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Visitors' Perception towards Public Space in Shopping Center in the Creation Sense of Place

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to find out which public space plays a role in the formation of shopping center's image, to examine the intentionality of people's relationship to a shopping center, and to determine factors of public space design that create sense of place. The objects of research are two shopping centers in Indonesia. The research uses the method of Focus Group Discussion. In conclusion, the research finds that the image of a shopping center is formed by its corridors, atriums and dining areas or food courts. Meanwhile, the relationship of people to the shopping center has a variety of intentionality. The relationship existed is influenced by the interior element and interior design is an indicator for the success of public space design.

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1. Introduction

Shopping center as a global phenomenon is developing rapidly these days, especially in Asian and Middle Eastern countries. Yusuf (2012), published an article about the social activities of Indonesian people in popular shopping centers during public and religious holidays. The attachment of people towards shopping centers is propelled by the changes of lifestyle, pattern of motorized transportation and intensive activities in shopping centers. The management of physical and social facilities in shopping center can influence the enhancement of the functional values and create a sense of place and intense social relationships among visitor.

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Firstly, the development of today's shopping center is no longer merely a functional purpose, yet, it becomes a more experiential one. Recent shopping centers have more complex functions compared to the previous ones (Kusumowidagdo, et al., 2013). The functional side of a shopping center is to cater for economic transactions in accommodating the connection between business entities (tenant) and visitor (buyer). The other function is to create an interesting place that brings iconic and unique impression to the visitor by its architectural and interior design. To the function of an experiential place, a shopping center must have a unique physical space and be favorable for a social place. To achieve this function, spaces in a shopping center must become public places that are far from being placeless (Auge, 2011).

Secondly, a shopping center must create the sense of place through various means (Morris, 2012). The sense of place is formed by physical and social factor (Najafi and Mina, 2011). The physical sense of place can be achieved by creating spatial forms that are attractive. And the social sense of place can be stimulated by the organization of various social and promotional events.

Thirdly, regarding people's relationship with a place, each visitor must feel different sensations along with different depths and levels of meanings. Kusumowidagdo (2011) stated that the environment of shopping centers influences shopping habits. Place attachment can also be explored in shopping centers (Maharani, 2009). People relationship to a place is generated by the physical and social factors that form a place (Najafi and Mina, 2011), and those factors will, in turn, contribute to the place's characteristic (Steele, 1991).

This paper aims to figure out the interactive relationships between visitor and the interior of a shopping center as a place. This will be described in several issues dealing with spatial image, place, depth of relationship purposes and design indicator of interior public space that creates a sense of place.

2. Indonesian Shopping Centers

2.1. Spatial Development in Shopping Centers

According to the Urban Land Institute, a shopping center is defined as a group of commercial structures with integrated architecture, which is built in a planned location, developed, owned and managed as an operational unit (Kowinski, 2002). However, recent shopping centers have undergone alterations of previous forms. Kusumowidagdo et al., (2013), based on the spatial development, classified the development of shopping centers in Indonesia in three periods, namely the 1960-1980 period, the 1980-1998 period and the period after 1998.

In the first era, old shopping areas, known as traditional markets and retail stores, were transformed into multi-story buildings with utilities of air conditioning, escalators, lighting, and distinguished architectural style. The typical spatial characteristic of a shopping center is narrow spaces with 2.5-3.00 meter high of the floor to ceiling, and layers of corridor, which create cramped and congested feeling.

The second era of 1980-1998 was the time when shopping centers grew rapidly and named as mall and plaza. The typical physical facilities are the use of panoramic lifts, high atriums, straight and functional shapes, corridor of ramps, and food courts. The period after 1998 was the time when construction of shopping centers was halted because of the monetary crisis.

The new construction of shopping centers started again in the year of 2005. During this era, the architecture and interior design of shopping centers become more sinuous in form. Organic shapes are more commonly applied to the design. Iconic and thematic design with additional theatrical shapes are frequently found. Multi-story shopping facilities are now combined with quasi-public space and outdoor plazas.

