable content tended to be present in crime dramas- such as *Goodfellas* (1990), where violence, assault, and betrayal were prevalent themes.

There is a large concentration of the films taking place in Manhattan within the films analyzed. This makes a lot of sense, especially when considering that Central Park is the most filmed location in the world (Weaver). In many cases, Manhattan functions as a metonym for New York City. Even though it is one of the smaller boroughs, it tends to represent all of New York City. Perhaps this is because of the amount of representation it receives from different media sources (film being a main source) in comparison to the other boroughs. The films that are set in Manhattan do tend to showcase high volumes of desirable content, which aligns with both the study conducted in this thesis, as well as the overall entire collection of films set in New York. An overview of genres can be seen in figure 2.3. Figure 2.2 showcases the film rating proportions. This data was sourced from IMDB genre designations. Content that would be considered undesirable is pushed outside of Manhattan, and is prevalent in The Bronx and Queens.

While all a part of New York City, each borough holds its own unique identity that may actively go against a conceived identity of New York City itself. For example, most people have heard thoughts echoing along the lines of "Dreams really do come true in New York". It is both a popular slogan and a main narrative driving theme in New York films. But dreams come true in which part of New York? One would be hard pressed to find a person shouting "Dreams really do come true in the Bronx!" from the rooftops. It seems like a silly notion. This sentiment seems to fit more appropriately when envisioning Manhattan, because that is what is shown over and over again in film (and other

media sources). It is this reinforcement of the same narrative that helps to shape the identity of New York City (and its subsequent boroughs).

Very few scenes in the New York films that were studied showcased undesirable environments. For the most part, the environments (both interior and exterior) tended to be well cared for and maintained. There were few instances of decay, litter or vandalism present within the selected scenes. Overall, the environments presented were quite attractive based on several factors. The most noticeable factor was the intentional use of color and vibrancy levels. In many of the scenes, the colors are quite vibrant and eye-catching - creating atmospheres that feel happy and joyful. The most obvious example of this can be seen in *In The Heights* (2021), during the number "96,000". The pool and sky are a bright turquoise color, the tubes in the pool are very colorful, and greenery can also be seen in the foreground of some of the shots. The scene feels warm and sunny - like a perfect summer's day you would not want to miss. In addition to an overall brightness, there are also lots of warm toned color palletes, as seen in figure 2.4-5. The coloring of the scene affects how people receive the scene - how they feel about it and what conceptions they create about it. For example, because of the intentional use of vibrant colors, people are more inclined to make positive connections to this environment.

An analysis was done on the coloring of the chosen films by sampling 4-5 colors from each scene that was analyzed. A software was used to randomly select the colors that were present in each image still. As shown in figure 2.1 (which shows every sampled color) it's clear that there



Figure 2.1: New York Film Color Analysis

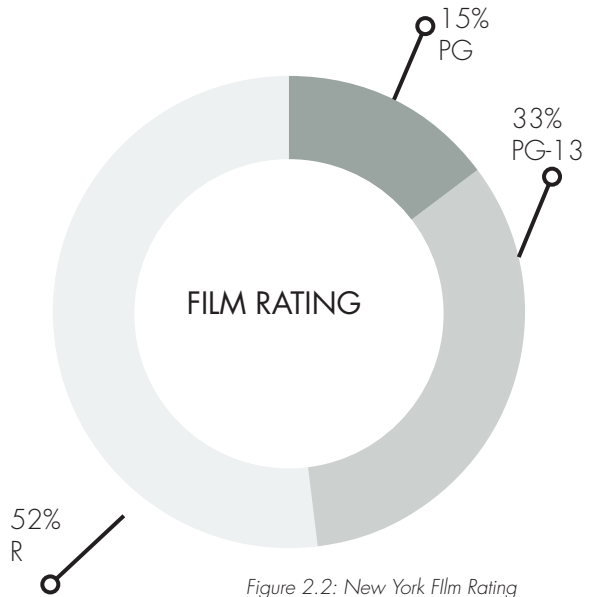


Figure 2.2: New York Film Rating

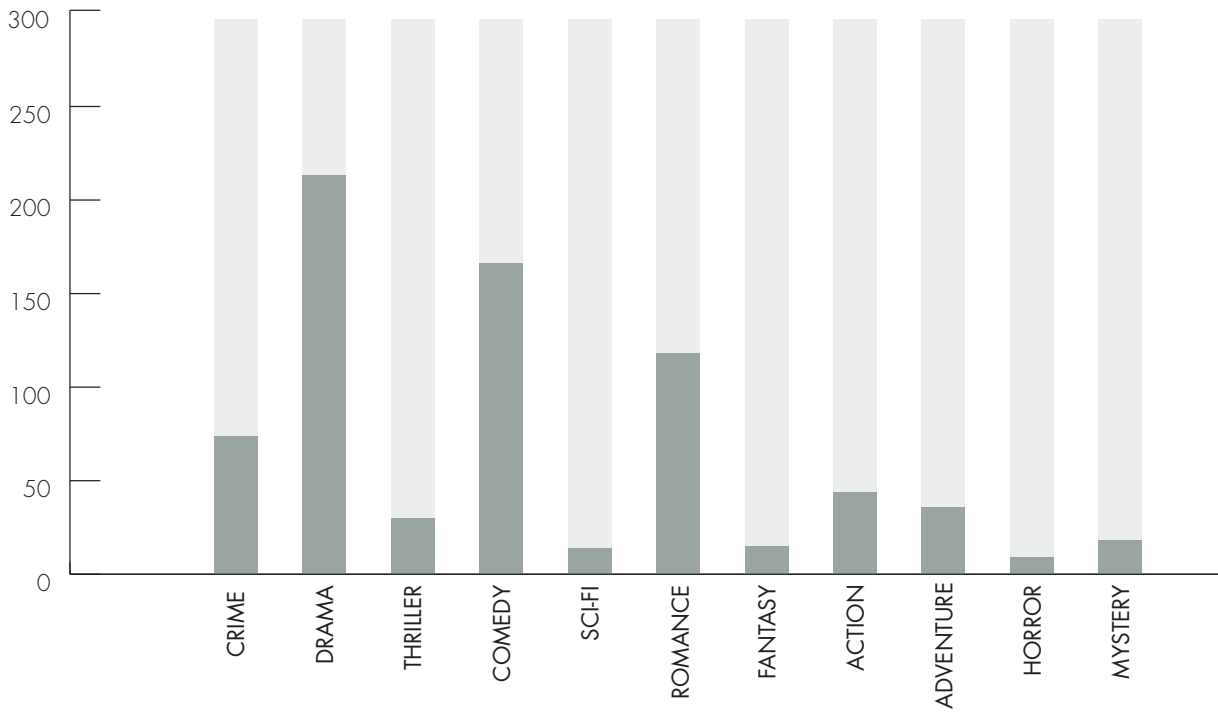


Figure 2.3: New York Film Genre Breakdown

is variety shown within the sampled colors, with dark, light, vibrant, and muted colors.

Another factor that contributed to the desirability of some of the scenes was the presence of vegetation. Many scenes highlighted street trees, landscaping outside of homes, and general access to “natural” spaces. New York has four seasons, with winter included of course, so it is interesting to see very few scenes

of winter. Vegetation is in full bloom in every scene - which would not be the case in reality.

An in depth analysis of each scene is located in appendix A, but overall, New York films showcase a variety of environments and narratives, with no overarching narrative present or contained within all of the films. That being said, there is not a singular narrative enforcing certain conceptions of New York City.



Figure 2.4: Still from *When Harry Met Sally* (1989)



Figure 2.5: Still from *In the Heights* (2021)

DETROIT FILM ANALYSIS

Detroit does not have a huge film presence. There are about 50 films with Detroit film credits, but not all of these films are actually set within Detroit. Take Transformers (2008) as an example. While mostly filmed in the city of Detroit, the story takes place in the fictional "Mission City". There are also several other films with Detroit credits that are not actually set in Detroit, but are filmed and set near Detroit. Grosse Pointe Blank (1997) and the Virgin Suicides (1999) are two examples of this. After removing all of these types of films from the set, there are about 15-20 films that actually take place in the city of Detroit, and therefore have the potential to affect someones viewpoint of the city.

For this study, 8 of the most prevalent films were chosen to be analyzed, to understand the way in which Detroit is represented through the lens of film. For this study, 8 films were chosen based on a variety of factors. Those factors include: genre of film (see Figure 2.9 for overall genre breakdown of all films), release date, gross income, and amount of time spent in the city. Based on these factors, these films were chosen: 8 mile (2002), Gran Torino (2008), Bird on a Wire (1990), No Sudden Move (2021), Detroit (2017), True Romance (1993), Robocop (1987), and Dreamgirls (2006).

When looking at content presented, there tended to be very little variation in the types of narratives that were told. Nearly all of the films could fit into the crime genre - as themes of violence were prevalent within the scenes. 7 out of the 8 films showcased scenes that included the presence and inappropriate use of guns. Many scenes within the films highlighted violence



Figure 2.6: Detroit Film Posters

assault, arson, abuse, theft, vandalism, and harassment. Figure 2.9 showcases the overall breakdown of all Detroit film genres. This information was sourced based off of IMDB genre designations. It is important to note that within this data, genres for each film are not mutually exclusive. A film could be both considered a comedy and a crime genre, allowing it to count for both categories. That being said, the most prevalent genres were crime, drama, and action.

When looking at the overall ratings of all Detroit films, it is clear that Detroit narratives tend to tell a darker story, with 75% of the 50 or so films being rated R. This information is also based off of IMDB rating designations. There are strict markers for what constitutes the rating of a film and this is outlined by the Motion Picture Association. They state: "An R-rated motion picture may include adult themes, adult activity, hard language, intense or persistent violence, sexually-oriented nudity, drug abuse or other elements." (Motion Picture Association, 7)

While some scenes showcased in the eight films that were analyzed showed different content, positive/desirable content was few and far between. Many of the films and scenes within these films capitalized on Detroit's reputation as an unsafe city and its blight/abandonment to tell their stories. Many of the environments in the films showcased littered streets, streets / buildings that have not been maintained and are falling into disrepair, and cloudy, gray skies that produce bleak, colorless environments. Additionally, there was rarely a feature on attractive environmental conditions, such as vegetation, public parks, sunshine, or access to water (all

things that are available within the city of Detroit).

An analysis was done on the coloring of the chosen films by sampling 4-5 colors from each scene that was analyzed. A software was used to randomly select the colors that were present in each image still. As shown in figure 2.7 (which shows every sampled color) it is clear how dark and muted the color palettes in the films are.

Overall, it was found that the films showcased a high volume of poor environmental conditions as well as high volume of undesirable adult themes, aiding in and fostering the perception of Detroit's negative identity.

A detailed analysis can be seen of each scene on the following pages. Additionally, each scene location was mapped to showcase which areas of Detroit were being represented. It was interesting to find out that out of the 35 scenes from the films that were analyzed, 9 of them could not be placed on the map, as they were not actual locations within Detroit. These settings were filmed in other cities, but were posing as Detroit locations. *Robocop* is an example of this. While audience members are told the story takes place in a future Detroit, all of the scenes were filmed in Dallas.

From the scene analysis for environmental conditions, descriptive words were highlighted within the analysis and then were pulled together in a separate diagram, as a means to distill the information. From this, it can be seen that the majority of the environmental conditions are undesirable.



Figure 2.7: Detroit Film Color Analysis

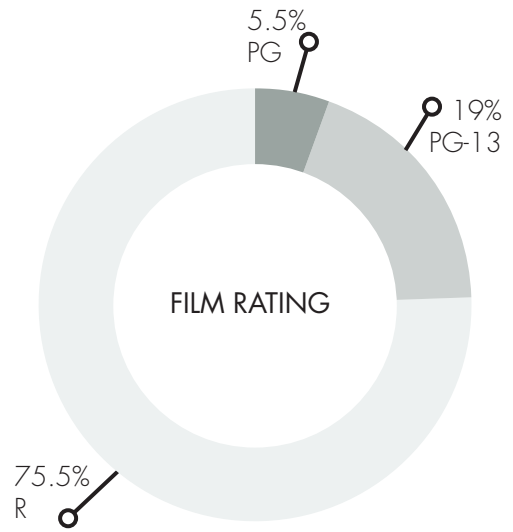


Figure 2.8: Detroit Film Ratings

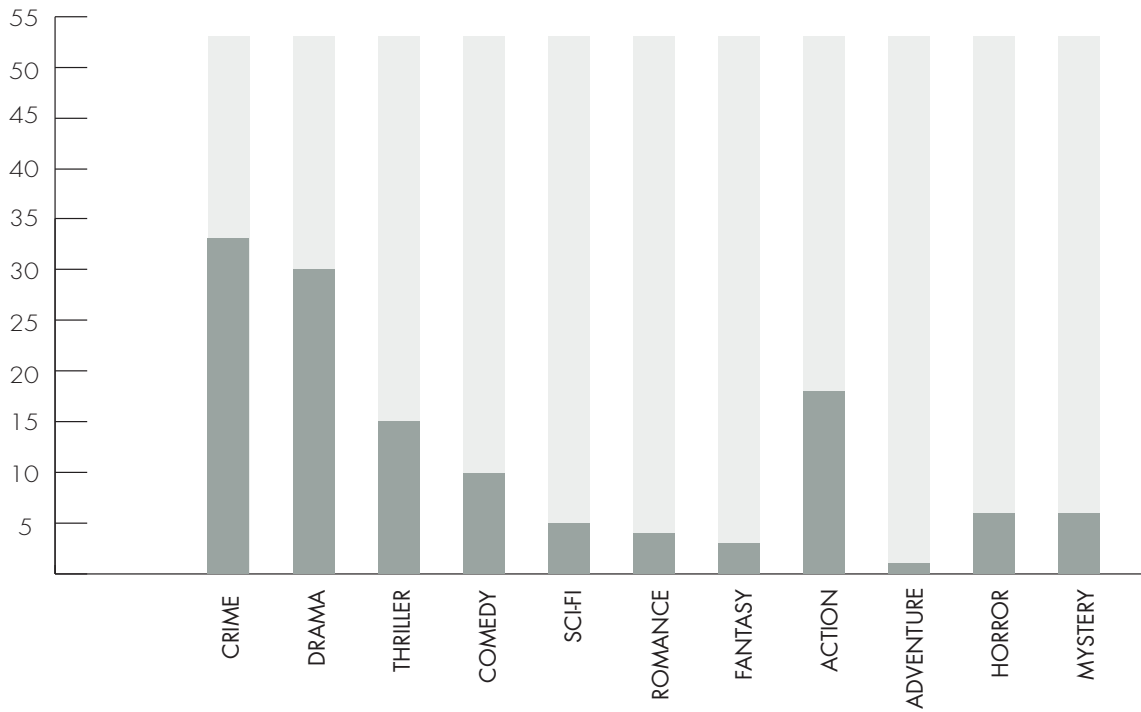
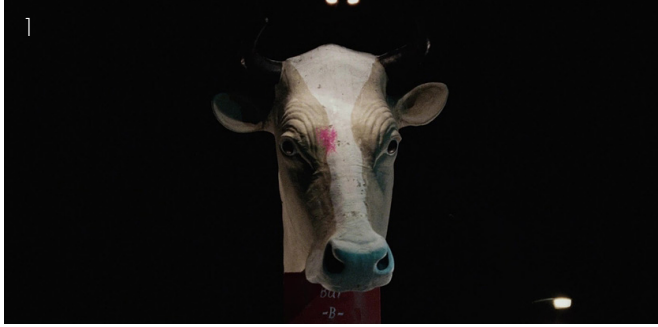


Figure 2.9: Detroit Film Genre Breakdown



8 Mile, 2002

Jimmy, Future, Cheddar, DJ Iz, and Sol George are driving down Mac Avenue. They take turns shooting a paint-ball gun at a giant cow head above an ice cream store, a grocery store, and a police car.

Figure 2.10: Still from 8 Mile



8 Mile, 2002

Jimmy, Future, Cheddar, DJ Iz, and Sol George decide to burn down an abandoned house that a little girl was raped in. They discuss the fact the city has done nothing to stop actions like this from happening, so they decide to take matters into their own hands.

Figure 2.11: Still from 8 Mile



8 Mile, 2002

Jimmy, Future, Cheddar, DJ Iz, and Sol George are driving together when Jimmy sees Wink with the Free World members. Jimmy then stops the car, walks over to the other group, and the group instantly begin physically fighting one another. Cheddar then pulls out a gun, fires a shot in the air, and then accidentally shoots himself in the leg.

Figure 2.12: Still from 8 Mile



8 Mile, 2002

Jimmy attacks Lyckety Splyt after a rap battle and then Papa Doc pulls out a gun to end the dispute. The two groups antagonize one another.

Figure 2.13: Still from 8 Mile

Content Analysis:

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases acts of vandalism.

vandalism: willful or malicious destruction or defacement of public or private property

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases arson and references violence.

arson: the willful or malicious burning of property

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases violence and assault.

