THE PHYSICAL CONSTRUCTION OF
SENSE OF PLACE
A Case Study of Ciputra World Shopping Centre
of Surabaya

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Abstract

New shape and concepts and creative ideas exploration with regard to experience creation which has the point of interests for customers in the public spaces of commercial building are often encountered. In this study, a shopping center is a case study to understand about the relation among physical designs of commercial public space which conditions the atmosphere to be the mental image of sense of place creator at certain level. As a recreation center does, such unique design of this space will help the management to creatively create a “theatrical” atmosphere of space for the visitors, especially those public spaces, so that those shapes finally can seduce the visitors to be interested in visiting the space and thus, a special bound between the shopping centre and the contemporary society can eventually be created as the preference place to support their lifestyle.

This study is aimed to find out the role of internal public space (internal quasi public space) arrangement, especially at a shopping center, in order to create the sense of place. Sense of place is usually constructed from physical factor and social factor, but the study will only focus deeper on the physical factor. Further, the specific objective of study can be described to obtain the scheme of correlation between public space physical elements in its role to create various scales of sense of place, especially at a shopping center.

The study case in this matter is Ciputra World Shopping Center of Surabaya. The subject of study consists of 15 informants at Ciputra World of Surabaya. The method of study employed herein is called qualitative methods will be joined. The result is physical dimension of certain place is related to comfort as well as to create the sense of place.

Keywords: sense of place, physical factors, shopping centre

INTRODUCTION

Recently there has been an increase in the number of shopping centers across the country following the improvement of the Indonesian economic growth.
The urban society with their urban lifestyle sees these shopping centers as a space for their various activities—from leisure to business activities—that can augment their mobility and productivity. Shopping center managements are starting to respond to this matter and try to provide a comfortable environment for the people to complete their activities.

In order to do this, shopping center managements have carefully arranged the exterior and interior’s physical atmosphere, especially in the interior’s public area, to reinforce the orientation towards the shopping centers. There have been numerous attempts to develop the interior, particularly the public area, in order to create a brand new image and experience through an ambience felt perceptually by visitors’ senses during their activities. Shapes, new concepts, as well as creative ideas regarding the creation of experience and the development of new shopping centers that have a point of interest for consumers are several points to consider.

Similar to the ambience of a recreational spot, a decorative physical design in a shopping center can help the management to create a theatrical shopping atmosphere. Visitors can then feel comfortable during their activities by sampling more and more new experience offered by the management through various sensations (for instance visual, sound, smell and textural experience). According to Williams (2006), a design that creates experience is the new ongoing rationale so a shopping center’s design should be able to innovate to create a new experience, thus allowing it to have a competitive edge in creating a sense of place (Kramer, 2008 and APRINDO, in Marketing Mix 2009).

![Picture 1. A beach ambience is conjured with the addition of a water feature and a ship replica in Pacific Place Shopping Center, Jakarta (left), and a scene depicting a city alley in Gandaria City, Jakarta (right).](image)

An ambience created from a public space design will provide a sense of place for a shopping center. This sense of place works as a stimulus for visitors during their activities. Later in the process visitors will respond through their actions (wanting to stay in the shopping center and explore or wander away and leave the shopping center). Positive behavior from visitors will foster the desire to return to that place. A repetitious visit to a shopping center is a cyclical phase that will strengthen visitors’ sense of place (an emotional attachment towards a place because of the integrated condition of the physical and social environments). Cyclical here means activities not related to a chronological timeline but those associated more with the idea of meaning and frequency of activities conducted in
that place (Altman and Low, 1992). In some previous researches, the attachment towards a shopping center is seen in visitors having corresponding personal concept and lifestyle with the characteristics of the shopping center. Attachment in various levels can happen with the medium of personal and social meanings if a place’s meaning or symbol, both physical and social, is in line with the sign or locus of the self (Lavin & Agatsein, 1984; Proshansky et al, 1983; Rapoport, 1982) on Altman and Low (1992: 258). Shamai (1991) even defined that someone might have a sense of place from the lowest to the highest scale in the context of attachment (from not having a sense of place to willing to sacrifice for a place). In addition, the dependence towards a public space in a shopping center according to Cross (2001) could be categorized as having a sense of place that is based on the commodification correlation because someone considers a shopping center as an ideal room for self-actualization.

On the other hand, the design of a shopping center can be considered a failure when it can’t create the necessary sense of place that can boost visitors’ desire to interact, whether individually with the products or with their communities. Nevertheless, physical element is not the only factor that causes the failure of a public area; there are also other reasons such as social, cultural, economic and political changes. Physical and social elements of a public space have a significant role in creating a sense of place (Steel, 1981) for the public space, especially in a shopping center. This research is focused on creating a sense of place from the physical condition of a shopping center.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Sense of place can be defined as a subjective perception process as a result of the complete sensorial process towards an environmental condition (physical and social) that brings out a relationship status towards a place. According to Shamai (1991), a sense of place has a scale level that separates someone’s reaction towards a place, from not having a sense of place, knowing about a place, having a sense of belonging towards a place, having a place attachment, knowing the purpose of a place, willing to participate in developing a place, and finally wanting to sacrifice for the place.

