Correlates of an Aesthetically Pleasing Campus Outdoor Environment and its Functional and Perceptual Properties

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Abstract
Aesthetic qualities can affect user’s enjoyment of space, and increase the use of outdoor space. Designers can create aesthetically pleasing spaces through recognizing how functional or perceptual properties of an environment can support this perception. Given that most students are exposed to many tension and anxiety drawbacks due to academic and career competence, landscape designers can enhance their tension through providing aesthetically pleasing outdoors. This study focused on how the perceived and functional qualities of an outdoor campus plaza correlate with its aesthetical property.

The research focused on a recently constructed outdoor campus setting with NCSU, Raleigh, which incorporated a variety of pathways, vegetation, elevations, and materials. The users of plaza were requested to participate in a survey with multiple-choice answers. The researcher observed the plaza in two days and for a total of five hours to understand dominant behaviors, such as reading, walking, etc. The inclusion of perceptive qualities were based on previous research correlating creativity (Corpley & Corpley, 2008; Rawlings, Twomey, Buns, & Morris, 1998), legibility (Nasar, 1994; Taylor, 2009), complexity (Palmer, 2004; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989) functionality (Chen, Admio, & Bao, 2009; Daniel, 2001), security (Kaplan, Kaplan, & Ryan, 1998; Kuo & Sullivan, 2001), and restorative (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). Respondents were asked to rate on a three-degree scale if they agreed the plaza offered chances for certain activities or space qualities. With a total of 118 survey responses, Chi square analysis was conducted to evaluate these perceptions and aesthetic quality. The results indicated a significant association with users’ perception of an aesthetically pleasing outdoor campus environment and opportunities for sitting, walking, private spaces, social spaces, eating, reading, and lying on the grass. The findings also implied a positive association between perception of creativity, legibility, complexity, functionality, security, and restoration and perception of an aesthetically satisfying environment.

Suggested Citation