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

assault: a violent physical or verbal attack

DESIRABLE - Showcases assault and hate.

assault: a violent physical or verbal attack

hate: intense hostility and aversion usually deriving from fear, anger, or sense of injury

Environment Analysis:

UNDESIRABLE - Very **dark** street conditions, even with light being emitted from street lamps. Additionally, all of the lighting in the scene is of a blue hue, which makes any part of the environment that is well lit, extremely harsh. There are **puddles** of water in the street, which makes the scene feel more **gloomy**. The characters are actively **vandalizing property** as they are driving, which lowers the perceived value of the environment.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases an abandoned house which is falling apart. Windows are **broken**, paint is peeling off of the walls, and all remaining furniture is broken to varying degrees. It also appears that there has already been **fire damage** to the house, before the characters decide to douse it in lighter fluid and set it on fire. Outside of the house, there is an **abandoned** car sitting on the lawn, **broken** and covered in leaves.

UNDESIRABLE - The street is in **poor condition**. There are cracks everywhere, discoloration, and weeds pop up in random places. The surrounding buildings appear to be quite **worn down**, with **faded coloring** and paint chipping off the facades. A payphone that can be seen has been **vandalized**, and **garbage** is on the ground. The sky is **overcast**, with puddles of water pooling the streets. Overall, the environment feels forgotten about and **gloomy**.

UNDESIRABLE - The ground of the parking lot looks quite **dirty** and the lighting conditions are also quite **dark**, with the lights appearing once again to cast a blue tinge. The structure they are in has clearly been **abandoned** and is falling apart. The ceiling and columns which were once quite lavish appear to be extremely **run down**, with paint peeling off of their surfaces.



Gran Torino, 2008

After saving Thao from being taken by the gang, the neighborhood leaves flowers and food at the doorstep of Walt's house to show their appreciation for his actions.

Figure 2.14: Still from Gran Torino



Gran Torino, 2008

Sue is walking with a boy she is interested in. They pass by three boys around their age, who start harassing her. They grab her, push her around and make sexual comments about her.

Figure 2.15: Still from Gran Torino



Gran Torino, 2008

In order to absolve his actions, Thao works for Walt for two weeks. Walt uses Thao to better their neighborhood, ordering him to repaint home exteriors, remove old tree stumps, and fix a broken gutter.

Figure 2.16: Still from Gran Torino



Gran Torino, 2008

Thao exits a bus while coming home from work, and cuts through an alleyway. As he walks down the alley, the gang trying to recruit him sees him, drives down the alley, and begins to harass him. They begin to push him around, they start breaking his tools, and then they burn his face with a lit cigarette.

Figure 2.17: Still from Gran Torino

Content Analysis:

DESIRABLE - Showcases thoughtfulness and generosity.

generosity: the act of being liberal in giving

thoughtfulness: given to or chosen or made with heedful anticipation of the needs and wants of others

Environment Analysis:

DESIRABLE - Walt's property is extremely **well maintained**. His grass is a very **bright** green color and his fence around the porch is very white and clean looking. There is a welcome mat in front of the steps up to his porch. An American flag hangs in front of the house. This house feels, **warm** and **welcoming** (which is actually in opposition to Walt's initial demeanor). The environment is quite **sunny** and the lighting has a warm hue.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases harassment.

harassment: to create an unpleasant or hostile situation for especially by uninvited and unwelcome verbal or physical conduct

UNDESIRABLE - Grass is overgrown and is coming up out of the sidewalk cracks. **Garbage** is littered across the ground and the chain link fence is **rusting**. A sign that is attached to the fence is starting to come off, and is hanging diagonally. Windows on the building are covered with a black material. There are **stains** and scuff marks along the entryway of the door. Overall, the environment appears to be poorly taken care of.

DESIRABLE - Showcases loyalty and joy.

loyalty: the act of being faithful to a private person to whom faithfulness is due

joy: a source or cause of delight

DESIRABLE - Thao works on his neighborhood, and it visibly improves. He works on Walt's landscaping, tending to his garden and pulling out weeds. He also removes old tree stumps from the ground, fixes a neighbors gutter, and repaints several homes on his street. This scene is done in a montage sequence, and the scene starts with it **raining** quite heavily, but by the time Thao completes the work the **sun** is shining on his improved neighborhood.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases harassment and violence.

harassment: to create an unpleasant or hostile situation for especially by uninvited and unwelcome verbal or physical conduct

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

UNDESIRABLE - The alleyway is extremely cracked with **weeds** popping up all over the place. The house and property that can be seen adjacent to the property appears to be maintained, and is in contrast to the state of the alley. A green fence that lines the alleyway seems to be **broken** through in some spots. The sky is **overcast**.



Gran Torino, 2008

The gang does a drive by and shoots up Thao's house. After the shooting, Sue returns home bloodied after being raped and assaulted by members of the gang.

Figure 2.18: Still from Gran Torino



Gran Torino, 2008

Walt shows up to the gang's house after all of these events took place. While reaching for his cigarette lighter, the gang members believe he is reaching for a gun, and they immediately start shooting at him, killing him instantly. Walt is aware of what will occur as he walks up to the house, and continues knowing that this will allow Thao to be able to have a life free from these gang members.

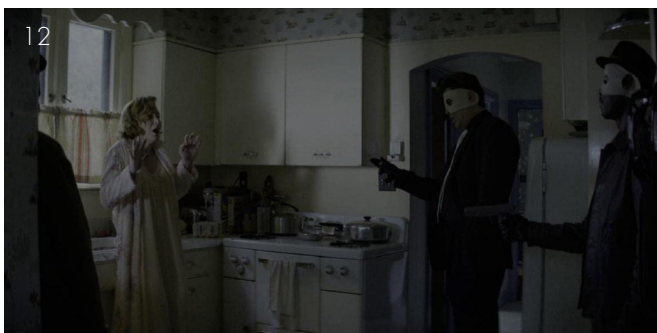
Figure 2.19: Still from Gran Torino



Bird on a Wire, 1990

Sorenson and Diggs show up Marvin's Motown Motors (where Rick works) and they try to kill him. They kill Marvin, but Rick escapes with help from Marianne. Sorenson and Diggs set part of the building on fire, and write Rick's alias "Billy Ray" in spray paint near Marvin's body, to make it look like he was the one who killed him.

Figure 2.20: Still from Bird on a Wire



No Sudden Move, 2021

Three armed men, wearing masks, break into a family home to 'babysit' them as they make the husband steal a document for them.

Figure 2.21: Still from No Sudden Move

Content Analysis:

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases assault, violence, and vandalism.

assault: a violent physical or verbal attack

vandalism: willful or malicious destruction or defacement of public or private property

Environment Analysis:

UNDESIRABLE - Due to the shooting that occurs, the entire front facade of Thao's house becomes **damaged**. Windows shatter and bullet holes rip through the siding on the house. This scenes occurs at night and the street is **not very well lit**. No street lamps can be seen; the only light being emitted is from people's porch lights.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases violence.

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

UNDESIRABLE - This scenes occurs at night and the street is very **dark**. There are no visible street lights and no homes have porch lights that are on. The only visible light appears to be emitted from the interiors of several homes on the street. The sidewalk has **severe cracks** and the grass appears to be **dying**. The scene is so dark, it is challenging to distinguish the conditions of the surrounding homes.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases arson and violence.

arson: the willful or malicious burning of property

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

UNDESIRABLE - This scenes occurs at night and the street is very **dark**. It appears to have rained and **puddles** can be seen on the street. The shop where the scene takes place is destroyed from the **fire damage** that occurs.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases violence and corruption.

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

corruption: dishonest or illegal behavior especially by powerful people

DESIRABLE - By all appearances, this home seems to be **well cared for** and occupied by a nice family. The interiors of the house are in good condition and the home is very **clean**. The exterior of the house and surrounding neighborhood as appear to be very well maintained. The landscaping is quite **attractive** and the street is lined with trees. However, the sky is very **overcast** the interior of the house is quite **dark**.



No Sudden Move, 2021

It is hinted at that Frank physically abuses his wife Vanessa after finding out that she had been having an affair with Ronald. A few other scenes occur, and then we are back in the Capelli home, where it is evident that Vanessa has been abused due to the bruising on her face. Vanessa then shoots and kills Frank.

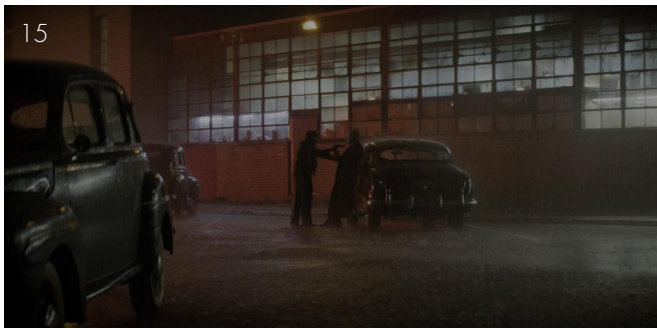
Figure 2.22: Still from No Sudden Move



No Sudden Move, 2021

Doug, Frank, Curt, and Ronald meet at the Roma Cafe to discuss business. Curtis fires shots at Frank, and three of them run through the restaurant while bystanders scream and duck under their tables. Doug is shot and killed during this scene.

Figure 2.23: Still from No Sudden Move



No Sudden Move, 2021

Curt and Ronald assault Frank, and then shove his body into the trunk of their car.

Figure 2.24: Still from No Sudden Move



No Sudden Move, 2021

Aldrick (one of the Detroit mob leaders) and his members, meet with Joe Finney (a police officer). Joe intends to arrest Curt, who is responsible for three murders that occur in the film. Aldrick offers Finney 50,000 dollars if he will not arrest Curt, and instead let him take care of Curt. Finney accepts the offer and trades Curt for 50,000 dollars.

Figure 2.25: Still from No Sudden Move

Content Analysis:

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases abuse and violence.

abuse: to treat with cruelty and violence, especially regularly or repeatedly

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

Environment Analysis:

DESIRABLE - The interior of this house is quite **dark**. This scene is quite short and not very much can be seen of the interior, but it appears to be **well kept**.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases assault and violence.

assault: a violent physical or verbal attack

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

DESIRABLE - This cafe appears to be very **nice**. The atmosphere feels **warm** and **inviting**, even with its low lighting level. The tables are covered with white table cloths, and they are set quite nicely. Soft music plays in the background.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases assault and violence.

assault: a violent physical or verbal attack

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

UNDESIRABLE - This scene occurs outside of a warehouse. It is quite **dark** and is **raining** very hard. With all of the rain pouring down, everything looks quite **hazy**. The main source of light is from the interior of the warehouse. This lighting appears to be of a cool hue, but the exterior scene looks as if it has a reddish hue.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases corruption.

corruption: dishonest or illegal behavior especially by powerful people

UNDESIRABLE - This scene occurs outside of a hotel in an adjacent covered alleyway. The street is made from cobblestones and it looks like there are several grates along the side of the hotel facade. The coloring of the scene is very **gray** and quite **dark**. There are no light sources in the alleyway.



No Sudden Move, 2021

Vanessa and Ronald reunite and end up with 400,000 dollars the between the two of them. As they are seemingly driving away together, Vanessa pulls over at a park near a riverbank. She tells Ronald that he needs to relax, and that they should be celebrating. She offers him a bottle of champagne, and as he goes to open the bottle, she shoots and kills him.

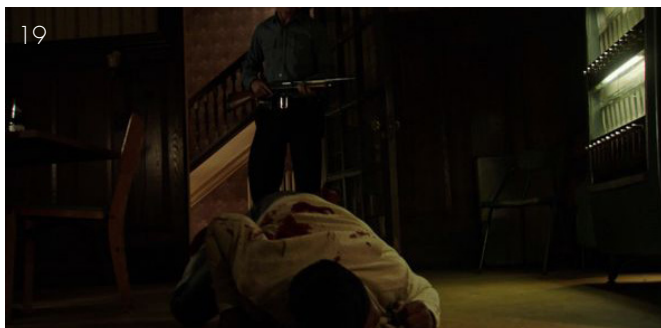
Figure 2.26: Still from No Sudden Move



Detroit, 2017

During a show at the Fox Theatre, it is announced that everyone is to vacate the premises and go home due to the riots. There is a panic in the crowd, and everyone rushes to leave. Larry, who is behind the stage and was about to perform with his group The Dramatics, waits. Before leaving, he walks out onto the stage and stares at the empty seats. His disappointment is palpable.

Figure 2.27: Still from Detroit



Detroit, 2017

One of the boys (Carl) staying in the hotel runs down the stairs, enters into another room, while one of the Detroit Policeman enters the premises (Krauss) looking for a "sniper", and shoots him in the back, killing him.

Figure 2.28: Still from Detroit



Detroit, 2017

Krauss places a knife next to Carl's dead body... making it appear as if Carl was a threat to the Krauss, giving him a "reason" of self-defensive to kill Carl.

Figure 2.29: Still from Detroit

Content Analysis:

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases violence and betrayal.

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

betrayal: violation of a persons trust or confidence

Environment Analysis:

DESIRABLE - This scene occurs in a very green field. There are lots of trees and other **vegetation** in the area. The environment is quite alluring do its remoteness and coloring. It looks **peaceful** and **serene**. It appears as if it is mostly undisturbed by people, but functions as a place to escape and find restoration.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases disappointment and wasted potential.

disappointment: the act of failing to meet a hope or expectation

DESIRABLE - This theater has very ornate detailing. The interior is richly filled with gold, reds, and light blues. The lighting is very **warm** and **soft**. The interiors are well maintained and look as if they were new. It feels very **luxurious**.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases discrimination and violence.

discrimination: prejudiced or prejudicial outlook, action, or treatment

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

UNDESIRABLE - While the hotel itself appears to be fairly well kept and clean, the interiors of the hotel (where nearly the entire film occurs) is made very undesirable because the horrific actions that are occurring within the scene. The scene occurs at night, and the interiors of the rooms are pretty **dark**. There is very minimal lighting shown within the building. The building feels quite **haunted** in a way - and its identity stems from the horrible things that happened.

UNDESIRABLE - showcases corruption.

corruption: dishonest or illegal behavior especially by powerful people

UNDESIRABLE - While the hotel itself appears to be fairly well kept and clean, the interiors of the hotel (where nearly the entire film occurs) is made very undesirable because the horrific actions that are occurring within the scene. The scene occurs at night, and the interiors of the rooms are pretty **dark**. There is very minimal lighting shown within the building. The building feels quite **haunted** in a way - and its identity stems from the horrible things that happened.



Detroit, 2017

The police force enter the building, and everyone staying there is forced to come downstairs, and place their hands against the walls. They are extremely violent, threatening to kill everyone if no one confesses who the sniper is. The policeman look for the alleged weapon, but none are found. They are extremely aggressive, screaming at and beating everyone.

Figure 2.30: Still from Detroit



Detroit, 2017

The policemen take individuals into separate rooms, and pretend to kill them to scare the others who are still on the wall. The national guard notes how the Detroit PD is acting wrongly, but they leave because the main officer did not want to get into a "civil rights mix-up".

Figure 2.31: Still from Detroit



Detroit, 2017

The policemen continue to beat the men and two girls, and eventually are so aggressive they rip off one of the girls dresses. They say inappropriate sexual comments to the girls.

Figure 2.32: Still from Detroit



Detroit, 2017

After killing Aubrey, the police officers tell the others that they can leave as long as they do not speak of what happened that night. Fred, another one of the residents, refuses to pretend to ignore everything that had happened, and Krauss shoots and kills him on the spot.

Figure 2.33: Still from Detroit

Content Analysis:

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases harassment and discrimination.

harassment: to create an unpleasant or hostile situation for especially by uninvited and unwelcome verbal or physical conduct

discrimination: prejudiced or prejudicial outlook, action, or treatment

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases harassment and corruption.

harassment: to create an unpleasant or hostile situation for especially by uninvited and unwelcome verbal or physical conduct

corruption: dishonest or illegal behavior especially by powerful people

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases harassment and abuse.

harassment: to create an unpleasant or hostile situation for especially by uninvited and unwelcome verbal or physical conduct

abuse: to treat with cruelty and violence, especially regularly or repeatedly

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases violence and corruption.

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

corruption: dishonest or illegal behavior especially by powerful people

Environment Analysis:

UNDESIRABLE - While the hotel itself appears to be fairly well kept and clean, the interiors of the hotel (where nearly the entire film occurs) is made very undesirable because the horrific actions that are occurring within the scene. The scene occurs at night, and the interiors of the rooms are pretty **dark**. There is very minimal lighting shown within the building. The building feels quite **haunted** in a way - and its identity stems from the horrible things that happened.

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Detroit, 2017

People rioting in the streets. Windows shatter as people break through them and steal goods from inside the buildings. People are yelling and screaming as surrounding buildings are burning. The police beat people in the streets. People are arrested and shoved into cars by policeman. The feeling is chaotic and disorienting.

Figure 2.34: Still from Detroit



True Romance, 1993

Drexel and Marty meet with two other men. Drexel ends up killing the two men, and stealing their cocaine.

