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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:

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