Cross explained that the emergence of sense of place can stem out from six types of relationship, namely biographical, spiritual, ideological, narrative, commodified and dependent. This research's focused on the commodified type. Commodified means a connection that is formed from a place that reflects self-actualization and lifestyle as well as from other places that reflect something ideal. It has a cognitive type of bond that is based on choice and desirability. Dependent means that the development of sense of place usually happens because no other options are available, for instance because of economic factor. It has a material type of bond.

A shopping center, according to Cross’ table (2001), is a place where the sense of place is developed from a commodification relationship, in which its cognitive process arises because the place is in line with the lifestyle. From a typological point of view, a shopping center’s sense of place is relative to a mid-level local identity.
RESEARCH METHOD

In this research the data was collected through a focus group discussion, personal notes and visual recording by the author, who at the same time acted as a participant observer. The use of focus group discussion was aimed at exploring how the respondents experience the sense of place of the research object, in this case Ciputra World Shopping Center in Surabaya. This method is expected to provide further understanding from perspective respondents and present a detailed and comprehensive result.

Participants’ discussion here is determined by a group of visitors who were fulltime university students (Wilhelm and Mottner, 2005; Taylor and Conzenza, 2002). This condition was determined by several reasons. First, participants who liked the ambience of the research object, in this case Ciputra World Shopping Center, would therefore have a knowledgeable point of view regarding the physical spatial context of their activities. Second, this respondent group was chosen because it has been proven in previous researches that respondents at a young age enjoy a physical environment which provides the ideal experience (Wilhelm and Wottner, 2005; Tabak et all, 1998). Respondents were categorized as young adults with the age span of 18-33 years old (Papalia et all, 2008), with middle-class economic condition. The reason for this being, in the lifecycle model, respondents of this age have reached the achieving stage in their cognitive development and are in the phase of pursuing their ambitions in terms of career and family life. They are also seeking self-actualization. (Papalia et al, 2008). Shopping center is one of the places they visit to actualize themselves while expressing their lifestyles.

The process of holding the focus group was preceded with explaining the aim of the research. In order to streamline the discussion, first the participants were asked to write down their personal data as part of the respondents’ characteristic. Then they proceeded to give their responses to several discussion topics that had been prepared previously.

The researcher analyzed the written connection of the focus group and the solutions obtained. At the end of the focus group discussion recorded notes were checked and read several times and important parts were highlighted. The objective was to select phrases containing hidden ideas that would support the research and to compile them. In addition, in order to reinforce the research, interviews with the shopping center management and observations were conducted to complement one another.

RESEARCH OBJECT

Designed by DP consultant, the architects responsible for the design of Mall of Dubai, Suntec City, Esplanade-Theatre on the Bay Singapore, Vivo City as well as Singapore’s Fountain of Wealth, Ciputra World entered the first phase of its development with a mall measuring 90,000 m² and two apartment towers comprising 415 units. Some of the interesting physical areas here include the v-walk area, rotunda and express escalator. These areas will be elaborated below.
RESPONDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIARITY WITH THE RESEARCH OBJECT

Respondents were university students with an age span of 20-22 years with the characteristics and relations towards their visit to the shopping center elaborated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Companion</th>
<th>Classmates</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Weekdays after class</td>
<td>Week end</td>
<td>Week days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>3-4 hours</td>
<td>2-3 hours</td>
<td>1-2 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Once a week-twice a week</td>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>occasionally</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending</td>
<td>&gt;IDR 40.000</td>
<td>&gt;IDR 200.000</td>
<td>depends on number of family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip time</td>
<td>30-45 minutes</td>
<td>20-30 minutes</td>
<td>20-30 minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Hang out, working on paper, shopping</td>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>Meeting and hang out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favourite Place</td>
<td>V-walk, Express Escalator, Food wave, corridor, attractive stores.</td>
<td>Corridor, Dept Store, Hypermart, V-walk, Other tenant spaces, and restaurant.</td>
<td>Café, atrium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In summary, after the interview it was established that the most influential factor concerning time of visit, visit duration, frequency, spending and length of trip, as well as activities and favorite places in a shopping center were their companions. Most respondents brought along their colleagues, family members and friends from their hobby-related communities and organizations.