This research is focused on the public space inside shopping centers built in the era after 1998. During this period, public space in shopping centers can be categorized as 'privatized' public space since the owner and the operation management have the rights to arrange and regulate its access. In this research, public space is referred to places inside shopping centers that are quasi-public space: atriums, corridors, and food courts.

Sense of place in shopping centers can be created through the interior design of public space inside shopping centers. Usually, shopping centers produce sense of place in the attempt to evoke emotional relationships with the visitor. Kusumowidagdo et al., (2013) defined the process of people's relationships to shopping centers as explained in the table below:

Table 1. Relationship between people and Shopping Center as a place

Relationship	Process
Biographical	The process that happens because of the involvement of people and shopping center as a place as part of their past lives
Iconic	The process that happens because of an iconic place
Functional	The process that happens because of transactional needs
Experiential	The process that happens because people like the environment of a place that provides new and unique experience
Social	The process that happens because there are activity and social relationship in the place
Dependent	The process that happens because people are forced to be in the place

According to Steele (1991), the relationship between people and a place are transactional in nature and have a number of intentionality levels. In this research, intentionality levels are observed by adapting the Shamai's theory. According to Shamai (1991), there are several scales of intentionality, from no sense of place or placeless, knowledge of being located in the place, belonging to a place, attachment to a place, identification with the place's goal, involvement in a place, and up to sacrifice for a place. These scales will be explored further in this research. Concerning public space inside the shopping center, it is important to differentiate the four characteristics of public space, namely corridors, atrium, food court and thematic corridor. The tangible elements that create the interior space must also be differentiated from the intangible elements that create an environment.

2.2. Focus Group as a Method

This research used Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to disclose factors that create a sense of place in the public place in shopping centers in a comprehensive way. FGD is needed because assessment on sense of place is very subjective and related to personal response. The method is perceived as suitable for the phenomenon that involve many people, in this case, a great number of visitor (Basrowi and Suwandi, 2008). The people who are invited for FGD should be visitors between the age of 15-35 (Papalia. et al., 2008), who have connectivity with shopping centers. For this research, the public are defined as visitors who are concerned with issues of public spaces. To select the participants of FGD, several visitors are selected by purposive sampling method. They are asked to fill in a form of identification and orientation drafted by the researcher. The researcher determines out of the incoming forms the persons who are suitable to be participants of FGD and to be involved in the discussion process. The number of participants in the FGD follows the requirements of Krueger and Casey (2009), who defined that FGD should be organized with 4-6 people. The right size of FGD will ensure the comfortable and intimate discussion. From the recommended number of people, normally an approximately 2 hour-long discussion can be expected.

Table 2. Technique of data sampling and Sample of questions for participants of FGD.

Objectives	Participant of FGD	Technique of data sampling	Sample of Questions
1. To identify the image of the shopping center	Seven people with various jobs (private employees, university students, entrepreneurs, media workers) living in Surabaya	1. FGD has done in Ciputra World Shopping Center Surabaya	1. What are the images of the shopping center being discussed
2. To find out about the intentionality of visitors' relationships towards the shopping center	Six people with various jobs (teacher, product designers, entrepreneurs, and university students)	2. Observation of the physical condition of the place	2. What are the reasons for their preference to visit the mall?
3. To find out about the indicator elements of the public spaces in a shopping center that influence sense of place		1. FGD has done in Gandaria City Shopping Center Jakarta	3. What activities do they do there?
		2. Observation of the physical condition of the place	4. According to them, which level of sense of place is felt?
			5. What place elements can support the sense of place process in public spaces such as corridors, atrium, food court and thematic place?

2.3. Objects of Research

The objects of research are chosen from the era of shopping centers after 1998/ the third era. This era exhibited

better people's perception towards physical conditions and resemblances of spatial development (Kusumowidagdo et al., 2011; Kusumowidagdo et al., 2013). During this era, shopping centers have similarity in market's segment and category. The samples are selected because of its accessibility to the purpose of long-term research.