Figure 2.35: Still from True Romance



True Romance, 1993

Clarence goes to confront Drexel at his brothel and retrieve Alabama's clothes, and Drexel physically (and quite violently) assaults Clarence. Clarence then shoots and kills both Drexel and Marty.

Figure 2.36: Still from True Romance



True Romance, 1993

Clarence's father offers him money and tells him that he hopes everything works out with Alabama. He tells him to stay out of trouble and tells him that he loves him.

Figure 2.37: Still from True Romance

Content Analysis:

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases vandalism and assault.

vandalism: willful or malicious destruction or defacement of public or private property

assault: a violent physical or verbal attack

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases violence and theft.

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

theft: the act of stealing

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases violence and assault.

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

assault: a violent physical or verbal attack

DESIRABLE - Showcases generosity and love.

generosity: the act of being liberal in giving

love: strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties

Environment Analysis:

UNDESIRABLE - The streets of Detroit are actively being **destroyed**. **Broken** glass from shattered windows lay in the streets. Buildings are ablaze and **smoke** covers the scene. There are pieces of rubble from broken buildings everywhere. Everything is **hazy** and **gray** from the smoke. The only real color that can be seen from the scene is from the patches of fire.

UNDESIRABLE - This apartment is extremely **dirty**. There is **garbage** littered on every available surface. The lighting level is pretty low, and it almost looks **hazy** within the apartment.

UNDESIRABLE - The house does not really look like a house, but more so looks like the interior of a club. It is very **dark** inside, and **neon lights** illuminate the spaces. The neon lights are red, so everything in the scene is under a **red hue**. The rooms look very **hazy**, as if it is filled with smoke. Overall, the space does not look very clean.

UNDESIRABLE - This scene occurs outside Clarence's father's mobile home. It is located near a riverbank and train tracks. The trains passing by are very loud. There is no grass, but rather the ground consists of gravel. The sky is very **overcast** and everything appears to be very **desaturated**. There is a refrigerator outside the mobile home. Everything in the scene feels very **bleak**.



True Romance, 1993

Clifford gets held up in his own house and is interrogated by Vincent, as the men are trying to find out where Clarence is. They hit Clifford, cut his hand, pour alcohol on it, and eventually Vincent shoots him six times, killing him.

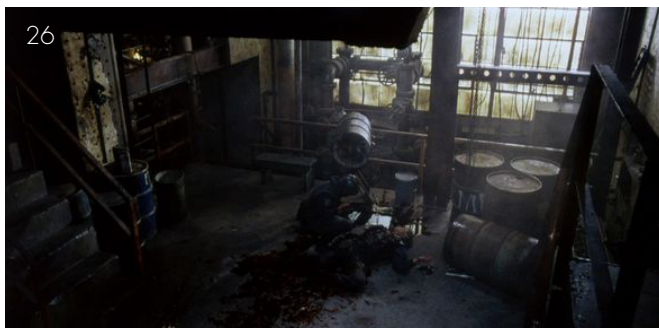
Figure 2.38: Still from True Romance



Robocop, 1987

While unveiling the robot that will "save" Detroit, it malfunctions and kills a worker. His body lands on the architectural model of Detroit, symbolizing and referencing the blood shed in Detroit. The other office workers seem fairly unbothered by this event, more concerned with its financial repercussions.

Figure 2.39: Still from Robocop



Robocop, 1987

Clarence shoots Murphy's hand off. He then continues shooting him, eventually shooting him in the head. Clarence and his people eventually leave, believing Murphy to be dead. Murphy's partner comes over to him, realizes he is still alive and gets him to a hospital.

Figure 2.40: Still from Robocop



Robocop, 1987

Two men chase after a girl, grab her, taunt her, and then cut some of her hair off. As she is screaming and crying out, robocop shows up, shoots the guy that is holding her, and she is set free.

Figure 2.41: Still from Robocop

Content Analysis:

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases violence and assault.

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

assault: a violent physical or verbal attack

Environment Analysis:

UNDESIRABLE - This scene occurs inside Clifford's mobile home. The interior is quite **dark** and looks very **hazy**. The furniture inside it appears quite **run down**. Nearly every inch of the wall space is covered with something; clocks, photos, or other decoration. The color in the space is quite **dull**.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases violence and greed.

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

greed: a selfish and excessive desire for more of something than is needed

UNDESIRABLE - This scene occurs inside an office building. Everything in the office is a **neutral color**. The walls are a light beige, the door is a dark gray, and the floor is a light gray. There are floor to ceiling windows that showcase a very gray and **bleak** looking city. There is a long conference table in the center of the room, and next to it is a white city model. The space feels **sterile** and **cold**. The only color that can be scene is the blood from the character that is killed.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases violence.

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

UNDESIRABLE - This scene occurs inside an **abandoned** looking warehouse. The windows are covered with a semi-sheer material, and the majority of the warehouse is quite **dark** due to this. Every item within the space looks like it has a layer of **grime** covering it. Overall, the space looks **hazardous** and in a state of **decay**.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases harassment.

harassment: to create an unpleasant or hostile situation for especially by uninvited and unwelcome verbal or physical conduct

UNDESIRABLE - This scene occurs at **night** in what appears to be an empty parking lot. There are no streetlights. The only lighting comes from red neon lighting on nearby buildings, faint lighting that can be seen in the distance from the interiors of buildings, and then from the headlights of Robocop's car. There is **garbage** all over the ground... newspapers, magazines, palettes, and cardboard.



Robocop, 1987

Emil tries to rob a gas station, threatens to kill the attendant, and then breaks one of the gas lines. Gasoline spews everywhere, Emil drops his lit cigarette into it, and the entire gas station blows up.

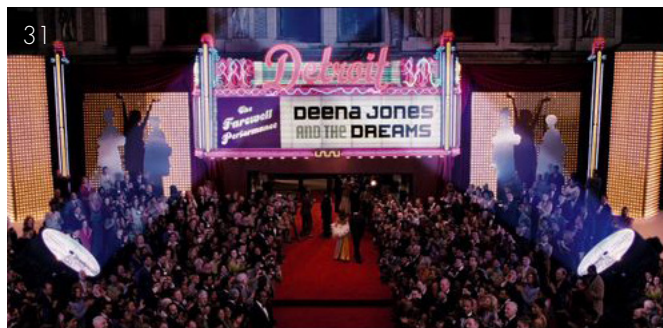
Figure 2.42: Still from Robocop



Dreamgirls, 2006

C.C. visits Effie in Detroit and apologizes to her. He tells her he wants her to record a song he wrote for her, called One Night Only. They reconcile and repair their relationship. Effie records the song and it is distributed around Detroit and is eventually distributed nationally.

Figure 2.43: Still from Dreamgirls



Dreamgirls, 2006

At the Dream's final performance, Deena tells the crowd that there are actually four members of the Dreams. Effie comes out on the stage and performs. Her little girl watches from the audience with tears in her eyes.

Figure 2.44: Still from Dreamgirls

Content Analysis:

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases theft and arson.

theft: the act of stealing

arson: the willful or malicious burning of property

Environment Analysis:

UNDESIRABLE - This scene occurs at **night**, at a gas station. The gas station is fairly standard. However, the gas station does get **destroyed** when it blows up and bursts into flames.

DESIRABLE - Showcases reconciliation.

reconciliation: the act to restore to friendship or harmony

DESIRABLE - This scene occurs in a night club. The lighting behind the decorative screen wall shifts from blues, to pinks, to reds, and to oranges. Not much of the environment can be seen within this shot (other than the characters and the screen). The space feels quite **mysterious**.

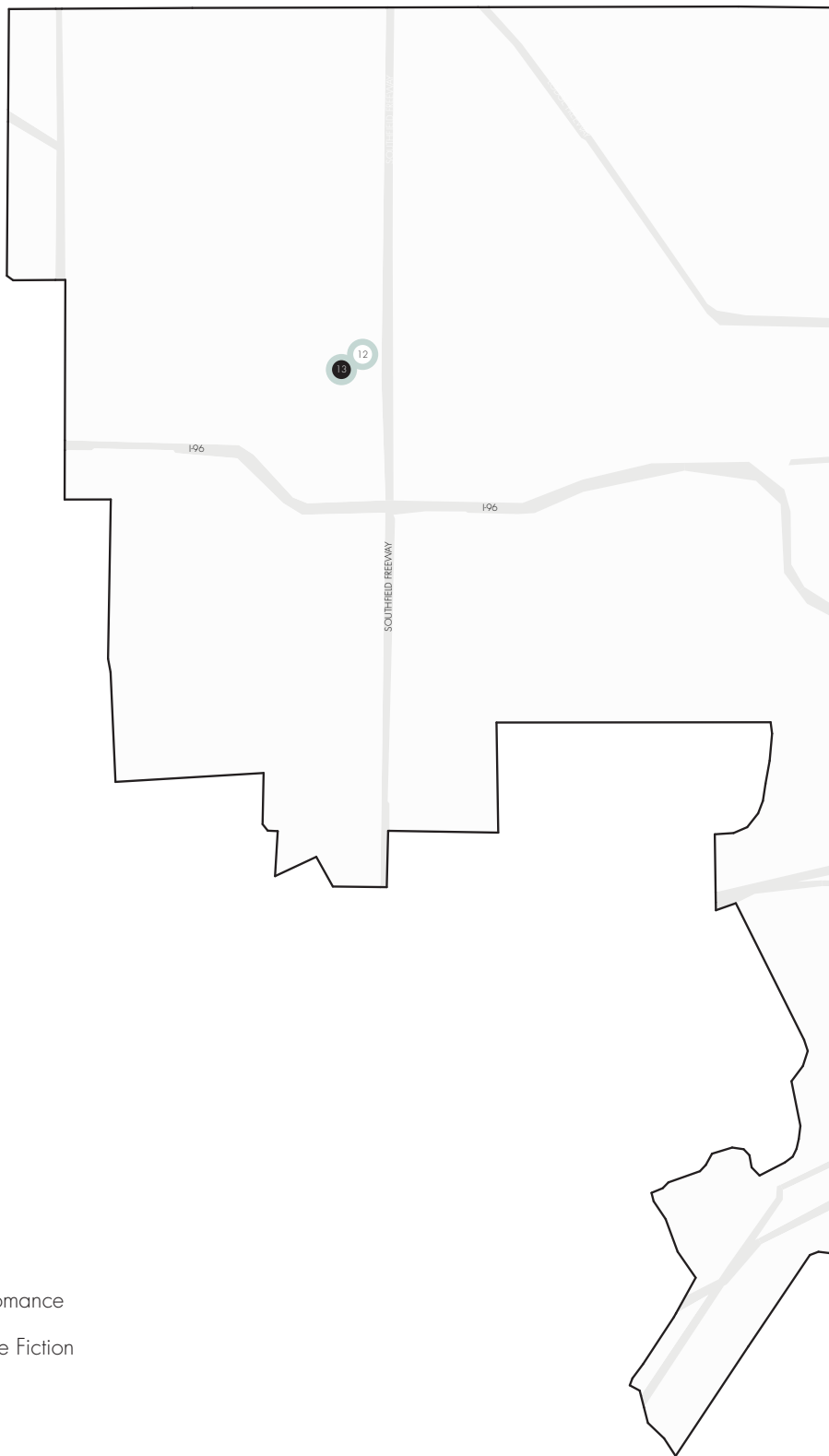
DESIRABLE - Showcases reconciliation and justice.

reconciliation: the act to restore to friendship or harmony

justice: the principle or ideal of just dealing or right action

DESIRABLE - Both the exterior and the interior of this theater is quite **attractive**. The marquee is very **colorful** with vibrant pinks, blues, and purples. The scene occurs at night, but is fairly well lit. The stage enhances the performance and is quite entrancing. The changing colors, glow, and sparkles are all quite **enchanting**. The music and lights create a beautiful atmosphere.

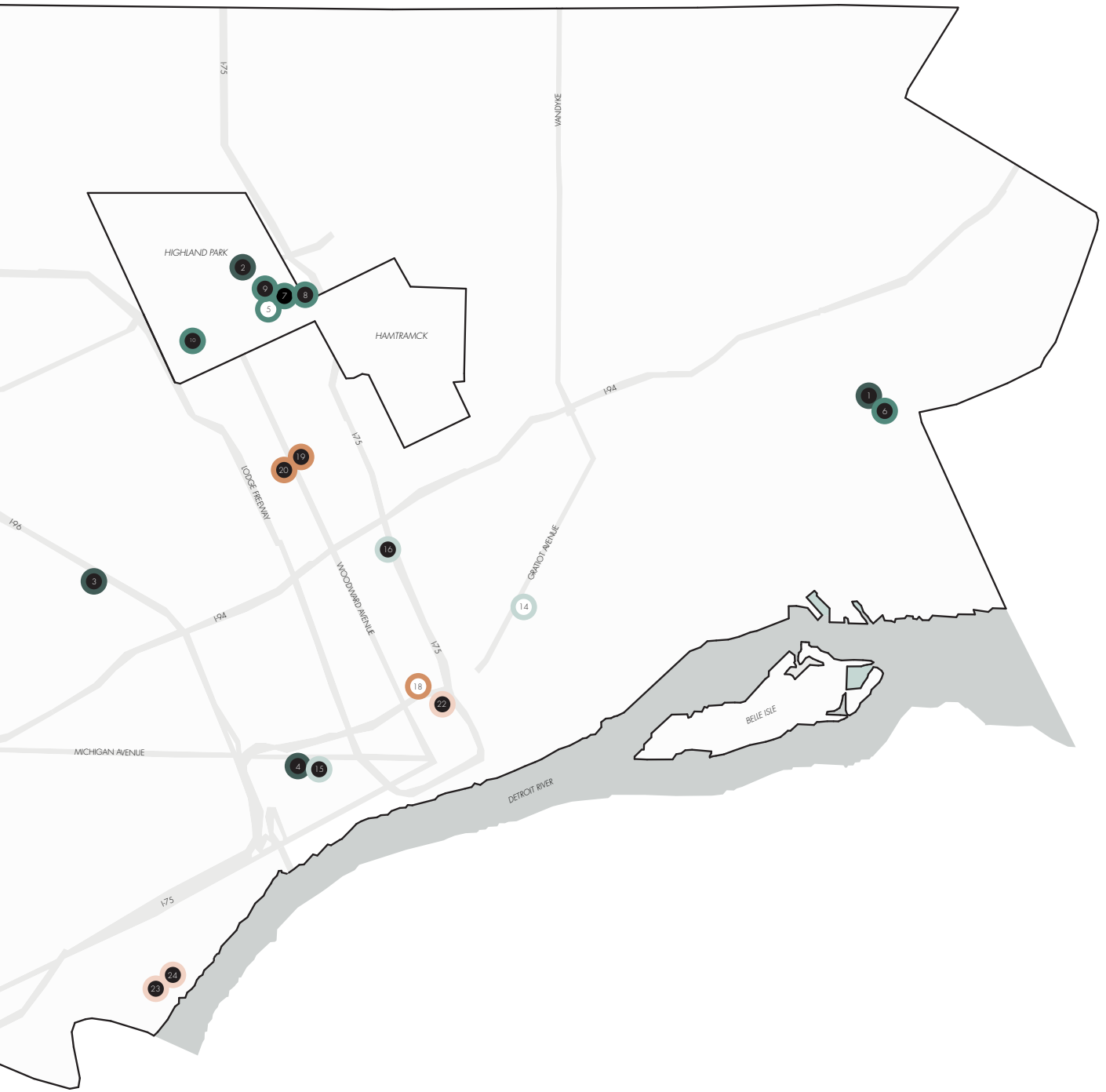
*this same exercise was completed for the city of New York, which can be seen in Appendix A. Due to the variety of content showcased within New York, Detroit was chosen as the city to focus on for the proposed branding campaign.



DETROIT FILM SCENE LOCATIONS

- Undesirable Content
- Desirable Content
- 8 Mile, 2002, Drama
- Gran Torino, 2008, Drama
- Bird on A Wire, 1990, Comedy / Action
- No Sudden Move, 2021, Crime / Drama
- Detroit, 2017, Crime / Drama
- True Romance, 1993, Crime / Drama / Romance
- RoboCop, 1987, Action / Crime / Science Fiction
- Dreamgirls, 2006, Drama

Figure 2.45: Detroit Film Scene Locations



**DARK. DISCOLORATION
DAMAGED. BROKEN. R
HAUNTED. BRIGHT. DU
GLOOMY. RUSTING. I
DIRTY. DISORIENTING.
DESATURATED. EMPTY
HAZARDOUS. QUIET. G
MYSTERIOUS. GRIME.
WARM. SOFT. PEACEFU
VANDALIZED. PUDDLE**

ON. DECAY. CLEAN.
RAINING. WELCOMING.
DUSTY. GRAY. OVERCAST.
HAZY. DIM. LITTERED.
BLEAK. DULL. STERILE.
Y. FALLING APART.
GARBAGE. ATTRACTIVE.
COLD. ABANDONED.
UL. STAINS. RAINING.
ES. SERENE. SMOKE.

