

Healing Perception

Subjects: Others

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The restoration of functional resources and competence from depletion is known as the "healing effect". Environmental designs can produce healing perceptions and have the potential factors to achieve healing effects. Healing perception is considered to increase visitors' place attachment and loyalty.

Keywords: environmental design ; place attachment ; healing perception ; place loyalty ; structural equation modeling (SEM) ; full mediation effect ; landscape attributes

1. Introduction

With the development of industry and commerce, the pursuit of work achievements causes physical fatigue, psychological pressure, and negative emotions in life, leading to a decline in mental health and causing chronic diseases eventually. Therefore, to seek a place where people can breathe a little under the tight pace of life in a big city is the key to balancing mental health ^[1]. Considering the elements that affect human psychological feelings and promote mental health and wellbeing, parks can be turned into a public leisure area with healing effects ^[2]. This is the reason why people often take time to visit parks—an open outdoor area in the city that they can easily reach.

In cities, Metropolitan Park is considered a suitable choice with a particular scale and rich in natural elements, which is often planned in urban areas or suburbs with high traffic accessibility and a specific scale. They have ecological conservation functions, environmental beautification, and leisure and recreation, enhancing physical and mental health to improve quality of life ^[3]. In other words, metropolitan parks can also provide disaster prevention, education, leisure and recreation, and access to the natural environment in terms of valuable functions ^{[4][5][6]}.

2. Environmental Design

The public open space of urban is a place for the people to socialize and interact ^[7]. In urban design research, public open space is defined as a park that provides greening and natural environment and has time control ^[4]. Park is used as a place that promotes health with two functions: "rest", and "socialization", it plays an ideal solution of environmental design to provide an outdoor field for the public ^[8]. Because the park is an integrated space of natural and man-made, its composition can include natural elements, use areas, structures, people, and other creatures ^[9], such as vegetation, soil, water, artworks, outdoor facilities, and buildings. It is necessary to consider passages, signs, entrances, exits, and safety during the planning and designing to achieve a compatible design that meets all users ^[9]. The manager and designers need to pay attention to designing the landscape that satisfies the three concepts: (1) Must be considered purposeful; (2) designed for the public; and (3) satisfy the needs of aesthetics and function ^[5].

In past studies, some scholars proposed to use the operable landscape elements in the land-laying plan as the basis and integrate them into six basic landscape elements: outdoor space, buildings, pavements, street furniture, artificial elements, and plants ^[10]. They are regarded as stimulation of the environment to the residents. In another article, the scholars further explored that the visual landscape elements positively influence the perception, emotion, and place attachment of the people ^[11]. In some cases, the scholars considered the visual level as the starting point to explore the visual aesthetic elements of the community, using architectural units, public spaces, natural elements, and human elements as the four aspects of planning and design elements ^[12].

Based on the composition of environmental design mentioned in the above documents, the environmental design defined in this entry is composed of two parts, including the design operation elements of the site plan and the basic elements of the park design. According to the characteristics of the survey site, the environmental design is consolidated into six aspects: (1) recreational space, (2) building, (3) walks, (4) outdoor furniture, (5) planting, and (6) signboard.

3. Healing Perception

In the field of mental health, many scholars believe that mental fatigue will reduce the attention of people, produce negative emotions, increase the incidence of errors, and reduce the ability to solve problems as well ^[13]. However, they also pointed out that the natural environment can reduce stress and promote positive emotions and other positive benefits ^[14]. The restoration of functional resources and competence from depletion is known as the “healing effect” ^[15]. The theory of the healing effect was derived from two main theoretical models: the psychological evolution theory proposed by Ulrich and the other is the functional evolution theory based on the Kaplan couple.

According to Ulrich, the theory is focused on emotional and psychological reactions, emphasizing that the healing perception is based on emotion ^[16]. It is the first direct response when people interact with the environment; the healing effect of the environment will be improved through positive emotion so that stress can be reduced, rather than the direct attention can be restored ^[17].

Regarding Kaplan (1987), people will have special emotions for meaningful environmental information and establish human cognition in the natural environment and the functional results in the environment as well ^{[18][19]}. Then, human response toward the environment combines emotions, comprehensive judgment, and cognition ^[1]. In the “attention restoration theory” proposed by Kaplan and Kaplan (1989), autonomous attention and involuntary attention were regarded as direct attention and fascination, respectively ^[20]. If the humans use direct attention for a long time, it will cause “Direct Attention Fatigue” ^[21].

Although the two theories are not the same, there are still many common points. Many scholars used these theories to explore whether religious spaces and other fields have healing perceptions and then achieve the healing effects on human mental health ^[22]. Environmental designs can produce healing perceptions and have the potential factors to achieve healing effects ^{[23][24][25]}. Therefore, this entry combined the two above theories to explore the relationship between the environment and the healing perception, in which the healing space was represented by four characteristics: (1) distance, (2) extension, (3) fascination, and (4) compatibility.

4. Place Attachment

“Place” is composed of physical forms, activities, and meanings ^[26]. The result of the interaction between human and place is called place attachment. In the 1970s and 1980s, the branch of human geography mentioned the idea of place, which profoundly impacted the concept of place and place attachment ^{[27][28][29]}. Some scholars believe that place attachment refers to the emotional and functional connection between the individual and the place through the interaction of emotion, knowledge, belief, and behavior ^[30]. The emotional/symbolic connection is often called place identity, whereas the functional requirements are called place dependence ^[31].

Place identity refers to the sense of attachment and belongingness to the place at the emotional level and is the individual emotional attachment to the place or the environment ^[32]. As merely, place identity is a personal sense of identity with a place, enabling individuals to distinguish this place from other places ^[11]. Place dependence refers to the functional connection between the individual and the place ^[33], when the individual feels essential to a particular place and can meet their functional needs and support their behavioral goals more than available alternatives ^[34].

Based on the theoretical literature above, place attachment composes two components, including place identification for emotional belonging and place dependence for functional needs, as discussed in many studies. Therefore, this entry divided place attachment into two aspects: (1) emotional attachment and (2) functional attachment.

5. Loyalty

As a psychological factor in human behavior, loyalty is considered the measurement of subjective judgment of the unique possibility to engage in a particular behavior, which corresponds to the individual willingness to engage in a particular behavior and an index to measure future behavior ^[35]. The researchers discussed the four different loyalty stages for the representative model in loyalty research, including cognitive, emotional, intentional, and behavioral loyalty ^[36]. Cognitive loyalty is the product information that consumers are aware of/or obtain and is the weakest form of loyalty; the subsequent commitment is emotional loyalty. Emotional loyalty is the attitude of the consumer toward products, and the relationship between products is determined. If consumers have a good attitude toward the product, they will be emotionally loyal to it ^[37]. Intentional loyalty is the behavioral intention stage, while the final behavioral loyalty is the conversion of intention to action. Some scholars transferred the four loyalty stages into two aspects: attitude loyalty and behavior loyalty ^[38].

In marketing research, loyalty is defined as a sense of pursuit of people, products, or services promised to consumers, willingness to repurchase, and preference ^[39]. Once an individual believes that he is receiving the best service, his loyalty toward this service will of course be enhanced. He can evaluate the products of this service as the first choice the next time, or he can be willing to recommend the positive words about products to others ^[40].

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