

Relationships between airside views and attention restoration in airport environments – exploratory studies

E. Ratcliffe¹ & J. Freeman^{1,2}

¹ Department of Psychology, Goldsmiths, University of London, London, United Kingdom

² i2 media research limited, London, United Kingdom

Introduction

Fascinating environments may facilitate attention restoration after fatigue. Gottdiener (2000) suggests that airports are imbued with excitement associated with travel. We hypothesised that aircraft could serve as symbols of travel-based fascination and restoration, and that passengers who viewed them whilst in the departure area of an airport would rate the area to be more restorative than non-viewers.

Method

In a field study across two airports, 154 departing air passengers were asked how much time they had spent viewing aircraft; how restorative they found the departure area, measured via the Perceived Restorativeness Scale (Hartig et al., 1996); and how restored and relaxed they felt, measured via the Restoration Outcome Scale (Korpela et al., 2008).

In an independent-samples experimental study online, 50 participants rated photos of airside airport environments with or without aircraft on three PRS Fascination items and measures of arousal and valence. Participants' usual reason for travel was leisure. They were randomly assigned to aircraft or no-aircraft conditions, and were asked to imagine the photos were views from an airport seen before departing on holiday.

Results

In the field study, passengers who reported viewing aircraft rated the departure area as significantly more restorative and fascinating than those who did not. This effect increased with reported time spent viewing aircraft, and varied between passenger types. At Airport 1,

infrequent passengers who viewed aircraft found the environment more fascinating than did non-viewers. At Airport 2 this effect was found in frequent passengers.

In the online experimental study, photos with aircraft were rated as significantly more fascinating, arousing, and positively valenced than those without. Fascination was positively related to both arousal and valence.

Discussion

The results suggest restorative potential and outcomes as a result of viewing aircraft in certain airport environments. In the field study, variation in effects between passenger types may be due to differences between the airports, and reflects limitations to internal validity caused by the quasi-experimental design. However, the common restorative effect of having viewed aircraft indicates that built as well as natural environments can be restorative, and that this restoration may vary depending on the presence or absence of symbols of fascination. Fascination may be afforded by affective and arousal responses to built as well as natural stimuli. These findings suggest that the restorative properties of built environments should be considered in their design, in order to optimise user experience.

References

- Gottdiener, M. (2000). *Life in the air: Surviving the new culture of air travel*. Maryland, USA: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Hartig, T., Korpela, K., Evans, G.W., & Gärling, T. (1996). Validation of a measure of perceived environmental restorativeness. *Göteborg Psychological Reports*, 26, 1-64.
- Korpela, K., Ylén, M., Tyrväinen, L., & Silvennoinen, H. (2008). Determinants of restorative experiences in everyday favourite places. *Health & Place*, 14, 636-652.