03





PHOTOGRAPHIC ENCOUNTER

This photography experience allowed for a direct encounter with the city of Detroit. When taking these photos, there was no prior agenda. Five days were spent photographing different conditions of the city, from parks to bars to sidewalks. The following pages showcase a selection of photos taken. During the time spent photographing, observations were able to be made regarding different conditions within the city. From watching people walking and biking, to ordering coffee, to buying goods at Eastern Market, this study allowed for a very organic understanding of the type of place Detroit is. This exercise challenged narratives that were present in the Detroit films that were analyzed, and additionally provided the jumping off point for the creation of a branding campaign for the city, with the aim to improve perceived identity.



Figure 3.1: Outside Folk in Corktown



Figure 3.2: Campus Martius Seating Area



Figure 3.3: Campus Martius Fall Programming



Figure 3.4: Fall Programming at Beacon Park



Figure 3.5: Saturday Market at Eastern Market



Figure 3.6: Alleyway Near Playground



Figure 3.7: Rouge Park Pathway



Figure 3.8: Street Near Eastern Market



Figure 3.9: Segways in Campus Martius

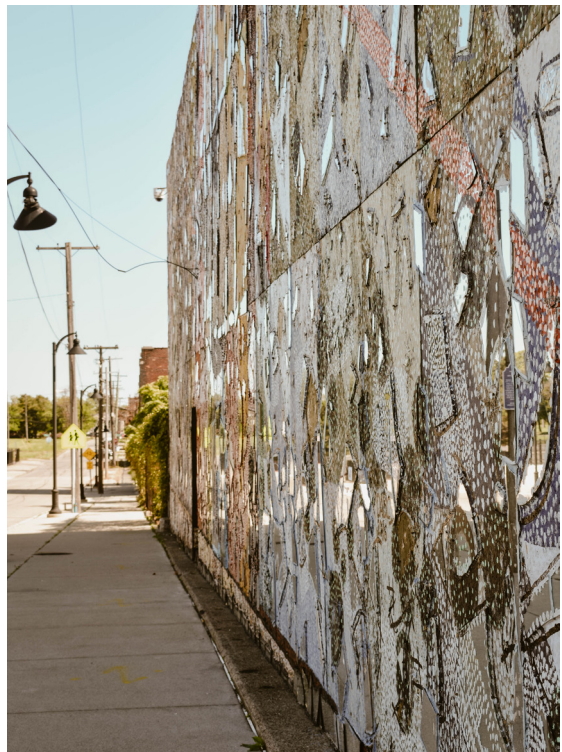


Figure 3.10: Mural Near Eastern Market





Sheridan

ONE WAY

SPEED LIMIT
30



Figure 3.11: Oudolf Garden



Figure 3.12: Belle Isle Conservatory



Figure 3.13: Lake Tacoma



Figure 3.14: Lafayette Park



Figure 3.15: Rouge Park



Figure 3.16: Downtown Detroit



Figure 3.17: Kiesling Bar Entrance



Figure 3.18: Sidewalk Art



Figure 3.19: Sidewalk Art



Figure 3.20: Riverwalk



DO NOT
BLOCK
INTERSECTION

PARK

ONE WAY

ZONE 105

JAL
482-56



Barz

Randolph



Figure 3.21: Chandler Park Skate Park



Figure 3.22: Chandler Park Skate Park



Figure 3.23: Abandoned Structure with Tree



Figure 3.24: Abandoned House

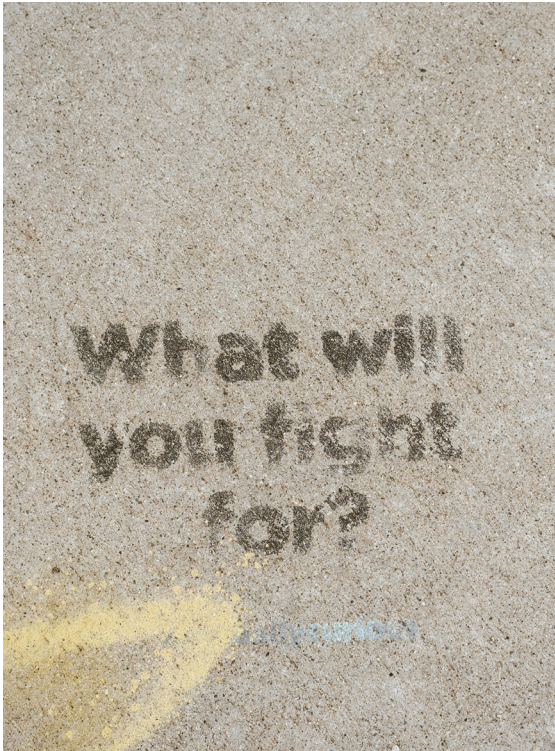


Figure 3.25: Sidewalk Art



Figure 3.26: Pond at Chandler Park



Figure 3.27: Belle Isle Beach



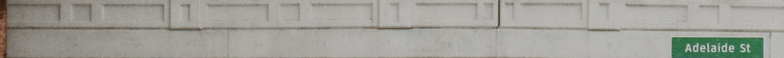
Figure 3.28: Jefferson Chalmers Canal



Figure 3.29: Jefferson Chalmers Canal



Figure 3.30: Avenue of Fashion



Adelaide St





04

DETROIT BRANDING ANALYSIS

EXISTING BRANDING:

In order to be able to propose and justify a branding campaign for the city of Detroit that works to counteract narratives/messaging presented in mass media outlets, a study needed to be conducted on any existing branding efforts that currently exist for the city. This includes both efforts specifically by the city, as well external independent branding by either companies or individuals.

There were four main brand identities that were identified in the study, which included: the Motor City, the City of Design, Detroit Hustles Harder, and Detroit vs. Everybody. The first two are often used in marketing campaigns by the city, and the latter are more product oriented, appealing to metro-Detroit and Detroit residents. Each brand identity is accompanied by a unique set of challenges or issues.

While the Motor City, is undoubtedly the most recognized brand identity, it can be seen as problematic due to negative connotations within the auto industry. Due to global production and rising imports, Detroit's car industry has been declining for the past 60 years. This has caused considerable job loss and lowered economic conditions for the city. As the auto industry in Detroit continues to decline, it simply is not the best way to highlight Detroit.

While the UNESCO Detroit City of Design could be a huge branding asset for the city, it is very much underutilized. Detroit is currently the only city in the United States with this designation, but it not really used in any promotional media from the city. The factors that qualify Detroit to be given this designation (talent, cultural institutions, research + development, community, and educational institutions) could begin to provide a means to promote the city, in a very holistic manner - using each category to highlight different aspects of Detroit. That being said, the only time this designation is really talked about

Figure 4.1 (Right): Detroit Brand Logos



is during Detroit's month of design. During this time there is an event held for the city, but it still has failed to make its way into branding or marketing for the city. It is not included in Detroit's website, it is not utilized in promotional videos, and it has not been used as a tool to communicate to residents or visitors what the city has to offer.

Detroit Hustles Harder and Detroit vs. Everybody are both brand identities that stem from Detroit entrepreneurs and are very product oriented. They are often seen on t-shirts, hats, or made into stickers. Neither of these taglines highlight a very positive message. Detroit vs. Everybody is especially problematic, as it promotes the idea of isolation. It creates a very closed in mindset, propagating the idea that Detroit should be both disconnected and competing against other cities. Neither of the messaging within these taglines communicates anything that would make people want to either live in or visit the city.

To gain a better understanding of how others viewed the branding efforts within the city, as well as how each individual would define the city, a brief survey was conducted to learn about current Detroit conceptions as well as evaluate the effectiveness of current Detroit branding efforts. One question asked on the survey was: *How would you evaluate Detroit's branding efforts as a city? Do they align with your understanding of Detroit?* Responses to this questions varied, but in general, it was made clear the current branding efforts within the city of Detroit are not effective in promoting a unified positive message for the city. Here are some of the responses that were recieved, both from residents of Detroit and the metro-Detroit area.

"These are Detroit brands that I recognize: Detroit Hustles Harder - I don't see this as true in my experience. Detroit City of Design - I don't think we live up to this, but I like the aspiration. Detroit vs. Everybody - I don't think this helps the city. Motor City - I don't think this helps the city; it's dated. Motown Soul and Birthplace of Techno - under-celebrated."

"I am not aware of Detroit's current branding efforts."

"I'm not especially aware of those branding efforts, but they seem cringey to me when I do see them. too white. they seem directed toward (racist) white suburbanites. this is depressing for people who actually live in the city."

"I'm recent years Detroit has branded itself as up and coming. I feel that it does align. I've noticed more development of the roads that lead from the city to residential neighborhoods. And on these roads, more businesses and parking. I can see how the city is trying to expand out."

"Somewhat."

"Not sure whose branding efforts. the City of Detroit's? Do they have a branding campaign? There are campaigns by others businesses, sports teams, t-shirt designers."

"I think Detroit could do better branding for the beautiful aspects of the city."

"They do. Most of the branding I'm familiar with encompasses language of "hard; tough; strong; crucible-wrought smiles behind frowns and short, gruff speech" etc. My experiences with kids

and families taught me that many residents grow up with weights far too heavy for humans to carry in all aspects of life, producing a "numero-uno" type mindset that lends to rough edges and tough hearts."

"I'm unaware that there is a unified City effort promoting branding or, if there is, what it is. I feel like different groups want different things for Detroit. Midtown, for example, used to be so cool and it still is, unless you're one of the people who was pushed out due to gentrification. People coming into the city to visit growing/trendy areas don't consider it, though. Even myself, at times."

"I think so. Detroit has made progress in how the world perceives the city and I miss it."

The inconsistencies in people's responses indicates that the city of Detroit is not producing a strong unified message - especially one that promotes the city in positive and productive manner.

VISIT DETROIT WEBSITE CRITIQUE:

In addition to the brand identities outlined previously, websites and social media sites that highlight the city were also analyzed. One website in particular was Visit Detroit. This website is oriented towards tourists and is organized by the Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau. This site states that their purpose is to: "is to market and sell the Detroit metropolitan region to business and leisure visitors in order to maximize economic impact... and to champion the continuous improvement of the region as a dynamic and memorable tourism destination." (Visit Detroit) There are a plethora of problems within this

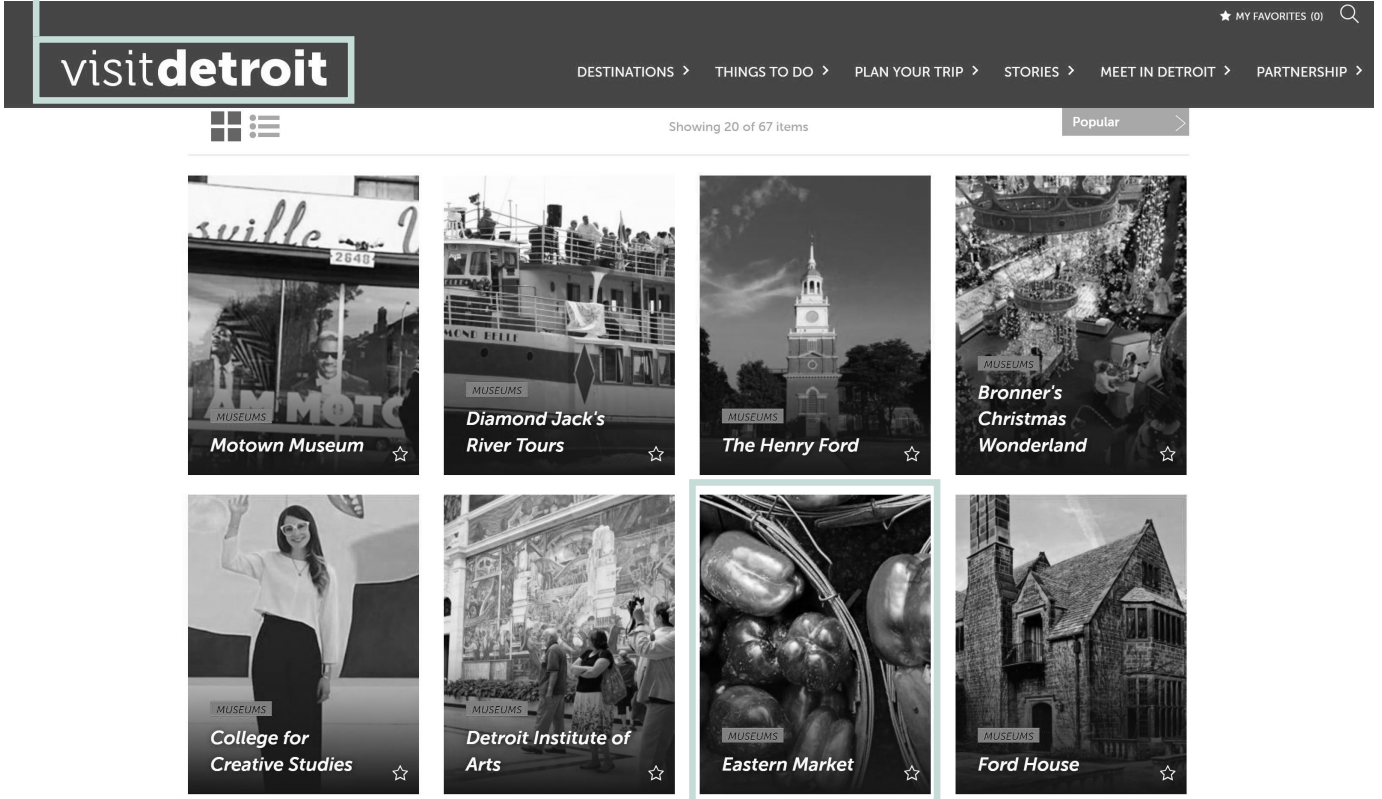
website that are in odds with the identified mission statement. The first is a marketing misalignment with the title of the website itself. Titled "Visit Detroit", it gives the impression that this website will focus on things to do and see within the city of Detroit. However, as seen in their mission statement, this website promotes places in the Detroit metro area. As a visitor, this can be extremely frustrating, as most visitors would be interested in spending the majority of their time actually in the city they intend to visit.

The places the website chooses to recommend to visitors is also baffling at times. When scrolling through the food and drink page, it can be frustrating to be given generic recommendations like McDonalds, Buffalo Wild Wings, or Applebees. Detroit has an incredible unique food culture, so it is alarming to see suggestions like this.

Additionally, there are several issues with the website from a user standpoint. The food + drink page alone has over 300 suggestions, with no separation between casual dining, fine dining, coffee shops, bars/breweries, etc. All categories are lumped together, causing the user to have to scroll through eighteen pages of recommendations. This can make the process of using the website feel both tedious and tiring.

