Trees in the Business District studies about consumer ‘habitat’

Kathleen Wolf, Ph.D.
Research Social Scientist

University of Washington
College of the Environment

Spokane Urban Forest Workshop
May 9, 2015
overview

trees in retail settings
studies overview
design ideas
conclusions
Trees & Retail Environments Research
Trees & Shopper Environments Research

• Research Questions •
  trees and visual quality?
  trees and consumer behavior?
  trees and product pricing?

• Methods:
  mail out/in surveys
  national or local sample
  residents/nearby city residents

partners: U of Washington, NGOs, business organizations
funded by USDA Forest Service
Image Categories (sorted by ratings)

Pocket Parks
mean 3.72
(highest)

Full Canopy
mean 3.63

Scale: 1 = not at all, 5 = like very much,
26 images
Enclosed Sidewalk 3.32

Intermittent Trees 2.78
No Trees
mean 1.65
(lowest)
(high - 3.72)
1. Place Perceptions
   • Place Character
   • Interaction with Merchants
   • Quality of Products

2. Patronage Behavior
   • travel time, travel distance
   • duration & frequency of visits
   • willingness to pay for parking

3. Product Pricing
   • higher willingness to pay for all types of goods
   • higher in districts with trees – 9-12%
strip malls
vegetation varied using image editing
shopper survey
freeway roadside
1. Place Perceptions
   • Place Character
   • Interaction with Merchants
   • Quality of Products

2. Patronage Behavior
   • travel time, travel distance
   • duration & frequency of visits
   • willingness to pay for parking

3. Product Pricing
   • higher willingness to pay for all types of goods
   • higher in districts with trees – 9-12%
social science of consumer behavior

‘atmospherics’
Companies stage an experience when they engage customers in a memorable way.
ALPHA
Awaji Landscape Planning & Horticulture Academy
typical retail street in urban Japan
Namba Parks, Osaka

view from nearby hotel
interior
retail space
ground level
small plazas
retail entry
up-close nature experiences

place of respite
Namba Parks
retail success & nature experience benefits
lessons learned?

social spaces
small rooms
variety within unity
Bainbridge Island, WA
“main street”
Austin, TX
identity

affordable materials

message of renewal
public xeriscape

shared design & management
summary

studies of trees in business districts
perception, preference & behavior
design & place messaging/identity
Nature and Consumer Environments

Shoppers are increasingly interested in the experience of shopping, as well as the goods and services they expect to purchase. A series of studies has investigated associations between the urban forest and people's response to shopping settings.

These studies show that providing for trees in the streetscape is an important investment for a business community. The presence of a quality urban forest positively influences shoppers' perceptions, and probably, their behavior. The information below includes research studies, booklets to help create and sustain beautiful streetscapes.

Studies

Trees and Business - Growing Together

A National Research Program

Trees provide environmental benefits in cities, but also contribute to the economic well-being of communities. Studies have found that shoppers respond positively to well-designed streetscapes. These findings have been consistent across large, medium, and small cities. The most positive consumer response is associated with urban forest where overhanging tree canopy helps create a "sense of place" that enhances the experience of shopping. Details of research found in sections below.

www.naturewithin.info