Both Gandaria City and Ciputra World have curved façades with flexible metal sheet as the main building's material. The curved façades feature glass and aluminum composite panels on a gigantic scale. The gesture of the building as a shopping center strikes out as the vocal point of the respective neighborhood. Both shopping centers have more than one atrium, and all atriums are designed in curved and oval shapes. Most corridors in the shopping areas have a dimension of 3-5 meters and single loaded corridor. The height from floor to ceiling is 4-5 meters high. In many areas inside the building, the void creates a huge space. The atrium in Gandaria City is nine-story high of space, while Ciputra World is five-story high. Both shopping centers have thematic corridors surrounded by food and beverages functions, and food courts with certain characteristics and themes.

3. Result and Discussion

This research will describe the shopping center's image, the feedback for relationships towards shopping centers, the explanation of intentionality in relationships, and the description of public spaces' design elements that create a sense of place. Some of the findings are explained below:

3.1 The formation of Shopping Center's spatial image

There are several factors that create the image of a shopping center both in Jakarta and Surabaya. These include types of tenant and uniqueness of tenant space, presence of atrium and events, food court and unique dishes offered, and thematic corridors with various art sculptures. These factors are compiled from the opinions stated below.

"I think the image of a shopping center comes from its atrium and food court. This view has been brought up in the previous discussion." (L, private staff, Surabaya)

"Browsing the tenant spaces usually following the corridors, and for this reason corridors can also provide an image." (C, culinary entrepreneur)

"In Gandaria City, in addition to a complete set of tenants, there are also numerous events and interesting live music performances." (Y, teacher, Jakarta)

"There is a specific area for main street dining. So the difference between the shopping area and the dining area is visible. A different atmosphere is shaped by the different look of the corridors' interior." (A, entrepreneur, Jakarta).

3.2 Intentionality of relationships

The intentionality of relationships between visitors and shopping centers can be separated into several levels. The similarity with Shamai (1991)'s research can be found in the first and fourth levels. Other scales have been adjusted to suit the needs and conditions of the shopping center. The division of the scales can be similarly concluded from Ciputra World, Surabaya and Gandaria City, Jakarta, and is explained in the table below:

Table 3. Scale of Sense of Place

No	Scale of Sense of Place	Description
1	Can identify the shopping center	Knowing about the areas of the shopping center, the shopping center's elements or important places inside the shopping center, knowing about the position of the shopping center.
2	Wants to conduct activities inside the shopping center	In this scale, visitors wish to do the basic transactional activities, as well as social activities at the shopping center.
3	Casual participation in the shopping center's events / sale or competitions	Coming to sale events, other events and competitions held by the shopping center, for instance: morning exercise in the shopping center, late night sale, biking community gathering in the shopping center.
4	Wants to linger in the shopping center	In this scale, visitors start to feel familiar with the condition of the shopping center and wish to enjoy the shopping center atmosphere a bit longer.
5	Attached to several places in the shopping center	In this level, there is a preference for several places in the shopping center or specialty tenants like café.
6	Active participation	Next is the active participation, such as wanting to rent a place for bazaar, joining multiple events.

3.3 Place elements as indicators for Shopping Center's Sense of Place

The factors of sense of place were obtained from two places, namely Ciputra World, Surabaya and Gandaria City, Jakarta. For the corridors, the important notions are dimension, good visibility, store harmony, store display, window display, comfortable lighting, appropriate temperature, the use of colors, corridor shapes, background music, the cleanliness of corridor, ornament of the ceilings, floor pattern, visitors' density, lifestyle, the visitor's ethnicity, and segmentation of visitors. The following are some of the opinions regarding this matter:

"I prefer shopping centers with wider corridors. And the view overlooks all directions. The tenants appear tidier and more focused. In addition, their designs are done very well." (N, student, Surabaya)

"I feel comfortable with the tenant designs that are deliberately made similar, for instance, the use of glass and the dimension of the design." (C, private staff)

"About the lighting in this area, it is better, brighter and gives a more spacious feel." (D, media staff, Surabaya)

"The air circulation is good—it is not too cold and not too hot—although the corridors are wider than usual." (L, private staff, Jakarta)

"There are more fashionable visitors, it feels less crowded and lifestyle is placed at the top of the list." (E, private staff, Surabaya)

