

KANSEI APPEALING OF BALCONY DESIGN

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to analyze the citizens' emotional perceptions towards differential balcony designs of City Yeast - balcony project in 2008 and its feasibilities for enhancing city attraction. "City Yeast" is an urban activity which makes each Taiwan city and its culture unique and further becomes an attractive city by applying creativity. As a common facility in Taiwan society, balcony is always full of the blots on the city landscape. That is why they focused on this space and solicited the design proposals from citizens.

For understanding whether City Yeast - balcony project in 2008 had the positive influence on city attraction, interview and questionnaire were utilized to compile opinions. Moreover, before the quantitative surveys, the experimental sample selection, definition of attraction and corresponding relationship between design images and Kansei vocabulary were defined by those respondents. The quantitative results conclude the attractive design factors and further evaluate whether City Yeast achieve its target.

***Keywords:** Kansei design, balcony, city attraction, City Yeast*

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background -The City Yeast activity

In view of the fact that each city image tends to become more similar due to the globalization, Agua Design, a private design company in Taiwan, planned the City Yeast activity. (Figure1) It is partly a five-year project from 2006 to 2010 which aims to make one place unique through creative ideas. The curatorial group referred to European city marketing experiences and transfers them to Taiwan. Richards and Wilson (2004) point out that cities need to find new ways of distinguishing themselves from other cities which can be regarded as their competitors in tourism and investment markets. With the core concept of anti-globalization, the City Yeast insists on applying more attractive elements that originate from our inner culture in hope of making both residents and visitors emotionally attached to a place and then seizing the chance to promote Taiwan's image in World Exposition of Shang Hai in 2010.

Besides, the City Yeast highly integrates multi-disciplinary approaches to realize those creative plans. All participants from various backgrounds are regarded as the yeasts to ferment, and they are invited to present more concrete actions in the city. This concept attempts to widen the connotation of "creative class" which was defined by Richard Florida.(2002) Several studies argue that this partiality would mainly benefit the higher educational group, and upper class part of society and increase socio-economic polarization in city-regions.(Bontje and Musterd, 2009) Matsuoka and Kaplan (2007) generalize one statistics from previous researches that half of the studies(46%) emphasize that citizens hope to participate in the city design process.

Unlike the infrastructure-based city marketing strategies that always accompany high-cost, the City Yeast applies the daily elements such as street furniture (2009) and taxis (2008) to build an attractive city. The mega events may be used as a platform for creating landmarks, as in the case of the 1992 World Expo in Seville or the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. Nevertheless, the City Yeast has the ambition to achieve the equal benefit and generate significant media interest from citizens' bright ideas.



Figure 1: The related products and events of City Yeast

1.2 Balcony – one of the elements in city image.

Modern balcony, one of the intersections of the indoor (private) and outdoor (public), is chosen as the key issue of the City Yeast in 2008 to reverse the trend of current unplanned balcony landscape. The scope of balcony-redesign is limited to “a platform that projects from the wall of a building, or supported by pillars, and surrounded by a balustrade to prevent falling.”(City Yeast, 2008)

Although balcony is a semi-public space that influences city landscapes, now it is commonly messy in Taiwan, especially the cloth-hanging phenomenon. Understanding the restrained relationship between people and space may help to comprehend the cause: Rapid urban growth rates elevated land price, which led to smaller apartment.(Cromley, 1990) A survey conducted by Lin (1990) indicates that the insufficient space is unable to satisfy the activity demands for Taiwan residents. Due to this difficulty, residents have no choice but to move some daily needs, like storage or cleaning, into this semi-public space.

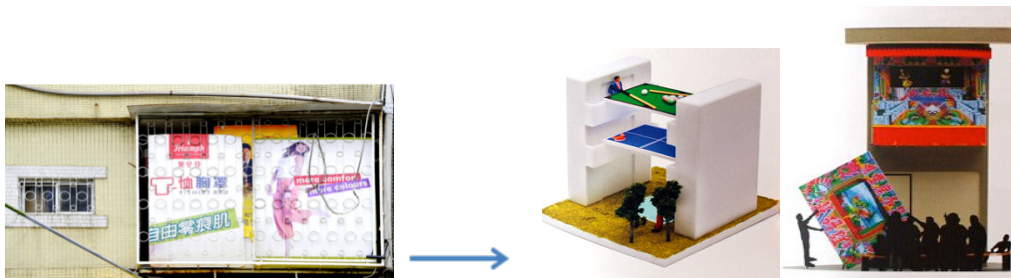


Figure2 : The current balcony in Taiwan and the redesign samples of City Yeast

1.3 City attraction

City attraction refers to the individuals and their psychological relationships with the environment they live or visit. Kurt Lewin (1936) believes that a person's feelings and behavior are a function of tensions between the things in the world (city) that a person is aware of at any one time. Thus, Hsieh (2005) defines the “city attraction” as “the appeal and characteristics a city possesses”.

