

Preferences for indoor or outdoor setting in leisure time activities

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Background

Research on Perceived Restorativeness (PR) clearly shows beneficial effects of natural environments on well-being and performance.

Objectives

Our aim was to examine the personal preferences for indoor or outdoor settings in leisure time activities in detail.

Method

We performed a two-phase study with psychology students as respondents (mean age = 25.27, 60% females), applying a mixed methodology (quantitative and qualitative approach). The Perceived Restorativeness Scale (PRS, German version, $\alpha = .54$ to $.76$) was administered in phase I ($n = 15$), photo questioning was applied in phase II ($n = 5$). Students could freely choose their leisure time activities. They were instructed to perform the same leisure time activity with comparably high level of activation under indoor as well as under outdoor conditions.

Results & Discussion

Phase I: PR means for outdoor settings ($M = 1,79$) differed significantly from indoor scores ($M = 1,19$; T-Test for dependant measures, $t(14) = -4.386$, $p = .001$, $r = .773$). Phase II: Participants' statements clearly reflect the restorative quality of outdoor environments ("...never gets boring... a meditative character.", "...much more favourable, restorative"). Counting of benefits vs. disadvantages demonstrate the superiority of the outdoor conditions (20:5) compared to the indoor conditions (4:6):

Benefits outdoor	Benefits indoor
better feeling/sensation/atmosphere/well-being (5)	calmness (2)
better air quality (3)	sheltered/not dependent on the weather (1)
fun/pleasure/enjoyment (2)	availability of sth to drink/need satisfaction (1)
beauty of the nature (2)	
fascinating, inspiring, motivating (2)	
no limitations (2)	
cognitive recreation/ruminant character/contemplation (1)	
calmness (1)	
better lightning conditions (1)	
diversion (1)	
Disadvantages outdoor	Disadvantages indoor
noise (2)	limitation (2)
distraction (1)	monotonous/"always the same" (1)
dependent from weather (1)	more motivation required (1)
not influenceable (1)	boring (1)
	closeness (1)

The mentioned outdoor benefits in the photo questioning (marked in red) are in line with the experiential qualities of favorite places found by Korpela et al. (2001). Apparently, the outdoor condition is perceived as positive as a favorite place. Besides, environmental quality indicators are relevant for the perception and evaluation of leisure time settings.

The restorative effect of being outdoors is replicated in this study. Nature supports contemplative experiences even in young adults. The mixed method approach with dependant sample proved useful for the detection of the multi-faceted benefits of nature during outdoor activities.

References

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Above: Examples of the photos taken by the students for the photo questioning during an outdoor and an indoor activity.

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