The goal of this research study was to understand biophilic design and its influence on the interior environment and man's behavior. For the purposes of this research study, we focused on how biophilic elements make occupants feel relaxed and calm. The literature review was chosen because it tells us that individuals who are relaxed in a retail setting tend to be in a positive mood which in turn increases their consumer buying power. (DeKaan, 2016) In terms of residential environments, research shows that natural light makes residents feel calmer and in turn they will have improved moods and sleep better. (DeMaria, 2018)

As indicated above, this research study focused on biophilic design in interior environments and an occupant’s well-being. For the purpose of this research study, we focused on how biophilic elements make occupants feel relaxed and calm. The literature review was chosen because it tells us that individuals who are relaxed in a retail setting tend to be in a positive mood which in turn increases their consumer buying power. (DeKaan, 2016) In terms of residential environments, research shows that natural light makes residents feel calmer and in turn they will have improved moods and sleep better. (DeMaria, 2018)

The survey results show that biophilic design does in fact increase consumer buying power in a retail environment because it makes the consumer feel more relaxed in the space. Respondents agreed that they would spend more time in a space with direct views to the outside and naturally lit spaces which correlate with building fenestrations. When asked to choose between a naturally lit retail store and an artificially lit retail store, 57% preferred the naturally lit space and would choose it again. If the space were to be artificially lit, 55% preferred a color palette of blues and greens while 45% preferred greens and yellows. This is consistent with research by Browning where they state that real materials have a positive effect on them in both retail and residential environments. In a natural retail space, natural materials helped enhance their retail experience by making the space feel more comfortable for both spaces (retail and residential). Biophilic design can increase consumer buying power because they agreed that these elements reminded them of nature which in turn could have a positive effect on their shopping experience. In a retail space, consumers may be more relaxed when asked about the kind of food they would like to eat in the space. 57% would rather have linear forms in a retail setting whereas curvilinear forms took preference in the home. Both linear and curvilinear forms deal with shape/elements.

Survey results show that biophilic design positively affects a person’s well-being in a residential environment. Building fenestrations impacted occupant’s opinions about their home in which the respondents strongly agreed that their well-being was positively affected by rooms with direct views to the outside and natural light. When asked to choose between two living room images; 98% of respondents preferred the living room with floor to ceiling windows over the living room that was artificially lit and had a lack of windows. The residential respondents aligned with the retail respondents for shape/elements. 57% preferred a color palette with blues and greens and 43% preferred greens and yellows.Respondents were also interested in the materials in the home. It is found that fewer people are interested in both materials (retail and residential) because they agreed that these elements reminded them of nature which in turn could have a positive effect on their shopping experience. In a retail space, consumers may be more relaxed when asked about the kind of food they would like to eat in the space. 57% would rather have linear forms in a retail setting whereas curvilinear forms took preference in the home. Both linear and curvilinear forms deal with shape/elements.

The first survey topic that we covered is building fenestrations, which is the focus on natural light and the views that the occupant has from within the space through windows. Retail studies indicate that naturally lit stores can create a relaxing atmosphere that is attractive to consumers. (Biophilic Retail Spaces, 2016) According to the literature review, consumer’s buying power is increased the longer they spend in a store because they are more likely to find other things that they like while looking around. Natural light in a residential setting helps improve sleep habits and improved mood of the resident. (DeMaria, 2018) Research tells us that a visual connection to nature can be restorative and make the occupant feel calmer while in their home. (Ryan, 2014)

Color is the second topic that we covered, specifically color commonly found in nature and how it makes individuals feel. Warm colors (reds, oranges, and yellows) are good at grabbing the occupant’s attention and attracting them to a retail space. The same literature review, (Biophilic Retail Spaces, 2016) goes on to say that blues and greens can aid in relaxation therefore it is better to incorporate cooler colors (blues, greens, and purples) in the interior of a retail space. In terms of residential environments, colors can help to create a certain atmosphere in the home. The literature review written by Nancy Bounds discusses how warm colors, natural materials, soft furnishings, and lower levels of lighting can create a “homelike” atmosphere within the occupant’s space. (N/A, 2019)

Literature Review

A quantitative method was utilized to explore biophilic design and its effects on occupant’s well-being. Prior to beginning the survey process, IRB approval was obtained. A 35 survey was collected through a survey a researcher developed after conducting an extensive literature review of published architectural and interior design research and residential projects. The survey posed nine questions related to biophilia in the retail environment with the individual answering on a Likert scale [1- absolutely disagree to 5- absolutely agree] or they chose a photo that they perceived best answered the question. This survey then went on to pose the exact same nine questions, but they were related to a residential setting. Students from the Furnishings and Interiors Program and Visual Merchandising students were asked to participate in the survey because they are designers for future retail and residential environments. Therefore, it is important to gather their perceptions of biophilic design and its applications in both commercial and residential settings.

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