The photography used within the website was also disappointing. Many images were stock images that did not align with the items that were showcased. Additionally, many of the images were repeated over and over again throughout the site. Overall, the website does not provide users with a good impression of the city.

marketing misalignment: platform is called "visit Detroit", but recommends both Detroit + metro Detroit experiences (with no separation between them)



experiences are not always in the correct categories... for example, eastern market is marketed as a museum/historical site

23%

of recommended museums and historical sites are not actually located within the city of Detroit

7.5%

of recommended museums and historical sites are not actually able to be visited by the public

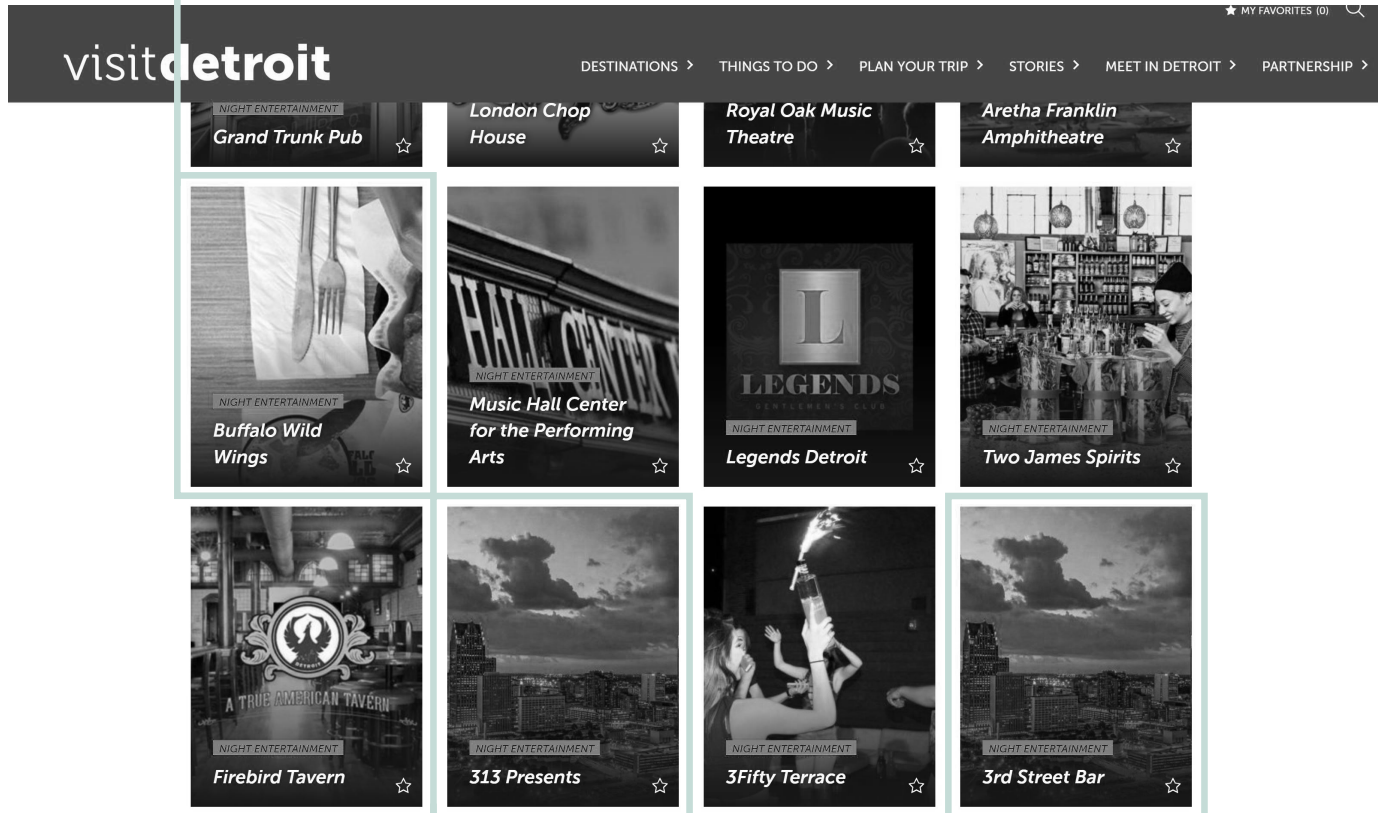
19%

of recommended restaurants are either located outside of the city of detroit, or permanently closed

7%

of recommended restaurants are common chains, not unique to the city of Detroit

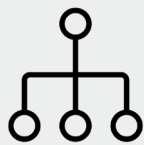
suggesting generic spots that do not specifically relate to or represent options unique to Detroit (site also suggests applebees, IHOP, mcdonalds, etc)



use of photography that adds no promotion or marketing value- many images are stock images with no clear identity that are repeated throughout the site.



overall, photography seemed to be lacking in consistency, creativity, and curation



there was no organization within categories.... for instance, all food + drink was just lumped together



nearly everything is a collapsible tag, making it hard to see information displayed together



there were too many suggestions, which made the process of looking through the site tedious and tiring

05

DETROIT BRANDING PROPOSAL

PROPOSED BRANDING CAMPAIGN:

The branding campaign starts with the design of a website and would eventually add social media applications and promotional videos. The design of this website is in response to narratives seen in Detroit films and other media sources, as well as the current branding efforts that exist within the city. Through the use of messaging frameworks and marketing strategies developed by Jonah Berger, the website is intended to provide a cohesive narrative for Detroit that begins to shift negative conceptions about the city.

MESSAGING FRAMEWORKS:

As outlined by CivicBrand, “a messaging framework provides the platform or jumping off point for how you’ll talk about your city in relation to your multiple audiences. It is a singular idea that communicates your brand story, but it’s executed in such a way that it’s flexible and can change based on the audience it is directed toward.” (CivicBrand)

This is an alternative to taglines, which are often used by cities as a method to promote a desired identity. An example could include “what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.” While taglines can be beneficial, they tend to not be very effective with cities that have either negative or weak identities. For cities that do not have positive or strong identities, it is more impactful to implement messaging frameworks, as they allow for flexible, but also unified communication that could be directed towards several audiences. (CivicBrand)

In the case of a messaging framework for Detroit, 25-30 words were identified to provide a basis for the type of content and tone the web

site would provide. Each word was selected to counteract harmful messaging present within the films that were analyzed, as well as to showcase characteristics of Detroit that feel genuine to the nature of the city and direction it is heading. The words that make up the proposed messaging framework include: *playful, exciting, creative, connected, calm, friendly, moving, colorful, lively, vibrant, vivid, unique, peaceful, warm, safe, exciting, serene, remarkable, engaging, dynamic, light, fun, clean, captivating, welcoming, sustainable, and inviting.*

With every choice in regards to the content and tone of the website, the intention is that everything that is shown relates back to one or more of these words. The messaging framework is essentially used as a tool to develop and communicate a projected image (the image you want to communicate to others) or a desired future image (the visionary image looking to the future). (Stock 123) Choosing words or phrases for a city allows for consistency in messaging across platforms, and creates a unified, yet distinct method of communication.

MARKETING STRATEGIES:

In order for the website (and therefore the place branding of Detroit) to be effective, marketing strategies need to be utilized. The strategies used within this proposed branding campaign and website were adapted from methods identified by Jonah Berger, in his book *Contagious: Why Things Catch On*. In this book, Berger hones in on 6 factors that make a product or brand successful. While these are oriented towards traditional products, they are applicable in the branding of a city. Those factors include: social currency, triggers, emotion, publicness,

practical value, and storytelling. For social currency, the intention is to provide a method for people to look or feel good about themselves. The aim is to be able to get people feel like insiders (Berger 22). Within the proposed website, a "hidden gem" marker is added within each category, to give people the opportunity to feel like they are a part of something that is exclusive. For triggers, the aim is to provide a method in which your product or idea can naturally pop up in daily habits - something that gets talked about with a high frequency due to natural triggers in one's environment (Berger 23). To implement triggers in the branding campaign, the website would be accompanied by social media pages that share the same curated information. Recent data shows that the average person spends two hours on social media applications daily (Broadband). For emotion, there needs to be attention on feelings, specifically high arousal emotions. High arousal emotions are more likely to prompt someone to share information as opposed to low arousal emotions (Berger 23). Within the branding campaign, there will be a focus on high arousal emotions, like excitement. For practical value, the aim is to provide information that is useful or helpful to people. This is largely embedded in the website, as it is intended to make the experience of planning and executing a trip to Detroit easy, fun, and enjoyable. The site provides information for this to occur. The last factor that Berger details is stories, essentially the idea that information is embedded within narratives. This was executed through the use of short blogs and photo series that explore different things to do within Detroit. Each of these blog post creations can be seen on pages 92 to 115. While all of these experiences were staged

for the purpose of this branding campaign, the idea is for them to replicate real experiences that could be shared. When choosing the experiences to showcase in the website, an effort was made to include a range of activities that would appeal to wide variety of people.

WEBSITE CONTENT + DESIGN:

First things first - why a website? A website format was chosen due to its capability to contain a high volume of information, its suitability to visual content, the capability to change or grow, and its ability to host multiple voices. Additionally, stated previously, the existing Visit Detroit website is not functioning to the best of its abilities.

One goal of this website was to try to create a sense of a collective curation. The website is broken up into seven categories, including activity, art, coworking, food + drink, events, shopping, and stories. The website aims to have a balance between being inclusive and well representative of items Detroit has to offer visitors, while at the same time providing a limited amount of options, so as not to overwhelm newcomers using the website.

Items are highlighted in each district, with the intention to showcase activities and businesses that fall outside the downtown district. While these places are really great, it is not very often that they are broadcasted. When sourcing these items, residents of the city and people who have worked in the city for an extended period of time were consulted. It was important to include a variety of items that promote the identity that Detroit is a city where one could work, live, and play. Photography was used very intentionally within the website. All photographs aim to

collectively tell a story about the city of Detroit—one that counteracts the negative content and environments shown in film and other media sources.

While the purpose of the website is clearly to promote Detroit, it needs to be stated that the website is in no way trying to hide or mitigate real issues that are present within the city. Every city is laden with issues, and Detroit is no exception from this. That being said, it is important to note that the website is meant to be used as a tool for people interested in visiting the city. Due to this, it would not make sense to highlight issues within the city. While important, this particular format and approach simply serves a different purpose.

It also has to be said that this website is not intended to be representative of the “true” or “authentic” Detroit. That is an impossible task. Every person has different experiences and expectations of the city. Therefore, every person has their own “authentic” Detroit, creating multiple realities (not one single reality for the city). The stories section within the website aims to capture this phenomenon by showing a diverse range of people’s experiences. Within the stories page, you can see a wide variety of things to do, from iceskating to seeing a movie at the Redford Theatre.

The activity page showcases a plethora of items to see or do. This page includes museums, sporting events, parks, significant buildings, and classes available within the city. This page also includes interactive mapping of all of the parks that are located within the city. When hovering over a park area, the name and a photo of the

park pops up. This interactive mapping was also done for art, restaurants, coworking spaces, and shops.

The art section is intended to showcase the vast amount of creativity in the city. With over 225 murals it is clear that Detroit is full of creators. The murals cover over 500,000 square feet of area, so it needed space within the website. (Beddingfield)

The coworking section was included to attract visitors who may be looking to both visit and work in the city for short periods of time.

The events page showcases larger events within the city. From the Jazz Festival, to the Detroit Grand Prix, to the Pierogi Festival, the events in this page intend to attract people with a wide variety of interests.

The food + drink page, as well as the shopping page, focus on smaller, Detroit specific places (no chains allowed!) It was important to choose places that are run by people who serve their communities. This allows visitors to experience places and people who keep Detroit alive. Within these pages, all minority and female owned businesses are specified.

Within the design of the website itself, great attention was paid to user experience. The website is designed to be straightforward and simple to use. To ensure this experience, a group of 24 people tested the website and left feedback on how easy or hard it was to navigate. Feedback was taken into consideration and changes were made to improve the ease of use within the website.

PROPOSED BRANDING CAMPAIGN:

The Website:



Promotional Video:



Mapping Video:



Figure 5.1: Detroit Parks Map

**proposed messaging
framework for detroit:**



PLAYFUL. EXCITING.

CONNECTED. CALM

MOVING. INVITING.

VIVID. UNIQUE. PE

REMARKABLE. CLI

DYNAMIC. CAPTIVA

WELCOMING. VIBRA

SERENE. EQUITAB

. CREATIVE. LIGHT.

. FRIENDLY. LIVELY.

. COLORFUL. WARM.

PEACEFUL. EXCITING.

MEAN. ENGAGING.

ATING. EQUITABLE.

ANT. SUSTAINABLE.

LE. FUN. SAFE.



Figure 5.2: A Day of Art + Music

A DAY OF ART + MUSIC

My family and I spent the afternoon at the Detroit Institute of Arts this past Sunday. We aren't really 'art' people, but we had a lot of fun and really enjoyed the temporary Van Gogh exhibit that was there. It was more of an immersive experience, not just showcasing Van Gogh's work, but also giving details about his life and history. All of the content within the museum felt really accessible and we learned a lot. After walking through the art museum, we went to Cliff Bell's, which is a really cool restaurant with live Jazz music. The music was phenomenal and the overall experience felt very special. We really liked the interior of the restaurant and the design of the stage and bar area. Being a musician, I see live music pretty often, but this experience definitely felt unique and was very memorable.

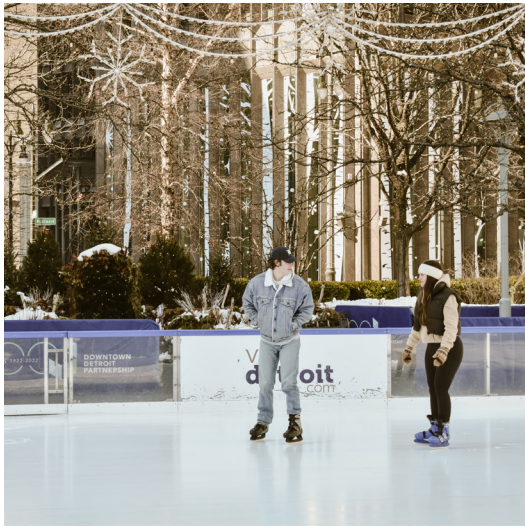


Figure 5.3: Ice Skating + Coney Dogs

ICE SKATING + CONEY DOGS

My boyfriend and I had some extra time before meeting up with friends in the afternoon, so we decided to go to Campus Martius and go ice skating. Neither of us are very good at skating, but we had so much fun! Since we went earlier in the morning there was no one else on the ice, which was pretty cool. The staff working the rink were really nice and played good music while we were skating. We had expected to skate for 30 minutes or so, and ended up skating for two hours since we had so much fun just goofing around! After we finished skating we walked over to Lafayette's to try some of Detroit's iconic coney dogs. We sat at the counter and enjoyed our lunch. It is definitely an interesting spot... serving tourists and residents alike.



Figure 5.4: A Taste of Eastern Market

A TASTE OF EASTERN MARKET

Even though we live in Plymouth, we love going to Eastern Market on Saturday mornings to get fresh produce. We love seeing new vendors and always enjoy a bite to eat from some of the food trucks there. Our particular favorite is the corn beef pierogis from People's Pierogi. This Saturday we decided to also take a walk down to the entrance of the Dequindre Cut and we biked along the greenway. We were able to rent bikes from the city... it was super easy. We saw lots of families walking together and lots of groups running the pathway. It was our first time doing this, but we really enjoyed the opportunity to spend some time outdoors and see all of the graffiti that lines the greenway. After our bike ride, we went into Germack and got some coffees to warm up. It was such a nice morning, filled with fresh air, good food, and fun interaction.



WALK
IN THE USA



WALK

DECONSTRUCT CUT

Division St

US LIFE CYCLE

EIGHT YARD

hap



Figure 5.5: Breakfast + Shopping in Midtown

BREAKFAST + SHOPPING IN MIDTOWN

We started our morning at Honest John's, a cool spot with a fun breakfast menu. The overall vibe of the place was very casual and we particularly liked their cocktail menu! The drinks were creative and different and the food was good too. After breakfast, we walked a few blocks and did some shopping along Canfield street. Even though we visited in the winter, it was a pretty nice day and we passed by the cutest dog park and got to watch some dogs run around and play. We shopped at Shinola, Bon Bon Bon, Third Man Records, and City Bird. We got some free samples at Bon Bon Bon and ended up buying several of their chocolates. Not only was the chocolate good, we really like how sustainable their packaging was! At Third Man records it was really cool to see the back of the store, where they actually make and press the records. It was a really interesting process. We also enjoyed all of the Detroit merch at City Bird, and ended up buying a cool Detroit T-shirt. It was a great way to spend our morning!

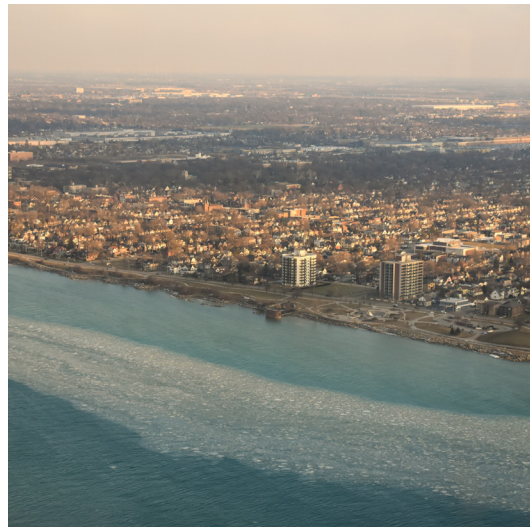


Figure 5.6: The Highlands

THE HIGHLANDS

What an amazing experience! We started our night with a quick walk along the riverfront and watched ice blocks float down the river as the sun began to set. We then went to the Highlands for dinner- which truly felt like a once in a lifetime experience. Being 71 flights high, the views of downtown Detroit and the river were stunning. The restaurant staff were so friendly and the food was spectacular. Fresh, delicious, and beautifully plated, every element in the dishes hit every mark. The entire evening felt filled with celebration and I cannot wait to return! We would definitely recommend getting a drink from their high bar... it is by far the coolest place to get a drink within the city.

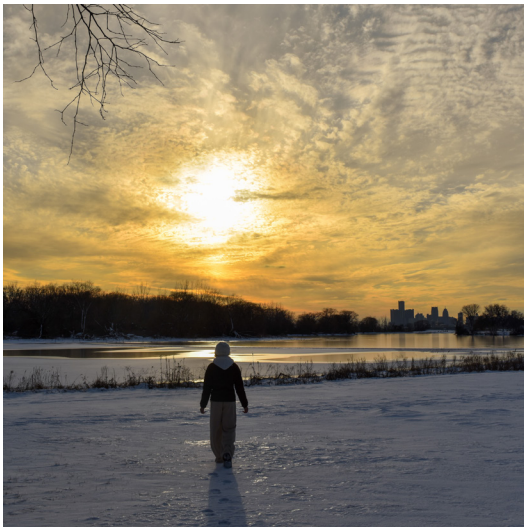


Figure 5.7: A Walk on Belle Isle

A WALK ON BELLE ISLE

I came to Detroit for work, and this past weekend I wanted to spend some time outdoors. I decided to check out Belle Isle and walk around the island. It was pretty cold when I went, but I bundled up and was able to take a break from the normal stresses of my job and just spend some time getting some fresh air. I absolutely loved walking the loop around the island. It had snowed a few days prior and everything was still covered in white. It was quiet, peaceful, and good for both my body and mind. I really liked the little beach area on the island, and enjoyed walking over the frozen waves. It was pretty empty when I went, but I'd really like to go back in the summer when it would be more active!





