

A Sound Environment Design Project for Kyoto Tower Observation Deck (3): Attitude Surveys Before and After the Renovation

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Since FY 2006, the author has carried out sound environment design work for the Kyoto Tower Observation Deck (5th floor) in collaboration with the tower's operators, Kyoto Tower KK (Shimogyo-ku, Kyoto). For the first time in the 43 years since it opened, the observation deck underwent a complete refurbishment, which was completed in late March 2007. It was decided to include improvements to the auditory environment in the form of a Sound Environment Design Project.

This paper constitutes an overall assessment of the project, as it reports the findings of on-site surveys to determine how visitors and staff perceived the spaces inside and outside the observation deck before and after the renovation work.

Specifically, the report covers four points: (1) a quantitative comparison of visitors' ratings of their impressions (measuring the effectiveness of the sound environment design); (2) a qualitative summary of visitors' responses to open-type questionnaires; (3) a quantitative comparison of the staff's responses to questionnaires; (4) a summary of interviews with the Kyoto Tower Business Department staff. An overview of the two-year design project is then presented, and some ideas for the future of the observation deck's sound environment are explored.

In the visitors' ratings of their impressions, every condition assessed was rated more pleasant after the renovation, confirming the effect of ambient sound on visual perception. The roles of sound and visual perception were found to be mutually reinforcing and inseparable.

In the open-type questionnaires, while visitors in general were positive toward the ambient music, regarding it as "natural" or unobtrusive and as enhancing the beauty of the view, the impressions reported by those with highly developed musical tastes tended to be divided. Thus, there are delicate issues involved when introducing ambient music into public and commercial spaces.

The quantitative questionnaire for staff recorded an overall impression that the deck interior

has become quieter since the renovation; at the same time, there is now a greater perception of noise at certain hours, as greater visitor numbers have led to more voices and sounds of activity.

In the interviews with the Kyoto Tower Business Section, the smooth realization of the project was attributed to the fact that the sound environment design was consistent with the tower operators' own concept of the renovation. The operators also recognized that the favorable outcome was due to the good relationship maintained among the three parties (client, contractor, sound environment designer) and their own willingness to provide generous access from the start of the renovation project.

In architectural environmental design or urban community development, designers tend to work in conditions that are not yet conducive to a satisfactory process, perhaps because of the low level of social recognition of the field. In the author's view, increasing the number of practical examples by encouraging this kind of approach at sites such as Kyoto Tower will contribute to the evolution and advancement of the field.