When visiting the shopping center with friends, the visit duration ranged between 3 – 4 hours with a frequency of once to twice a week. During each visit, they at least spent a minimum of IDR 40,000 (the number varies depending on the activities) with a length of visit between 30 - 45 minutes. The activities that the respondents generally did with friends were relaxing, finishing their assignments, and going shopping. And their favorite locations included V-walk, Express Escalator, Food Wave/Food Court, Corridor and other interesting stores.

Meanwhile, during visits with family members, the visit duration was shorter, between 2 – 3 hours with the main recreational activity being having a meal together. The visit was done once a week and took up a budget of around IDR 200,000 (the number varies depending on the number of family members and activities). Their favorite places with family included the corridor (for strolling around), department store, hypermart and restaurants (the last three locations were selected for eating and shopping purposes).

When the respondents did some activities inside the mall with friends from their communities, the average time of visit was only around 1 – 2 hours. They generally spent the time to do activities related to their communities so their visit largely depended on whether the activities were being held there or not. These activities usually took place in the atrium and café.

**PHYSICAL FORM ELEMENTS THAT INFLUENCE SENSE OF PLACE**

The interview managed to find several physical elements that influenced the making of the informants’ sense of place. These physical elements can be separated into two parts: the architecture and interior variables. For the architecture variable there are some supporting parts as indicators including landscape, parking area, material, sign board, as well as form and scale. The interior variable has these following indicators: form and finishing of planes, thematic zones, tenant spaces, lighting, zoning and grouping, air conditioning, seating area and scale of public area. Table 2 below presents the result of the physical elements found in the description obtained from the focus group session.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Sense of Place Elements from Physical Construction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ARCHITECTURE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form and Scale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The architecture feels different from other shopping centres in Surabaya. The neon sign and symbol appears neat and has an appealing shape, unlike other shopping centres which usually have posters. The cascading landscape is also quite interesting. (Yulia Sentosa)

Exterior-wise, the shape of the building is visible even from a distance; for a mall in Surabaya this feature is quite prominent. Most shopping centres in Surabaya have a firm, rectangular shape while this shopping centre displays a more dynamic and modern exterior which represents the lifestyle and fashion of its visitors. (Margareth)

The façade is extremely attractive and noticeable. In fact it is very eye-catching, as if jutting out of the Mayjend Sungkono road. Because the building next door, Vida, has a rectangular shape, the shopping center...
creates a vista for the road. (Esther)
Its advantage lies in its shape and materials. (Wina)
Exterior-wise the architectural concept borrows the shape of a ship, which is very interesting to look at as it closely resembles the real thing. (Deasy)

| INTERIOR | The interesting interior element is the undulating ceiling that is inspired by the waves, in keeping with the overall theme of the shopping center. Like other elements, the window display is very well organized. (Cindy)
|          | In several parts the best floors are made of marbles and granites; the ceiling also looks attractive. The main entrance’s lighting accessories comes in the form of a stately chandelier which appeals to visitors. (Surya)
|          | The most interesting floor is the V-walk area with its dark ambience, chosen to emulate the nighttime. The park-inspired decorations add to the charm of the area. (Willy)
|          | The impressive thing is the grouping and positioning of the stores, both on each floor and on different the floors of the shopping centre. For instance there is a supermarket with branded stores directly placed on the floor above it, while more affordable items are positioned on the next level. In addition, Ciputra makes the most of its corner by using them for photography display area. (Ester)
|          | The entrance showcases a floor with a unique pattern and wonderful curves. The atrium appears unique with its wavy ceiling and excellent lighting. There is also the express escalator that links the ground floor and V-walk as well as the floors, walls and columns of V-walk that resemble the trunk of a tree, giving the area a comfortable, restful ambience. (Andri)
|          | Ciputra World offers something different with a different layout. There are the oval and linear shapes that appear frequently to give the place a distinct flavor. Curved shapes can also be found in the wall elements, complete with complementing lighting design. The shopping centre’s longest escalator has a wall that goes up towards the ceiling to avoid an overly lofty appearance. Other parts of the shopping centre feature ornaments such as plastic leaves and garden lamps. (Theoderikus)
|          | A favorite area is the V-walk. Between columns clad in vegetation are comfortable benches for sitting leisurely. Other favored characteristics of the shopping centre are its wall element and ceiling that resembles ripples of water. (Melisa)
|          | The atrium’s ceiling interior features waves and curves and is very tall. The interior is spacious and the public areas appear roomy. Providing larger space for movement is the sense of place of Ciputra World’s distinctive character, which is one of the newest shopping centers in Surabaya. The retailers’ interior feature a variety of designs and thus far from boring. The interesting point of the interior layout is the grouping of the stores, which is very helpful in finding a particular item. (Margareth)