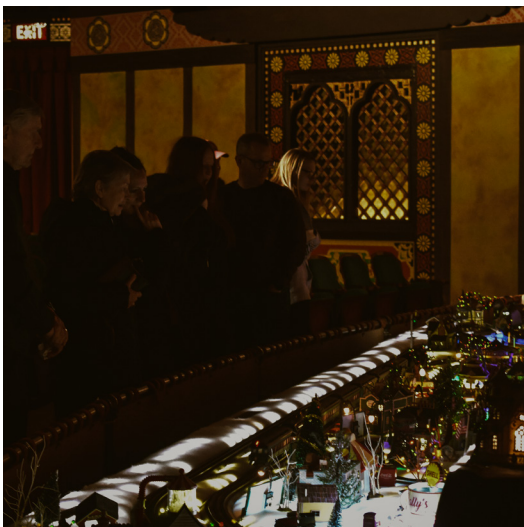


Figure 5.8: The Redford Theatre

THE REDFORD THEATRE

This was our first time at the Redford Theatre, and wow! What an experience. The inside of the theatre was really interesting and felt like we were stepping back in time. Movie tickets were only five dollars and the concessions were also really reasonably priced. We found out that the entire theatre is completely run by volunteers which made our experience feel even more special! We loved the live organ music and enjoyed all of the decorations they had up for the winter season. We saw the film *Funny Girl* and everyone really enjoyed it. This definitely feels like an under-wraps spot... and we were so happy we got to experience it during our time in Detroit!



Figure 5.9: African Bead Museum

AFRICAN BEAD MUSEUM

I heard about this place through instagram and I am so glad I was able to visit it! The outdoor installations were really cool, but my favorite part was actually the shop where you could purchase a HUGE variety of beads. The girl that was working in the shop was so kind and spent a lot of time explaining the history of the place and how/why the owner started it. Both the store and installations were so unique. I bought some beads while I was there and am looking forward to creating some jewelry pieces. They also had some really beautiful jewelry pieces already for sale as well. Even though the building and building site are so colorful and vibrant, this place somehow feels like a hidden gem.



Figure 5.10: Avenue of Fashion

AVENUE OF FASHION

This was actually our first time exploring some of the shops on Livernois, even though we go to school at the University a few miles down the road! We checked out Three Thirteen, Art in Motion, and Good Cakes and Bakes. Three Thirteen had lots of awesome Detroit merch and we ended buying a T-shirt and had a really good conversation with the owner of the store. We then popped our heads into Art in Motion, which is a ceramic studio. We did not have enough time to participate in a class, but we talked to some students who were participating in a self-directed study and got to see some of the pieces they were working on. The studio seemed so fun, relaxed, and community oriented. I definitely plan on returning to take a class. At Good Cakes and Bakes we got some of the most delicious cupcakes. They had so many flavor options, but we ended trying lemon, strawberry, and banana. All of them were so good! We will definitely be back.



Missing Job
seekers flow

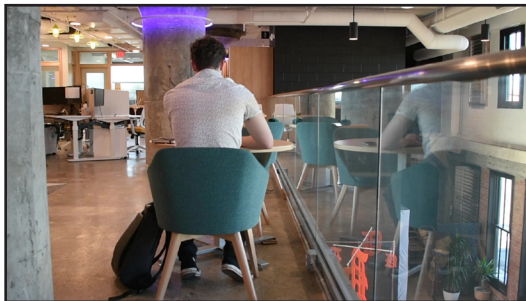
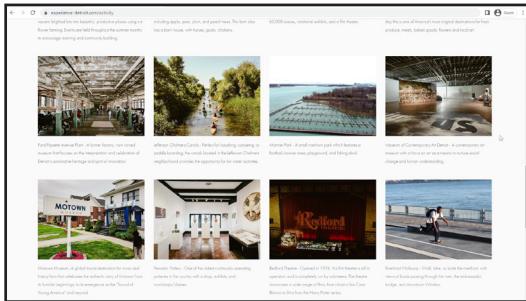
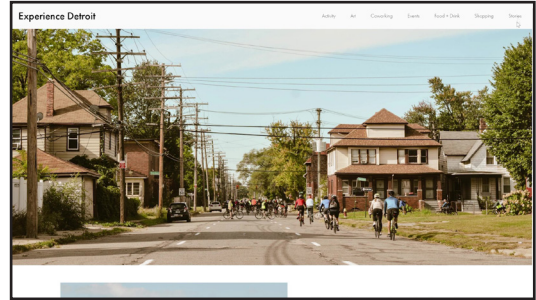
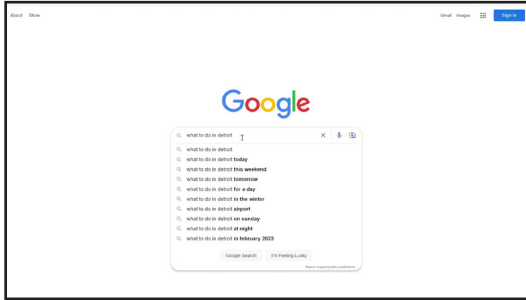
Friends & gains

Jeppia

Continued from Page 22



PROMOTIONAL VIDEO STILLS:



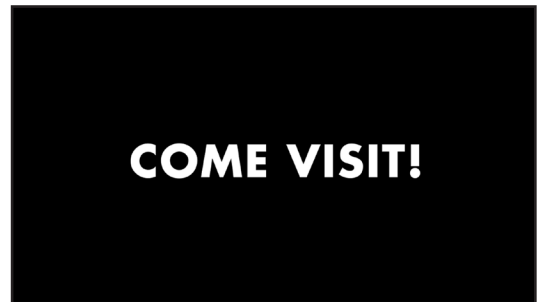
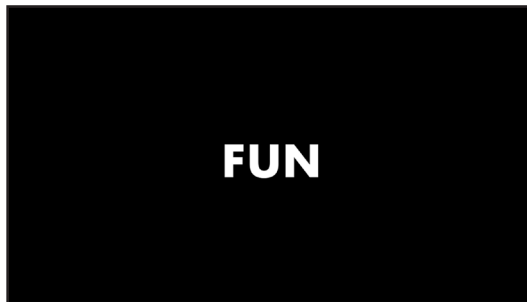
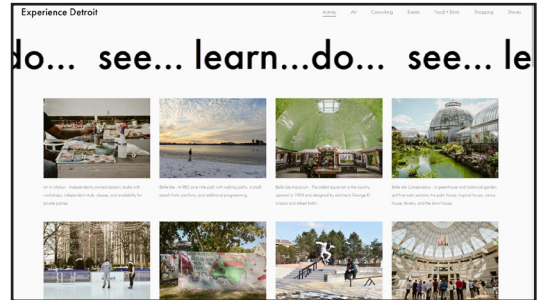
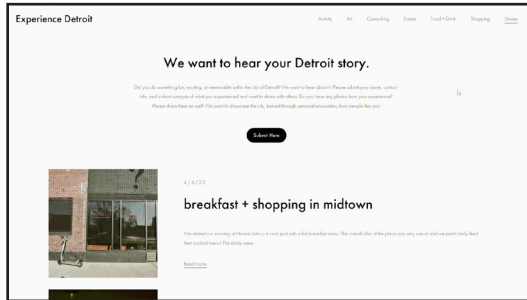


Figure 5.11: Stills from Detroit Promotion Video

WEBSITE SURVEY FEEDBACK

A survey was completed by 24 people to understand the type of messaging that was received from the website. Ideally, responses would correspond to the outlined messaging framework. Outlined below are the results of the survey.

Based on your current understanding of Detroit's identity projected in media sources, how would you compare the identity of Detroit based of the content reflected within the website?

"I think is amazing to depict the "New Detroit". Growing up Detroit was always considered rough and nobody wanted to go there, they have obviously been going through lots of revitalizations and it has really changed so much in the last 10 years. I think this is perfect to show that "new" side of it that visitors outside of the city and Michigan don't think about when they think about Detroit."

"I believe the content gives a great identity of the city and believe it gives a better more intoned aspect of the city."

"It makes it seem like Detroit is a city that I would visit, rather than the abandoned ruin the media puts it out to be. This website offers a side of the city people never knew existed."

"I think that Detroit is becoming more popular as it is invested in by new restaurants and attractions, and I think that the content of this website reflects how new attractions bring new life to Detroit."

"It seems like there is a lot of fun activities and places to experience in Detroit that I haven't

heard of before, specifically things to do outside of the downtown."

"The website portrays Detroit as a vibrant place to work and play, whereas news focuses on the ongoing hardships."

"The website puts it in a much more positive light and shows a lot of things I didn't know about the city. You made it bright and interesting, and I knew nothing about coworking spaces and how abundant they are there."

"Complete opposite"

"It aligns with and enhances media attempting to draw people to Detroit and contrasts/debunks the idea that Detroit is simply an impoverished area with little to offer."

"The content on the website is much less negative and shows a much more positive cultural side to Detroit than I would typically see in the media."

"Portrays Detroit in a very positive, clean, and vibrant way"

"this sheds a light on all of the good Detroit has and the liveliness and community-oriented nature of the city. i appreciate that your website shows a rightful vibrancy to the city that media does not always show"

"I think you really captured the essence of detroit. It's a fun place to do lots of stuff. I think you also did a beautiful job at changing the narrative and showing the soul of Detroit."

"The identity of Detroit reflected within the website is one of hope, community, and beauty."

"In contrast to media, I perceived a sense of hope, energy, healing, community, preservation, and a sense of merging the generational gap. There's many diverse opportunities for activity and growth in which I've never come to see and realize having grown up in Detroit. The website, is a powerful 'hub' —the all-in-one tool— that embodies 'the good' behind Detroit, outweighing the negatives. Accessible, brilliant, fascinating."

"It makes Detroit feel welcoming and fun."

"I would say Detroit has some good aspects. I would also classify a large majority of the city as dangerous or unwelcoming."

"The content reflected is done beautifully and in a way that feels genuine, positive without being too effusive."

After reviewing the website, what kind of story do you feel is told about the city of Detroit? What impression does Detroit give you (based off of content presented in the website)?

"That it is rejuvenated and there is things for all ages."

"There is great history reflected in the website and also amazing growth and momentum building in Detroit going forward."

"There is something here for everyone. There are a variety of options across a vast part of Detroit and it is inclusive and welcoming. I find comfort in the website and the thought to visit Detroit. It makes me think that I can take anyone here and we can find something for them to enjoy."

"I feel as though this cities story is long but can also been seen on the faces that live, work, and play within it's limits everyday. It shows a city that has been through it's fair share of rough times but has also proved resilient."

"It gives me the impression that there is much to do in the city of Detroit."

"The city feels warm and authentic, with things to do that aren't common to do in other cities."

"Young and fun!"

"Detroit is giving the impression that it's modern, staying relevant, and keeping up with current trends. That there is a lot more to do downtown then just hitting up a Tigers game or going to a concert. And that a lot of it is based on local businesses running the city."

"Lots of options of things to do and see"

"Detroit is vibrant with a lot to offer to a wide range of age groups."

"I suppose that there is much more to do in Detroit than most people think. The website is a positive collection of experiences."

"There is a rich history that is being appreciated, along with celebrating its diversity through all the various events and businesses. Also that there is an attempt to make Detroit appealing to visitors."

"it gives a refreshing take on the city and shows how far Detroit has come and where it continues to progress to in the future"

"That Detroit was once a place people almost feared going to and now it has blossomed into a place that people enjoy going to."

"A place to experience culture and people. A place full of activity."

"The impression that Detroit gives is one of a rich history with diverse cultures and a variety of things to do"

"I am given the impression that Detroit is a community oriented community. I think that's what sets it apart from other major cities. Maybe I get this impression because you choose local businesses instead of chains but I think that's the whole point."

"There's a story of growth, resilience, and hidden opportunities. As a result, I've become more intrigued and fond of the city—especially one that has gone through so much history and devastation. It is just a matter of looking and finding these gems. Detroit is like a remnant, such as an ancient ruin that still lives and breathes today."

"Based on the content, this makes Detroit out to be a very aesthetic and welcoming city to all people."

"Its hard to give an answer bc I have my own experiences and relationship with the city, curious to see what people who dont live in MI think of the website"

"Fun, eclectic, vibrant - all counter to the typical narrative"

Please list any words that you would use to

describe the city of Detroit, based off of content projected within the website. What does it look like? Feel like? etc.

vibrant (8)
 welcoming (4)
 exciting (4)
 fun(4)
 alive (3)
 community (2)
 unique (2)
 growth (2)
 resilient (2)
 historical (2)
 modern (2)
 warm
 authentic
 engaging
 safe
 clean
 lemonades from lemons
 bright
 inviting
 eclectic
 attractive
 desirable
 friendly
 relaxing
 inclusive
 interesting
 trendy
 comeback
 hopeful
 reborn
 experiential
 beautiful
 culture
 interaction
 love
 place
 light
 moving
 momentum
 empowered
 incline

progressive
happy
unique
fascinating
colorful
active
overlooked

Overall, the feedback received from the respondents very closely related to the proposed messaging framework. It was encouraging to see that many of the goals that were outlined within the design of the website were echoed within the responses of the feedback that was received. This is an important step, as it allows for the website to be tested, and for alterations to be made if necessary, in order to best communicate the desired crafted narrative. This can then begin to shift existing negative conceptions about the city of Detroit.

06

CONCLUSIONS

FURTHER APPLICATION

While this thesis focused on the city of Detroit, what was learnt throughout the process allowed for the creation of a method that could potentially be applied to other cities - any city looking to shift, reframe, or strengthen their existing projected image. While the process for either shifting, reframing, or strengthening an existing image or perceived identity of a city would somewhat change depending on the purpose, a general method has been created that is adaptable to fo each intent.

PROPOSED METHOD

The purpose of this method is to allow for a city to have the agency to have a say in their projected image. Based on the work completed in this thesis, six steps were identified to help cities create their desired future image - to provide an opportunity to communicate desired messaging to an indentified audience. This opens the door to have a level of control over a city's perceived identity.

The first step is to do an analysis of existing media representation to begin to understand narratives and attitudes formulated in regards to the city. News (written or visual), social media, film, and music should all be studied. This thesis had a focus on visual mediums (film), but it is important to look at all mediums, as each has the potential to affect a city's pereived identity. This step is essentially a gathering step, taking the time to collect and distinguish different narratives that are present within the media.

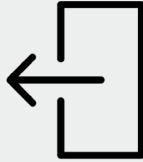
This then leads into step two, which is the evaluation of the content that was collected. Is the content and messaging that is being shared

through media platforms positive about the city? Does it make people want to visit or live in the city? Or does it showcase the city in a bad light? It is unlikely that there will be a cut and dry answer to any of these questions due to the volume of content the media produces. For any city, there is bound to be conflicting messaging. That being said, it important to look for narrative trends within the content. Is there anything, whether that be words used to described the city, environments shown in films or photographs, or types of stories being told about the city? The dominating trend(s) needs to be identified, as it is that specific content that is most likely to affect how the majority of people think and feel about that particular place.

Once the identified messaging and narrative trends have been identified, a desired future image needs to be created (step three), one that is in response to the narrative trends that were previously identified. Ideally, the creation of a desired future image (the visionary perception the nation would like other nations to have of it sometime in the future) (Stock 123) would be cocreated by a team of city members, city planners, urban designers, and architects. One of the limitations in this thesis was that kind of collaboration between disciplines and perspectives was not possible, but this step would be the most successful with the inclusion of multiple disciplines.

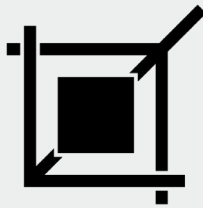
After a clear desired future image has been created, a branding campaign can be utilized as a means to communicate this image. Step four advocates for development of a messaging framework that is accompanied with corresponding images within the branding campaign, in order

ANY CITY LOOKING TO:



SHIFT

a slight change in position, direction, or tendency.



REFRAME

frame or express (words or a concept or plan) differently.



STRENGTHEN

to make or become stronger.

THEIR EXISTING PROJECTED IMAGE.

01

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING MEDIA REPRESENTATION

02

PROJECTED NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT + EVALUATION

03

CREATION OF DESIRED FUTURE IMAGE

04

DEVELOP MESSAGING FRAMEWORK +
CORRESPONDING IMAGERY

05

IDENTIFY AUDIENCE + MARKETING STRATEGY

06

CONTINUING ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF
PROJECTED IMAGE + METHOD

to most effectively communicate desired messaging.

The fifth step includes identifying an audience and marketing strategies. Messaging should be tailored to the identified audience, and marketing strategies should also be chosen partially based on the audience. Within the branding campaign for Detroit, one of the main marketing strategies was through the use of storytelling, sharing aspects of the cities that were told through first hand accounts, with the aid of images if each particular experience within the city. That being said, there are plenty of marketing strategies that could be appropriate for a variety of branding campaigns, depending on the type of message one is trying to communicate.