The indicators for good atrium design are: the ability to view all directions/ visibility, the shape of atrium, the height of the ceiling, the size of the atrium, proportion of the space, ornaments on the ceiling and floor, the use of color, background music, directory, lighting, stage, event's crowdedness, density, visitors' lifestyle, the visitor's ethnicity. Below are the indicators of the atrium's layout that can create a sense of place:

"Proportion plays a very important part. It provides the possibility to have unobstructed views of all directions. The atrium has a spatially comfortable shape. The shape is distinctive—there are three different ones—and for this reason it is far from boring. In my opinion, the height is alright—I mean the height of the atrium—and because of the size, different designs can be applied." (N, student, Surabaya)

"Visitors of the events are interesting to see, and it is easy for us to join an event. I think they have style. Similarity of segment also plays a part." (L, interior designer, Jakarta)

"Segment similarity provides a connection, which gives a comfortable feeling. In addition, the interior is brightly colored with curved patterns on the floor. I think this is interesting." (H, student, Jakarta)

For the food court area, layout indicators that are perceived to create public space with a sense of place are: thematic decoration, accents in the interior, zoning of dining area, washing area, furniture in the dining area, tenant decoration, lighting, finishing of interior wall, floor finishing, visitors in an amiable atmosphere, food stalls, density of visitors, lifestyle and tenant signage. These indicators are summarized from the following opinions:

"I think it is the view, it is not often that a shopping center combines a food court and an entertainment area. There is a dynamic interior element—the children's ride that hangs from the ceiling looks like flying carriages, providing an indoor mobile element." (N, student, Surabaya)

"I believe interesting furniture—chairs and sofas— so it feels comfortable to linger inside. The atmosphere is friendly, you can laugh out loud and there are more food choices because of the variety of tenants. The tenant spaces are interesting with inviting designs and decorations. There is also a wall above, which undulates, but I think it is deliberately created by the shopping center management." (L,

private staff, Surabaya)

"I find it more comfortable to eat in the food court when I go with friends but when I go with my family I prefer to dine in the shopping center's restaurants. Similar to the point mentioned above, the stylish interior is enhanced by the attractive look of visitors so that we can feel at home." (Y, entrepreneur, Surabaya)

For the thematic corridor, layout indicators that are perceived to create public space with a sense of place are: thematic decorations, accents like art sculptures or other vocal points, dynamic corridor elements, furniture, tenant decoration, good lighting that appears dramatic, finishing of interior wall and floor, visitors in an amiable atmosphere, the variety of restaurants, restaurant zoning area, density, lifestyle and directory.

"There are different spaces, for instance as seen from the lighting." (D, Media Staff, Surabaya)

"The design of the tenant's space complement to the look of the building. In addition to their tenant areas, they are allowed to place chairs outside to emulate the feel of walking in a city park." (C, entrepreneur, Surabaya)

"There are typical decorations such as a water fountain, trees, replicas of terracotta statues, all of which support the overall look, including the park benches and city lamps." (N, student, Surabaya)

"Hanging out there feels like lifestyle, because of the atmosphere. There are indoor and outdoor seats. It is sometimes crowded but still feels comfortable." (Y, product designer, Jakarta)

"This area feels interesting because it is divided into several bright and dark spots. What important is when we enter the dark area, it still feels comfortable, so it is okay despite the lack of light. So for visitors the dramatic effect is felt, and as long as it suits our taste and is comfortable, the atmosphere here is welcoming." (Y, teacher, Jakarta)

4. Conclusion

The research offers several conclusions for the questions it has raised:

- The spatial images of a shopping center to visitors are represented by tenant spaces, atrium, food court, and corridors.
- The intentionality of the relationships between visitors and shopping center can be divided into several levels: people who can identify a place, people who have the desire to do some activities inside a shopping center, people who participate in casual events, people who linger for a long time inside a shopping center, people who are attached to several places and people who are actively involved in a shopping center.
- The research finds several indicators for the public space layout in the corridors, thematic corridors, atrium and food court, as described above.

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