The finding of these two elements is backed by the view of Kramer (2008) and the research of the previous researcher (Kusumowidagdo, 2012). Kramer (2008) in his book Retail Center Development stated that the important elements that should be focused on in the physical form of a shopping center are the interior and architectural features. On the other hand, in the researcher’s previous research (2012), there were some additions to the architecture and interior features, which included supporting facilities such as toilets and parking areas. These indicators were obtained from various literary studies, and not by directly seeking visitors’ perception through an in-depth interview as was done for this particular research.
This physical condition also provides spirit for this place. Some key words from the spirit / aura can be explained with characters such as elegant, dynamic, unique, urban and lifestyle, as evident from these following opinions:

*For me this shopping center feels full of lifestyle and urban.* The appearance of the tenants and other facilities here tends to spoil mall-goers who give extra attention to their looks. (Margareth)  
The elegant design makes for a comfortable visit, which is also suggested from the name of Ciputra World. (Winna)  
A lot of shopping centers in Surabaya opt for a stiffly rectangular shape while Ciputra World is more dynamic and modern, which reflects the lifestyle and fashion of its visitors. (Willy)

In addition to the physical condition, social condition also plays a role, such as the social interactions that happen with communities or society through events held by the management of the shopping centre, usually in collaboration with producers and communities. Such opinion also came up in the interview:

*Moreover, social-wise this place often holds events and launch incessant promotions for them, which increase the desire to take parts in the events.* (Margareth)

The background for the perception of sense of place in the shopping centre is inescapable from the individual factor as well as the shopping centre management factor. The individual factor here is based on contemporary culture (lifestyle) and demographic factor (age, occupation, household lifecycle). First, the existing cultural context influences the condition of the society to appreciate every experience felt in certain places (economic experience era, Pine and Gilmore). Thus a place becomes the reflection of self which is indicated in the lifestyle, as seen in the opinions below:

*The V-walk area has an interesting architecture and space. It also has good aeration for resting and relaxing, as well as having an enjoyable time with friends.* (Theoderikus)  
*To sum up the spirit of Ciputra in a few words: fresh, elegant and unique.* (Wina)  
The stores available here correspond with our lifestyles, from the places to their designs. For instance the wonderful cinema with its great design. I think the fresh and young characteristics of the design really suit a lifestyle that is always on the lookout for something new. In addition to the design factor, the various events held here are also a plus point. (Surya)

In line with the informants’ view stated above, the concept of extended self which was proposed by Belk talks about places / spatial spaces which are an extension of one’s self (Belk, 1990); furthermore, in the same line of thought Fiske (2011) also said the same thing about shopping centers which are strategically designed, have supermarkets or department stores as magnet to attract
visitors and sell various items. These places are actively used by numerous groups of people as private spaces, to display and consume mode because the stores, facilities and ambience of the shopping centers are imagination sources that provide experience.

Second, the respondents’ characteristic factor, which stems from individual factors such as age, occupation and household lifecycle, influences the need to visit the shopping center and the activities they enjoy. This can be seen from table 1 and several opinions below:

The reasons to visit the shopping centre are usually to hangout and meet friends, colleagues and families as well as going around and sampling the cafés. With my parents, I usually eat, go shopping in the department store or other stores and roam around the shopping center. (Andri)

I visit the shopping centre because in addition to being located in a nice environment, the prices here are affordable and the things on sale suit what I need. (Surya)

My activities in the shopping centre include walking around the shopping centre with friends as well as family members. My favorite location when I go with my family is the playground area where I take my toddler siblings to play before having a meal in the restaurants. We also go shopping in the clothing stores. There are five of us in my family, including myself. (Yulia Sentosa)

From the shopping centre management’s side, obtained from a separate interview, it was known that there have been efforts from the physical and social settings of the shopping center. From the physical setting, there is an effort to provide a more tangible branding tactic by designing the public areas. For tenant areas, there is a tenant coordinator unit that works to control the layout of the tenants in order to appear attractive at all time. From the social setting, events are held both for promotional purposes as well as to create a bond with the society’s life so that at least the shopping center offers a contribution for the society’s social life, thus bringing people closer to it. As a result, the sense of place here is a factor which is co-created by the developer.

CONCLUSION
1. Sense of place is created from a physical condition. In the case of a commodified space like Ciputra World shopping center, it consists of an architecture feature (with elements) and an interior feature (with elements). This physical side has to be distinctive enough to make it stand out from other constructions.
2. In addition to the physical aspect, there is also a social aspect that influences sense of place.
3. The physical side is influenced by an individual factor as well as an effort factor done by the management of the shopping center. The individual factor here is based on contemporary culture (lifestyle) and demographic factor (age, occupation, household lifecycle).
4. The occurrence of sense of place is a process that results from three sides. The role of owner and creator (architect) in creating a place is inevitable, and there
is also the management’s role to communicate the existence of a place in an accurate way. The last is the role of the users to stay in the place, make use of the place and give their appreciation to the place.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


