How Trails Make Us Feel

Critical Elements of Emotional Design in Trails

PTBA Sustainable Trails Conference, March 26 - 28, 2018
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Thank you if I have used something of yours

Parks Canada
National Parks and National Park Reserves, National Historic Sites, National Marine Conservation Areas, National Urban Parks and National Monuments
Trail Principles

7 Core Principles

[What we want the trail system to achieve]

42 Principle-based guidelines

[How it can be achieved]
How does this trail make you feel?

It appeals to the subconscious
Visitors Needs

Positive experiences kindle our curiosity and negative experiences protect use from repeating mistakes

Trail designers must seduce, shape and more importantly evoke an emotional response from the users
Emotional Design

Emotional design strives to create products that elicit appropriate emotions, in order to create a positive experience for the user.

Don Norman’ “The Design of Everyday Things”

3 Critical Element of Emotional Design for Trails
VISCERAL

Appeals to our first reactions when we encounter a trail. It mainly deals with aesthetics and the perceived quality from mere look and feel, and the engagement of the senses.
Behavioral

The usability of the trail, our assessment of how well it performs the desired functions, and how easily we can learn how to use it.
Reflective

Ability to project the trails impact on our lives after we have used it. How it makes us feel when not using it, or what values we find ourselves attaching to the trail in retrospect.
Putting the Trio Together

Every good trail design involves all three elements working together, effectively addressing all three cognitive levels of the human brain.
“The trail is in the land, its our job to release it.”
Jim Angel