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Mystery, complexity, legibility and coherence: A meta-analysis

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Abstract

This article is a quantitative literature review on the correlations between preference and mystery, complexity, legibility, or coherence for three classifications of environments: all, natural and built. A literature search located 61 articles covering 12,452 participants and 3125 scenes. Data suitable for a quantitative review were found in 28 of those articles, covering a total of 6288 participants and 1820 scenes. There was a considerable degree of heterogeneity in the data for all environments, for natural environments, and for built environments, indicating that results have not been reproducible. Studies using expert panels to rate coherence, legibility and complexity produced smaller results than did experiments using the same population of respondents for preference and the other variables. Implications for planning future work efficiently are discussed.



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