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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Visitors' perceptions on the important factors of atrium design in shopping centers: A study of Gandaria City Mall and Ciputra World in Indonesia



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Abstract

Atriums as quasi-internal public spaces in shopping centers play an essential role as an identity provider and offer spatial orientation in shopping center architecture. This study aims to examine the significant factors of atrium design, which can provide a sense of place for shopping center visitors.

The research was conducted with the sequential exploratory method, which involved a qualitative study, followed by a quantitative study. The objects of this research were two shopping centers located in the two largest cities in Indonesia, namely, Gandaria City Mall in Jakarta and Ciputra World in Surabaya. A total of 43 informants were a part of the qualitative data collection, and 350 respondents served as survey participants. The survey research shows that the design factors considered by visitors at the Gandaria City Mall are atrium legibility, atrium decoration, event decoration, social image and interaction, and event ambience, whereas the visitors at Ciputra World considered atrium legibility, social image and interaction, atrium ambience, and atrium decoration.

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1. Introduction

The development of enclosed shopping centers or malls first began in the US in the 1950s (Carr et al., 1992; Oc and Tiesdell, 1997). At that time, the number of shopping centers offering services for transactional and leisure activities was on

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the rise in Western countries. However, in the 2000s, the development of such shopping centers slowed down in the West (Yusof et al., 2011). Comparatively, the establishment of enclosed shopping centers has rapidly grown in Asia (Erdem et al., 2004; Yusof et al., 2011). For example, retail centers in Malaysia are considered a catalyst, and the number of these retail centers continues to rise along with economic growth in the area (Yusof et al., 2011). In Thailand, enclosed shopping centers, especially those with entertainment facilities, are highly in demand, with 60% of visitors seeking for them (Jariyagudchakorn et al., 2014). In other parts of Asia, such as in Hong Kong and Singapore, the increasing number of shopping centers is mostly influenced by tourism and high-class lifestyles (Tsang et al., 2003; Coclanis, 2009). Dubai has also been regarded as the shopping capital of the Middle East because this city offers many exciting and thematic shopping centers as tourism attractions (Anwar and Sohail, 2004). The same phenomenon is observed in Indonesia, where the number of shopping centers has increased because of the modern lifestyle needs of the people in large cities and the burgeoning development of property and population.

The development of shopping centers itself cannot be separated from several factors, such as cultural shifts, technology, climate change, and physical or environmental changes (Carr et al., 1992). These factors encourage the increased use of spaces, especially public spaces, in shopping centers for various activities. However, public spaces in shopping centers are categorized as quasi-public spaces (Celik et al., 1994; Akkar, 2007; Carmona et al., 2010) that have a low degree of accessibility and openness because these are privately owned, built, managed, and controlled under high-quality, comfortable, and safe environmental conditions regardless of the environment itself (Carr et al., 1992; Akkar, 2007). Some shopping centers are also integrated with city transportation systems, so their function as nodes in urban areas increases the use value of their public spaces. Today, this change in function and the increased number of public spaces are typical phenomena in post-industrial cities, including Asian cities (Akkar, 2007).

Atriums in shopping centers are not designed as a meeting place in the broad sense, so they have a low degree of public function (Punter, 1990). However, Kazemzadeh and Azadi (2014) explain that including the atrium as a part of town space is important to establish a positive image and maximize the effect of the sense of place. In Indonesia, the increased use of atriums in shopping centers cannot be separated from their common functions. Currently, atriums serve as orientation centers and spatial identification means for shopping centers. Open plazas and atriums also function as cultural activity centers for people, both for social activities or product exhibitions. With the presence of atriums, shopping centers do not only serve as a transaction location but also as a place to socialize and represent local culture. Some atriums are even decorated in theatrical ways to attract people to visit and use them. This observation is in line with the opinions of Kazemzadeh and Azadi (2014) who state that atriums help create social value and visual communication through their role of shaping socio-cultural meaning and the sense of place.

Because of the increased use of atriums, focusing on their design aspects has become important. Atriums have certain characteristics that differentiate them from other atriums.

Although globalization has resulted in many similarities in the configurations of shopping centers and atriums around the world, Morris (1998) states that each shopping center has its distinctive characteristics, and each offers a sense of place. A "mixing and multiplying" strategy is observed with each unique local variety, such as in the types of local, national, and international stores that can be found in atriums. This strategy provides a unique and specific sense of place and vitality to each shopping center. Similarly, global modern places can have cultural backgrounds that make them stand out from their counterparts. Therefore, although atriums have similar typologies, they have unique, distinctive characteristics.

A place has specific physical and social dimensions (Najafi and Mina, 2011). Similarly, the distinctive characteristics of atriums as places appear in both their physical and social settings that strengthen both the spatial and social functions of these atriums. The successful use of an atrium as an orientation and identification center, as well as a socialization center, creates a sense of place in a shopping center.

Few studies on atriums that provide a sense of place through their architecture and interior design have been conducted even if a large number of shopping centers are found in Indonesia and Asia. Several studies have focused on atriums as a part of urban planning (Kazemzadeh and Azadi, 2014) and as an aspect of building science and safety (Gardestat, 1989). In research on shopping areas, especially with regard to their environmental behavior, studies have typically focused on the atmospheric effect of shopping centers or on their interior elements, such as lighting, music, and scent. The condition of the shopping environment is often associated with the desire for exploration and patronage, as well as buying impulse. However, studies that specifically focused on determining the relationship between the shopping environment and the sense of place, especially with regard to atriums, remain limited.

To answer the need to identify the relationship between the shopping environment and the sense of place, this study aims to determine the atrium setting factors that provide a sense of place to shopping centers. This research is significant because strategically considering the atrium setting in relation to creating a sense of place is essential for property owners, management, and designers as they develop and plan activity centers for contemporary society.

2. Theoretical background

As a public space, an atrium can be categorized as a quasi-internal public place, which means that an atrium is a public space managed by a private organization (Celik et al., 1994; Carmona et al., 2010; Gardestat, 1989). Quasi-internal public spaces are commonly found in post-industrial cities (Akkar, 2007) and in developing countries that are influenced by globalization, privatization, and commodification. Quasi-internal public spaces have lower accessibility levels than other public spaces managed by the government; however, they still serve physical, psychological, social, economic, and esthetic purposes.

Similar to other public spaces in shopping centers, atriums function to provide spatial orientation. Based on the definition of Carr et al. (1992), which was explained

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