The sixth step should be performed continuously as it is an assessment of the method and projected image. This step asks all involved to pause - and evaluate results they are seeing from their work, and allow them to make adjustments within their process if necessary. Within this thesis, a survey was sent out asking for feedback on the proposed Detroit website, to understand the type of messaging that was being received from an outside audience. From the feedback that was received, certain adjustments were able to be made to make the messaging more effective, and certain aspects were confirmed to be working as intended. The results from this survey can be seen in Appendix C. Similar surveys could be used for other cities looking to utilize this method.

RELEVANCE

Why does any of this matter? A city's perceived identity can have a plethora of implications, but

there were two in particular that drove the investigation of this study. The first is related to the human condition. A city's perceived identity is directly correlated with a sense of self - the way in which people understand, value, and relate to a city (or place) is inseparable to a person who has a personal connection with that place, whether that connection be through experience, heritage, or a number of other reasons. This idea can be simply illustrated in a story that was shared during this process.

"I remember going to Disney World with my family. We were watching this show thing, and they asked the audience for volunteers... I volunteered for my kids, thinking I wouldn't get picked. But I did get picked, and they lined all of the volunteers up on the stage and started to ask what their names were, and where they were from. I just remember my wife shaking her head at me... giving this look of 'don't say it'. I kept looking at her and she kept staring back at me. But then it was my turn, and I said 'Hi, my name is Tony, and I'm from Detroit. The crowd got quieter. Everyone's eyes got big. And after that, everyone in the room treated me a little differently. They seemed nicer, as if afraid I might do something to them."

Short, yet powerful, this person's story showcases one way in which a city's perceived identity can affect a person. It holds the power to make someone feel uncomfortable, less than, judged... or empowered, proud, or valued. This type of interconnection should not be taken slightly. It matters very much - especially to those who have had a similar experience to the one that Tony shared.

The second is related to economic implications. A city's perceived identity affects investor interest, tourist interest, and resident interest. These three factors largely determine the health and development of a city. Due to these reasons, it is important to not underestimate the value of a city's perceived identity.



APPENDIX A

NEW YORK CITY FILM SCENE ANALYSIS



In the Heights, 2021

Nina returns home from Stanford and is greeted by Vanessa and the rest of her neighbors. Even though she is struggling with school and wants to dropout, it is clear how much her neighborhood supports her.

Figure A.1: Still from In the Heights



In the Heights, 2021

Someone from Usnavi's store purchased a winning lottery ticket. While at the pool, everyone checks to see if they are the ones with the winning ticket. The energy is high and everyone says what they would do if they won the money. Sonny's words are particularly potent demonstrating the care he has for his community.

Figure A.2: Still from In the Heights



In the Heights, 2021

Abuela Claudia goes to the new dry cleaner on the block to drop off the hand embroidered napkins made by Nina's mom so they will be cleaned for the party being thrown. After seeing how much it will cost to have them be cleaned, Claudia meekly says she will have to think about it, and leaves the store.

Figure A.3: Still from In the Heights



In the Heights, 2021

Nina's friends and family gather together to celebrate her coming home from school. Abuela Claudia cooks for all of them and they eat together. It is revealed that Nina's dad sold his store to pay for Nina's tuition at Stanford, even though she asks him not to do this.

Figure A.4: Still from In the Heights

Content Analysis:

DESIRABLE - Showcases friendship and encouragement.

friendship: a state of enduring affection, esteem, intimacy, and trust between two people

encouragement: the act of giving hope or promise

Environment Analysis:

DESIRABLE - The street is bustling with people. The sun is shining, and colors in the scene are quite vibrant. Some parts of the streets are slightly worn down, with painting of parking spots being a slightly faded. The streets are lined with trees and appear to be quite clean. The surrounding buildings look older, but are well maintained. Overall, the streets Nina walks down feel very warm, welcoming, and community oriented.

DESIRABLE - Showcases optimism and generosity.

optimism: an inclination to put the most favorable construction upon actions and events

generosity: the act of being liberal in giving

DESIRABLE - This scene occurs at a large community pool. The water is a very clear blue color (and so is the sky), and all of the entourage is in the scene is extremely colorful. The sun is shining and there are plenty of trees that surround the edges of the pool area. The pool is full of people, is very cleaned, and appears to be well maintained.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases gentrification.

gentrification: a process in which a poor area experiences an influx of middle-class or wealthy people who renovate and rebuild homes and businesses and which often results in an increase in property values and the displacement of earlier, usually poorer residents

DESIRABLE - The street is bustling with people. The sun is shining, and colors in the scene are quite vibrant. Some parts of the streets are slightly worn down, with painting of parking spots being a slightly faded. The streets are lined with trees and appear to be quite clean. The surrounding buildings look older, but are well maintained. Overall, the streets Nina walks down feel very warm, welcoming, and community oriented.

DESIRABLE - Showcases generosity and friendship.

generosity: the act of being liberal in giving

friendship: a state of enduring affection, esteem, intimacy, and trust between two people

DESIRABLE - This scene occurs in Abuela Claudia's home. The scene occurs at night, and the lighting in her home is soft and warm. The home is very clean and feels extremely inviting. There are little touches of family and community in the decorations. All items in the house appear as if they are quite personal and meaningful.



In the Heights, 2021

During Abuela Claudia's final moments, she remembers her life and moving to New York as a little girl. She remembers the hardships she experienced, and notes that it "wasn't like today". Before dying, she looks at Usnavi, Sonny, and Daniella and smiles at them. Internally, she is struggling to "go" or "stay", and seeing them doing good, she is able to go in peace.

Figure A.5: Still from In the Heights



In the Heights, 2021

Usnavi asks Daniella to cosign a lease for Vanessa, as he is unable to do so. He knows that it is Vanessa's dream to move downtown, and he does what he can to help her. Daniella signs for Vanessa.

Figure A.6: Still from In the Heights



In the Heights, 2021

Usnavi chooses to not move to the Dominican Republic and chooses to stay in Washington Heights. He tells his daughter: "This place... this is it." Him, Vanessa, and their daughter go out to the street where the fire hydrants have been opened. Kids are running around and playing. Usnavi is happy.

Figure A.7: Still from In the Heights



When Harry Met Sally, 1989

After running into each other in a bookshop, Harry and Sally go for a walk together. They both admit they did not like each other very much when they first met, and Harry apologizes to Sally for calling her uptight. Sally then asks Harry if he wants to go to dinner with her. Harry asks her if they are becoming friends, and she says yes.

Figure A.8: Still from When Harry Met Sally

Content Analysis:

DESIRABLE - Showcases peace.

peace: a state of freedom and harmony

DESIRABLE - Showcases thoughtfulness and generosity.

thoughtfulness: consideration for the needs of other people

generosity: the act of being liberal in giving

DESIRABLE - Showcases joy.

joy: a feeling of great pleasure and happiness.

DESIRABLE - Showcases friendship.

friendship: a state of enduring affection, esteem, intimacy, and trust between two people

Environment Analysis:

DESIRABLE - This scene occurs in a somewhat fictitious subway and is truly quite stunning. The colors from the graffiti are very vibrant, and the lighting that occurs within the scene is also quite colorful. The colors change somewhat throughout the scene, but the bright pinks and blues are fairly consistent and take a lead within the scene.

DESIRABLE - This scene occurs partially in this moving truck, but also in the street outside of it. The street is lined with trees in full bloom and the sun is shining. Weather wise, it seems like a perfect day. No litter or signs of deterioration can be seen within the scope of this street.

DESIRABLE - Lots of greenery can be scene in the foreground of the scene. The sun is shining and casts a warm hue onto everything. The hydrants are a spraying water in the streets and children run through them. It feels very fun and almost magical. People are everywhere and there is a strong sense of community.

DESIRABLE - This scene occurs during a beautiful fall day. There are lots of trees in the scene, and they are starting to change from green to orange. A few fallen leaves can be seen on the ground. The sun is just starting to set and there is an evening glow. Long shadows are cast on the ground from the trees. The surrounding buildings look well maintained. A soft piano plays in the background.



When Harry Met Sally, 1989

Harry and Sally talk on the phone while both watching *Casablanca*. They discuss the film and argue who Ingrid Bergman chooses in the end. They talk about problems in their own life and comfort one another.

Figure A.9: Still from When Harry Met Sally



When Harry Met Sally, 1989

After a fight over "feelings of loss", Harry apologizes for his words towards Sally. Harry and Sally immediately hug and make up. He grabs her hand they go back into Marie and Jess's house. As they are walking inside, Jess brings out the coffee table that Marie hates, showing his care for her and their relationship.

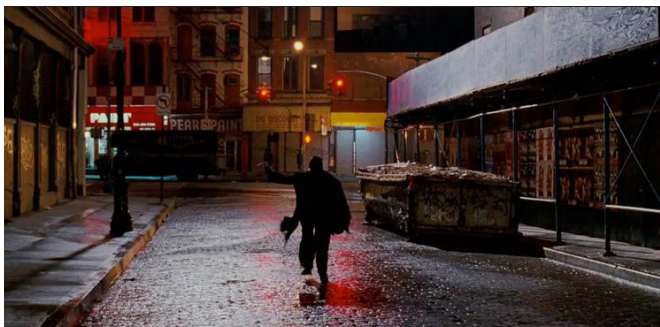
Figure A.10: Still from When Harry Met Sally



When Harry Met Sally, 1989

Harry confesses is love for Sally. "I love that you get cold when it's 71 degrees out... & I love that you are the last person I want to talk to before I go to sleep at night." She starts to cry, and says he is making it hard to hate him. They kiss, and Auld Lang Syne starts to play. Harry asks what the song is about and Sally says "old friends".

Figure A.11: Still from When Harry Met Sally



Enchanted, 2007

Giselle approaches a homeless man on the streets, and tells him that she has never been this far away from home. She asks if he can give her some kindness, a "friendly hello or even a smile" to lift her spirits. He then steals her crown and runs away from her.

Figure A.12: Still from Enchanted

Content Analysis:

DESIRABLE - Showcases friendship and connection.

friendship: a state of enduring affection, esteem, intimacy, and trust between two people

connection: a relation of personal intimacy

Environment Analysis:

DESIRABLE - This scene occurs in two locations - both Harry and Sally's bedrooms. They both lay in their beds watching a movie. They both have nicely decorated (although perhaps not everyone's specific desired design style), clean, safe looking apartments.

DESIRABLE - Showcases empathy and sincerity.

sincerity: being without hypocrisy or pretense

empathy: the action of understanding and being sensitive to, the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another

DESIRABLE - This scene occurs outside Jess and Marie's home (a really beautiful, well maintained brownstone). The sun is shining, very green trees can be seen in the background, and the streets look very clean. There are flowerboxes with red flowers and additional green landscaping near the entrance of the home.

DESIRABLE - Showcases love and forgiveness.

love: a profoundly tender or strong affection for another rising out of kinship or personal ties

forgiveness: a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or anger

DESIRABLE - This scene occurs in a large ballroom on New Year's Eve. The room is highly decorated with lighting, balloons, and other decorations. The room is packed with happy people and joyful music is playing. The space feels quite fancy.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases theft.

theft: the act of stealing

NEUTRAL - This scene occurs at night, and while it is not raining in the scene, puddles of water can be seen in the street. The buildings look slightly older and run down, but are not in a state of decay. One of the buildings has scaffolding on it. The streets are void of people.



Enchanted, 2007

After allowing Giselle to spend the night in their apartment, Giselle repays Robert and Morgan by cleaning their apartment. As she sings while starting to clean, animals come from all over to help her and they clean the apartment together.

Figure A.13: Still from Enchanted



Enchanted, 2007

While walking through Central Park with Robert, Giselle breaks out into song and all of the people in the park join in and start singing and dancing with her. The song has the refrain of "how does she know that you love her" and references different ways to show someone that you love them. Giselle then sends flowers to Nancy.

Figure A.14: Still from Enchanted



Enchanted, 2007

While at the ball, the evil queen gives Giselle a poison apple. She tells her that just one bite of the apple will make all of her pain disappear; with one bite she will not remember Robert or her feelings for him. She takes a bite of the apple and falls to the ground.

Figure A.15: Still from Enchanted



Enchanted, 2007

The evil queen transforms into a dragon and takes Robert to the top of the building, intending to kill him. Giselle follows them and rescues Robert from the evil queen. After the evil queen falls to her death, Robert and Giselle kiss on top of the building.

Figure A.16: Still from Enchanted

Content Analysis:

DESIRABLE - Showcases
thoughtfulness and generosity.

*thoughtfulness: consideration for the
needs of other people*

*generosity: the act of being liberal
in giving*

Environment Analysis:

DESIRABLE - This scene starts with a messy, cluttered, apartment, but ends with a clean, organized one. The apartment has lots of natural lighting and is quite large. There is a large living room, full bath, dining room with a 6 person table, full kitchen, office, 2 bedrooms, and private terrace. The colors are all quite warm, and make the space feel welcoming and homey.

DESIRABLE - Showcases love
and thoughtfulness.

*love: a profoundly tender or strong
affection for another rising out of
kinship or personal ties*

*thoughtfulness: consideration for the
needs of other people*

DESIRABLE - This scene occurs in several parts of Central Park. The sun is shining and the colors of everything are very saturated. The grass is a vibrant green, the trees are full of leaves, and the water that can be seen reflects all of the trees. There are lots of people within the environment and the entourage itself is very colorful.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases
malice.

*malice: the intention or desire to do
evil*

DESIRABLE - This scene occurs in a large ballroom on an upper floor. From the windows, a panorama of a lit up NYC can be seen. The lights are a pinkish purple color. There are interior trees with pink roses that are wrapped in soft, warm colored string lights. There are gold and crystal candle chandeliers. People dance in the center of the room.

DESIRABLE + UNDESIRABLE
- Showcases both malice and
courage.

*malice: the intention or desire to do
evil*

*courage: the choice and
willingness to confront agony, pain,
danger, uncertainty, or intimidation.*

UNDESIRABLE - This scene occurs on the exterior of a building. The scene occurs at night and it is raining very hard. Considering it is night and there are lower levels of light, the green materiality of the building is still quite bright and saturated. A birds eye view of NYC can be seen.



Enchanted, 2007

Giselle, Robert, and Morgan dance around their apartment together while smiling and laughing. The film closes on this image of them, with a voice over that says "and they all lived happily ever after".

Figure A.17: Still from Enchanted



Annie Hall, 1977

While walking along the river, Annie asks Alvy if he loves her. Alvy responds by saying that love is too weak a word for his feelings. They then kiss.

Figure A.18: Still from Annie Hall



Annie Hall, 1977

After Annie and Alvy had broken up, Annie calls Alvy in the middle of the night to kill a spider that is in her bathroom. He runs to her apartment and is initially angry because he thought there was an emergency. He kills two spiders and Annie tells him that she misses him.

Figure A.19: Still from Annie Hall



Annie Hall, 1977

After breaking up, Alvy and Annie run into one another. They are now both seeing other people, but they decide to catch up and have lunch together. They reminisce on their time together and their memories together flash upon the screen. Alvy says he realizes how much fun it was just knowing her. He remarks on the necessity of love.

Figure A.20: Still from Annie Hall

Content Analysis:

DESIRABLE - Showcases joy.

joy: a feeling of great pleasure and happiness.

Environment Analysis:

DESIRABLE - The apartment has lots of natural lighting and is quite large. There is a large living room, full bath, dining room with a 6 person table, full kitchen, office, 2 bedrooms, and private terrace. The colors are all quite warm, and make the space feel welcoming and homey.

DESIRABLE - Showcases love.

love: a profoundly tender or strong affection for another rising out of kinship or personal ties

DESIRABLE - This scene occurs near a river at dusk. The sky transitions from a deep pink color to a darker blue color. The main lighting that can be seen is from the bridge that is in the background. Despite being a public walkway, it is devoid of any other people. The environment feels very romantic.

DESIRABLE - Showcases loyalty and friendship.

loyalty: the act of being faithful to a private person to whom faithfulness is due

friendship: a state of enduring affection, esteem, intimacy, and trust between two people

DESIRABLE - Despite comments made by Annie about her apartment being "too small" and "filled with bugs", there is nothing about the apartment that seems glaringly unacceptable. The space looks clean, is well decorated, and has a variety of plants that give the space color. The apartment is minimalistic and features personal photography.

DESIRABLE - Showcases acceptance and peace.

acceptance: to give admittance or approval to

peace: a state of freedom and harmony

DESIRABLE - Not much can be seen of the interior of the cafe, but from what is shown, it appears to be quaint and comfortable. Outside of the cafe, the sun is shining and trees in bloom line the street. It looks as if there is a museum across the street. The scene starts with an empty road, but ends and terminates on cars driving down the street.



Breakfast at Tiffany's, 1961

During their day of new things, Holly and Paul go into Tiffany's. Holly says, "nothing bad can happen to you in a place like this". Paul offers to buy Holly a gift in the store, and they ask the salesman what they can buy for 10 dollars. They chose to engrave a ring from a cracker jack box. Holly says, "didn't I tell you this was a lovely place?"

