Factors Influencing Place Attachment to Middle-Eastern Restaurants in the United States: A Case Study

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Abstract:
The purpose of this study is to explore the factors that affect Arab customers’ place attachment in relation to an Arabic-designed restaurant in the United States. The Middle Eastern culture, representation, and identity are made explicit in the restaurant. The research is conducted as a case study, and the data-gathering methods involve interviewing the restaurant owner, distributing questionnaires to customers, and taking pictures of the restaurant to record the place identity. Twenty-five Arab customers were selected, using purposive sampling technique, for the questionnaire. In addition, the owner of the restaurant was interviewed in order to obtain in-depth information about the restaurant and the services provided. Because this study focuses on customers’ feelings and perceptions of the restaurant, a qualitative method of data collection was employed. The findings illustrated that Layalina Restaurant represents a meaning of place for Arab customers. The main physical characters that contribute to place attachment among participants are representing cultural elements, comfortable seating, and supporting group and personal activities. On the other hand, the psychological and social attributes that influence Arabic customers attachment to the restaurant are safety, comfort, protected personal space, the sense of ownership, networking and socialization which improve occupants’ feelings for and attitudes regarding the place. In a globalized world, interior designers need to understand the cultural needs and behavior for those we design for, and this paper tried to contribute to that respect.

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