Which factors would the individuals feel “attractive”? As for the issue of this study, balcony designs may form one of the place image parts. The urban activity tends to underline the importance of the image concept in attracting residents and visitors. Yet, moods (person's feelings) are subjective experiences and, therefore, must be measured through self-report. (McAndrew, 1993) For the sake of finding what kind of balcony samples can be good design criteria, Kansei Engineering may be one of the proper methods to measure image designs.

2. METHODS

2.1 Selection of balcony design samples

The balcony samples of this project consist of more than 300 images. To be further classified, a six-people team with three landscape designers and three non-expert citizens is formed. Finally, 15 balcony images are collected.

2.2 EGM (Evaluation Grid Method) process

The attractiveness items of the balcony designs are categorized into three parts: “initial reasons”, “abstract feelings” and “concrete subjects”.

(1) Prepare related image cards for 20 respondents and ask them to sort out the two levels-“like” and “dislike”.

(2) Take those beloved cards out and ask them “why do you like this?” and the answers are located in the “initial reasons” part. i.e.: function...

Ask them “why function makes you like it?” and the answers are located in the “abstract feelings” part. i.e.: safe, convenient...

(3) Ask them “what are the characters about safety?” and the answers are located in the “concrete subjects” part. i.e.: handrail...

(4) Construct the EGM results and the initial reasons are classified into function and shape.

2.3 Quantitative survey

The questionnaire is divided into two parts, one is to analyze the citizens’ emotional perceptions towards differential balcony designs of City Yeast - balcony project in 2008, and the other is to evaluate the feasibility of enhancing city attraction by those design proposals.

First, the questionnaire are drafted based on the EGM framework, and 20 respondents are asked to select “the most critical subject” they feel for each abstract feeling. This evaluation seeks to better understand the impacts of balcony designs on attractive senses so that the city designers could create more attractive space arrangements. The questionnaire and its results are as follows:

Table1: The questionnaire framework and results

Initial reasons	Abstract feelings	Concrete subjects	
Function	Safe	Handrail	(13)
		Monitor	(7)
	Pleasant	Social contact (talk with neighbors...)	(6)
		Amusement (play with pets...)	(12)
Eco-friendly	Performance (singing, dancing)	(2)	
	Plant	(11)	
Convenient	Energy-saving (solar panel...)	(9)	
	Flexibility (adjust the space and function...)	(6)	
Shape	Beautiful	Trouble-saving (be easy to clean, do sport...)	(14)
		Rich colors	(2)
		Good configuration	(4)
		Simple style	(12)
	Gorgeous	Ample lawn	(2)
		Gold wall	(11)
	Luxurious brand association	(9)	

Second, after seeing those images and filling out the questionnaire of first part, respondents are asked to evaluate those designs. This evaluation aims to check the activity effects. The survey results are as follows:

Table2: The hypothesis verification and results

Hypothesis	Level	
Those balcony designs suit for the toolkit of city image improvement.	Pretty much agree	(3)
	Agree	(7)
	No comment	(5)
	Disagree	(3)
	Pretty much disagree	(2)
The balcony designs suit for real environment.	Pretty much agree	(1)
	Agree	(1)
	No comment	(6)
	Disagree	(3)
	Pretty much disagree	(9)

3. DISCUSSION

People like mainly the balcony functions and the shape of the balcony designs. As for the design subjects, simple style, and functions of amusement and trouble-saving seem to be the most crucial factors to attract people. However, in other categories of abstract feelings, there is no clear difference to demonstrate a specific essential factor. Besides, as for the second part in questionnaire, the feasibility of the balcony designs is partly doubted. Most of the respondents have negative attitude towards its feasibility on application in real environment but approve that it is an approach to enhance city attraction.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study summarizes some attractive factors of balcony designs for future reference. Furthermore, the discoveries indicate that The City Yeast applies a correct concept to enhance city attraction, but it is required to reexamine its feasibility. Without understanding the real situations, some creative proposals are hard to practice. It is suggested that its strategy should be reorganized.

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