Figure A.21: Still from Breakfast at Tiffany's



Breakfast at Tiffany's, 1961

Paul tells Holly that he loves her, and that they belong to one another. while in the cab. He then leaves the cab, but gives her the engraved cracker jack ring. She then runs out after him and they both search for "cat". After finding him, they kiss.

Figure A.22: Still from Breakfast at Tiffany's



Goodfellas, 1990

Henry breaks the windshields of cars and then lights them on fire, at the order of Paulie.

Figure A.23: Still from Goodfellas



Goodfellas, 1990

All of the guests from Henry and Karen's wedding que up to give them wedding gifts. They all hand Karen their envelopes and kiss her on the cheek. The wedding scene ends with Henry and Karen dancing with each other to Life is But a Dream. They smile and laugh with each other.

Figure A.24: Still from Goodfellas

Content Analysis:

DESIRABLE - Showcases generosity and friendship.

generosity: the act of being liberal in giving

friendship: a state of enduring affection, esteem, intimacy, and trust between two people

Environment Analysis:

DESIRABLE - The interiors of Tiffany's are quite rich. It is a large room with wood paneled walls, marble detailing, a white decorative ceiling, and lots of glass cases holding jewelry. There are lots of people in the store shopping. The cases are lined with a blue velvet (which the jewelry sits upon) and are contrast with Holly's orange colored coat. The glass of the windows are a yellow color.

DESIRABLE - Showcases love.

love: a profoundly tender or strong affection for another rising out of kinship or personal ties

UNDESIRABLE - This scene occurs at dusk in an alleyway. The alleyway is filled with garbage - both bagged and unbagged on the ground. The alleyway also hold lots of wooden crates. The colors in the environment are very muted. It is raining very hard.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases arson.

arson: the willful or malicious burning of property

UNDESIRABLE - This environment is actively being destroyed. It is lit on fire and left to burn. The scene occurs at night and the flames light up the surrounding area. Silhouettes of garbage can be seen against the flames.

DESIRABLE - Showcases generosity and love.

generosity: the act of being liberal in giving

love: a profoundly tender or strong affection for another rising out of kinship or personal ties

DESIRABLE - This scene occurs in a wedding venue that is located high within a building. The large room is dimly lit, but still feels inviting. There are large spans of glass, and the lights from the city can be seen through these windows. "Life is but a Dream" plays in the background. The environment feels charming and enchanting.



Goodfellas, 1990

After getting into a verbal fight at the bar, Jimmy and Tommy physically assault Billy Batts. Thinking he is dead, they shove his body into the trunk of their car and plan to drive him upstate to bury his body. They pull over after hearing noises from the trunk. Seeing that Billy is still alive, Tommy stabs him multiple times, eventually killing him. They then bury his body.

Figure A.25: Still from Goodfellas



Goodfellas, 1990

In order to tie loose ends in the Lufthansa heist, Jimmy orders Stacks to be killed. Tommy goes over to Stacks' apartment and act like he is picking him up for job they need to do together, but when Stacks turns away from Tommy, Tommy shoots him in the back of the head and kills him.

Figure A.26: Still from Goodfellas



Goodfellas, 1990

While playing cards, Tommy complains that the bartender isn't caring for him properly. He shoots the bartender in the foot. Later, the bartender comes back (with a cast on his foot) and Tommy makes remarks about him. The bartender talks back to Tommy, and then Tommy shoots and kills him in front of everyone.

Figure A.27: Still from Goodfellas



Maid in Manhattan, 2002

Chris tells Ty that he also gets nervous before making his speeches. He shows Ty that he uses a paperclip during his speeches to channel his energy and help him keep his nerves under control. Before parting, Chris gives Ty a handful of his paperclips, encouraging him to try public speaking again.

Figure A.28: Still from Maid in Manhattan

Content Analysis:

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases violence and assault.

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

assault: a violent physical or verbal attack

Environment Analysis:

UNDESIRABLE - This scene occurs near a highway. It is very dark and there is a red glow that allows the silhouettes of the characters to be seen - but is not revealed where this lighting is coming from. The environment is quite hazy. Overall, the environment is quite eerie.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases violence and betrayal.

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

betrayal: violation of a persons trust or confidence

UNDESIRABLE - This apartment is very small and very cluttered. There is one window that can be seen in the scene, and the apartment is pretty dark. There is not much natural lighting. The furniture that can be seen looks a little worn down. By the time the scene ends, there is blood covering the bedroom area.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases violence.

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

UNDESIRABLE - This scene occurs in a private bar of sorts. The room is quite dark with very minimal cool lighting. The room is very hazy from the men smoking. The colors are quite muted, and certain parts of the wall and ceiling look as if they are starting to deteriorate.

DESIRABLE - Showcases thoughtfulness.

thoughtfulness: consideration for the needs of other people

DESIRABLE - This scene occurs in on a rock of Central Park. The sun is shining and the sky is very blue. Behind the characters, there is a plethora of green vegetation, and behind that, skyscrapers can be scene. There are no other people around them, and the environment acts like a refuge.



Maid in Manhattan, 2002

After Marisa gets dismissed from the hotel, she runs into Lionel while returning her badge. He is also returning his work items, as he quits his position after seeing what happened to her. He gives her words of advice and encouragement, saying: "I'll think you'll make a great manager someday, + it will have been a great honor to work with you."

Figure A.29: Still from Maid in Manhattan



Maid in Manhattan, 2002

After being apart for a year, Chris comes to Marissa's hotel to give a speech, and then afterwards finds her in the building with help from Ty. He immediately kisses her and asks her if they can start over. They then introduce themselves to each other and kiss again.

Figure A.30: Still from Maid in Manhattan



A Bronx Tale, 1993

Cars nearly crash into each other while trying to park in the same spot. One of the men gets out of the car, and starts to hit the other man's car with a baseball bat. Sonny watches what is occurring from down the street, and he shoots and kills the man with the baseball bat.

Figure A.31: Still from A Bronx Tale



A Bronx Tale, 1993

Sonny lets Calogero borrow his car for his date with Jane. Calogero confesses to Sonny that he is worried about going out with Jane due to the racial tension in their neighborhood. Sonny tells him, "you gotta do what your heart tells you to do", and says, "the only things that matters is whats good for you and how you feel about each other".

Figure A.32: Still from A Bronx Tale

Content Analysis:

DESIRABLE - Showcases loyalty and thoughtfulness.

loyalty: the act of being faithful to a private person to whom faithfulness is due

thoughtfulness: consideration for the needs of other people

Environment Analysis:

NEUTRAL - This scene occurs in a service hallway in a hotel. There are no windows present, and therefore no natural lighting. All of the colors of the environment and pretty muted. It is a very forgettable space. It is well maintained, clean, and orderly.

DESIRABLE - Showcases love and joy.

love: a profoundly tender or strong affection for another rising out of kinship or personal ties

joy: a feeling of great pleasure and happiness.

NEUTRAL - This scene occurs in the basement of a hotel. It is a break room, and there are no windows. There is minimal furniture in the room - really just a few tables and chairs. On the main wall (the backdrop of the scene) there is a mural of New York City, in which the Empire State Building is visible.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases vandalism and violence.

vandalism: willful or malicious destruction or defacement of public or private property

violence: the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy

DESIRABLE - The street is full of life and activity. People are out walking and shopping. It is sunny out and trees are in full bloom. The buildings are well maintained and the streets are very clean. There is variety of color within the environment, between buildings, vegetation, cars, and signage.

DESIRABLE - Showcases generosity and sincerity.

generosity: the act of being liberal in giving

sincerity: being without hypocrisy or pretense

Not Applicable



A Bronx Tale, 1993

Calogero offers to walk Jane home and carries her books for her. They both tell each other that they think the other is very nice. Both seem very excited and happy to be walking together.

Figure A.33: Still from *A Bronx Tale*



A Bronx Tale, 1993

Calogero's friends see black boys riding bicycles down their street. They pull them off of their bikes and start beating them up. They punch and kick them repeatedly. They break their bikes.

Figure A.34: Still from *A Bronx Tale*



A Bronx Tale, 1993

Calogero's friends go to the black boys neighborhood and throw molotov cocktails into their stores. The windows break and the buildings catch on fire. As they are driving away, one of the boys in the store throws a flaming brick into the window of the car. The flames light the remaining molotov cocktails in the car, and the car explodes with the boys in it, killing them.

Figure A.35: Still from *A Bronx Tale*

Content Analysis:

DESIRABLE - Showcases
thoughtfulness and joy.

*thoughtfulness: consideration for the
needs of other people*

*joy: a feeling of great pleasure and
happiness.*

Environment Analysis:

UNDESIRABLE - The sky is very overcast and
everything has a gray tone. All of the trees are bare
and some leaves can be seen on the ground. Lots of
garbage litters the street and can be seen on steps up
to entryways. The buildings appear as if they are run
down.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases
discrimination and violence.

*discrimination: prejudiced or
prejudicial outlook, action, or
treatment*

*violence: the use of physical force
so as to injure, abuse, damage, or
destroy*

DESIRABLE - The street is quite clean and well kept.
There are no signs of deterioration on the building or
streetscape. The sun is shining quite brightly. While
there are no street trees, trees can be seen just down
the street.

UNDESIRABLE - Showcases
vandalism and violence.

*vandalism: willful or malicious
destruction or defacement of public
or private property*

*violence: the use of physical force
so as to injure, abuse, damage, or
destroy*

UNDESIRABLE - This scene occurs at night and ends
with damaged property. Windows of a storefront are
broken and glass lays shattered in the interior of the
store, as well as on the street. The store catches on
fire and suffers from severe fire damage.

APPENDIX B

NEW YORK CITY PHOTOGRAPHY ENCOUNTER



Figure B. 1: Motor Cycle Event



Figure B.2: Cross Walk Condition



Figure B.3: Parking



Figure B.4: Street Shopping



Figure B.5: Pedestrian Street



Figure B.6: Coney Island Beach



Figure B.7: Coney Island Pier



Figure B.8: Coney Island



Figure B.9: The Highline



Figure B.10: Rockefeller Center







Figure B.11: Street Graffiti



Figure B.12: Street Graffiti outside Supreme



Figure B.13: Street Graffiti



Figure B.14: Street Graffiti



Figure B.15: Graffiti in the Bronx



Figure B.16: Scaffolding in Manhattan



Figure B.17: Scaffolding in Manhattan



Figure B.18: The Bronx Rail Line



Figure B.19: Garbage Waiting for Pickup

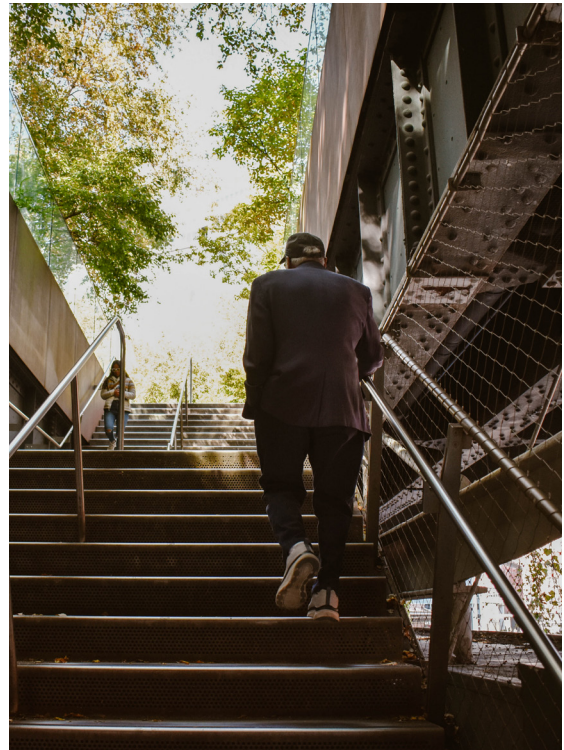


Figure B.20: The Highline Entrance







Figure B.21: Central Park Path



Figure B.22: People Sitting in Central Park



Figure B.23: Prospect Park



Figure B.24: Bike Path near Prospect Park



Figure B.25: Seating at the Highline



Figure B.26: Street in Harlem



Figure B.27: Urban Farming



Figure B.28: Street in Brooklyn



Figure B.29: Brooklyn Townhomes



Figure B.30: Seating Area in Manhattan





APPENDIX C

RESEARCH THROUGH MAKING

MATERIAL ITERATION:

The intent of this exercise is to understand how the materiality of an image representation affects the response of a given image. This process included the creation of three different material iterations all stemming from two different images, including an embroidered iteration, an acetone transfer iteration, and a 2D collage iteration. The first photo taken is from the exterior of a house in Detroit while the second photo was taken from the pier in Coney Island.

While all images have the same composition, the materiality changes the overall feel of the image. This exploration is intended to mimic the way in which the media frames stories about a given place, changing people's perception of either a story or a place. It is not really a question of whether the material changes how we may respond to a certain image, but rather - how does the use of a different material frame the person's experience of reacting with each individual iteration. For example, can the use of material change the feeling an image invokes from comforting to eerie, safe to unsafe, or joyful to sad? Do the same materials create a similar feeling regardless of the content or composition of the base image? If not, to what level of abstraction through material choice does an image begin to be framed differently, enough to alter the feelings created from it?

By creating two sets of each material iteration, the pieces can be compared either by same material to different images or same image to different materials within its set, allowing these questions to be explored.



Figure C.1: Narrative Through Material Iteration



Figure C.2: Narrative Through Material Iteration

APPENDIX D

FORM + PERCEPTION CHARRETTE



Figure D.1: Pyramid Form to Houses



Figure D.2: Pyramid Form to Mountains



Figure D.3: Pyramid Form to Egypt Pyramids

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1.1: Produced by author.

FIGURE 1.2: Information sourced from Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*. MIT Pr., 1979.

FIGURE 1.3: Anastasiou, Dimitrios & Tasopoulou, Anastasia & Gemenetzi, Georgia & Gareiou, Zoe & Zervas, Efthimios. (2022). Public's perceptions of urban identity of Thessaloniki, Greece. *URBAN DESIGN International*. 27. 10.1057/s41289-021-00172-8.

FIGURE 1.4: Sketches by Sophie Martin

FIGURE 2.1-2.3: Produced by author.

FIGURE 2.4: *When Harry Met Sally*. Directed by Rob Reiner, Castle Rock Entertainment, 1989

FIGURE 2.5: *In the Heights*. Directed by John M. Chu, 5000 Broadway Productions, 2021

FIGURE 2.6: Film Posters, IMDB

FIGURE 2.7-2.9: Produced by author.

FIGURE 2.10-2.13: *8 Mile*. Directed by Curtis Hanson, Imagine Entertainment, 2002.

FIGURE 2.14-2.19: *Gran Torino*. Directed by Clint Eastwood, Warner Bros Entertainment, 2008.

FIGURE 2.20: *Bird on a Wire*. Directed by John Badham, Universal Pictures, 1990.

FIGURE 2.21-2.26 *No Sudden Move*. Directed by Steven Soderbergh, Warner Bros Entertainment, 2021.

FIGURE 2.27-2.34: *Detroit*. Directed by Kathryn Bigelow, Annapurna Pictures, 2017.

FIGURE 2.35-2.38: *True Romance*. Directed by Tony Scott, Morgan Creek Entertainment, 2017.

FIGURE 2.39-2.42: *RoboCop*. Directed by Paul Verhoeven, Orion Pictures, 1987.

FIGURE 2.43-2.44: *Dreamgirls*. Directed by Bill Condon, Paramount Pictures and DreamWorks Pictures, 2006.

FIGURE 2.45: Produced by author.

FIGURE 3.1-3.30: Produced by author.

FIGURE 4.1: *Motor City*, *Motor City Casino Hotel* *Detroit City of Design*, UNESCO *Detroit vs. Everybody*, Tommey Walker *Detroit Hustles Harder*, Brendan Blumentritt

FIGURE 5.1-5.11: Produced by author.

FIGURE A.1-A.7: *In the Heights*. Directed by John M. Chu, 5000 Broadway Productions, 2021.

FIGURE A.8-A.11: *When Harry Met Sally*. Directed by Rob Reiner, Castle Rock Entertainment, 1989

FIGURE A.12-A.17: *Enchanted*. Directed by Kevin Lima, Walt Disney Pictures, 2007.

FIGURE A.18-A.20: *Annie Hall*. Directed by Woody Allen, CA Jack Rollins and Charles H. Joffe Production, 1977.

FIGURE A.21-A.A.22: *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Directed by Blake Edwards, Jurow-Shepherd Spinel Entertainment, 1961.

FIGURE A.23-A.27: *Goodfellas*. Directed by Martin Scorsese, Warner Bros Entertainment, 1990.

FIGURE A.28-A.30: *Maid in Manhattan*. Directed by Wayne Wang, Columbia Pictures, 2002.

FIGURE A.31-A.35: *A Bronx Tale*. Directed by Robert DeNiro, TriBeCa Productions, 1993.

FIGURE B.1-B.30: Produced by author.

FIGURE C.1-C.2: Produced by author.

FIGURE D.1-D.3: Produced by author in collaboration with Madison Nelson.

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