

Enjoyment of Trails: A flow-based study of contiguous signage recall

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Abstract

Flow is a state that occurs when the challenge of an activity and the skill level of the participant are in unison. This term has also been called “optimal experience” or “being in the zone” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). However, even a slight increase in challenge past one’s skill level can produce greater levels of enjoyment in any certain activity in which we engage (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Pearce, Ainley & Howard, 2005). This study was an attempt to add a slight increase in challenge of trail users at Katy Trail State Park (KTSP).

Through contiguous signage, or the content of one sign leading to the next, placed along the side of the trail, users were asked to recall the content upon their return from their trail walk via on-site questionnaire. The challenge, though non-physical, was an attempt to increase enjoyment in comparison to trail users without this signage in place. While mostly the enjoyment levels were largely homogenous, a few results did show some significance. Some users were found to be more “engrossed” or felt it “meant a lot” for them to be on the trail during the days of data collection. The exploratory nature of this study did net some results that could be useful in laying the foundation for future academic study in place attachment, enjoyment or motivation and provides some caveats for further study of enjoyment.