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Testing Olmsted's Lasting Legacy—Comparing Design Theory and the Post-Occupancy Conditions of New York Central Park

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Abstract: Social media is a rapidly developing field in architecture and landscape research, which is used to understand public opinions and landscape use. The year 2022 sees the 200th birthday of Olmsted, the founding father of landscape architecture in America. While we commemorate Olmsted's ground-breaking contribution to the landscape architecture discipline, in-depth analyses are always required to examine historic legacies for their current relevancy. Taking his first practical work, New York Central Park, as an example, this paper systematically revisits Olmsted's park design theory and vision, and investigates its post-occupancy conditions from 11,501 posts on TripAdvisor. The results show that the current park use pattern confirms the validity of his scenic image theory. At the same time, his design works have become increasingly popular as public projects to foster social interaction.

Keywords: Olmsted; New York Central Park; social media data; text analysis; landscape heritage; applicability

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1. Introduction

Olmsted is a fundamental figure in landscape architecture history. He founded the discipline of landscape architecture in America and completed nearly 500 projects during his lifetime [1]. The great works he left in hundreds of American cities were not only designed as environments for daily use, but also represent a collection of living design literacies and principles. 2022, the bicentennial of Olmsted's birth, is an appropriate time to contemplate Olmsted's legacy. In the parks that have served the public for more than 100 years, what design programs have survived and thrived? What design literacies and principles are still relevant to daily use? What new elements emerge that enhance experiences of the public space? Until we find answers to these questions, it is difficult to argue that our commemoration of Olmsted pertains to the design practice of still-relevant public spaces.

This study used New York Central Park as a case study. As Olmsted's famous and most representative work, this park was the first of its kind in the United States that truly served the public, and it remained of great significance to both Olmsted's legacy and the society for which it was designed, as well as contemporary society [2]. In designing Central Park, Olmsted created landscape design as an occupation, and chose it as his career [3]. Central Park marked the birth of public landscapes and the birth of the discipline of landscape architecture [2]. This does not mean that the park never faced challenges. In the 1830s, due to the influx of immigrants into New York, the grid layout of the city was destroyed, and Central Park provided entertainment places and healthy leisure areas for every citizen of all classes in the city [4]. When it was first built, Central Park was very popular, and the number of daily visitors reached 2% of the population of New

York City [5]. However, its brilliance dimmed at the beginning of the 20th century. The maturation of public transportation made long-distance travel popular, which allowed people to experience real nature far from the city [4]. Park visitation fell sharply, and the park managers' ignorance led to its first decline [4]. In 1934, a large number of leisure and entertainment facilities were built, including 19 playgrounds, ballfields, handball courts, and Wollman Rink, to return it livelihood [6]. In the 1960s and 1970s, rapid suburbanization, and a lack of funds and personnel, led to the second decline. The park management committee, established in 1980 [4], effectively restored the park landscape and held large-scale activities such as concerts, festival celebrations and protests [6]. Today, Central Park still responds directly to the expectations of the population and public life in New York [4]. The Park Conservation Association spends nearly USD 78 million a year on the care and maintenance of the park [7] (Central Park Conservancy, https://www.centralparknyc.org/about accessed on 20 June 2022). Today, New York Central Park is loved by Americans and people throughout the world. Currently, more than 42 million tourists visit every year [8] (Kang, 2017, https://www.centralparknyc.org/articles/central-park-history accessed on 20 June 2022). By examining the historical maps (Figure 1), the changes to the park's program can be understood with greater clarity. However, the impacts of different programs in the park still remain little understood by most designers.

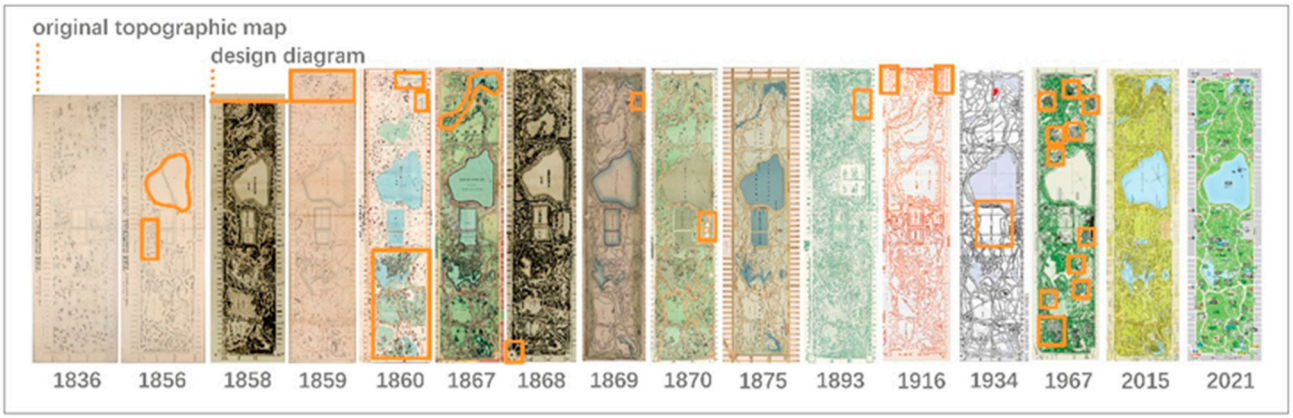

Figure 1. Pictures of plan changes in Central Park from 1836 to 2021 (Source: The maps of the park are from the Library of Congress website and were compiled by the authors.).

The overarching aim of the study was to explore the validity of Olmsted's design theory in the contemporary context. This raised the following research questions:

1. How did Olmsted envision the landscape elements, activities, and tourists' perceptions in the park?
2. What landscape elements will the current users prefer, what activities are they more willing to participate in, and what perceptions will they have of the landscape site?
3. What is the relationship between the landscape elements focused on by the tourists, the activities there in and the perceptions of the site?
4. What lessons can we learn by comparing Olmsted's original theory and the current usage pattern of Central Park?

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Framework

Two sets of data were used for this study. First, Olmsted's original design theory was extracted from the surviving literature and archives. Second, social media data about Central Park posted on the TripAdvisor platform in 2017 were used to reflect current users' observation, behaviors, and perceptions of the park. Both sets of data were sorted into the categories of landscape elements, activities and tourists' perceptions, which were compared. The study framework is shown in Figure 2.

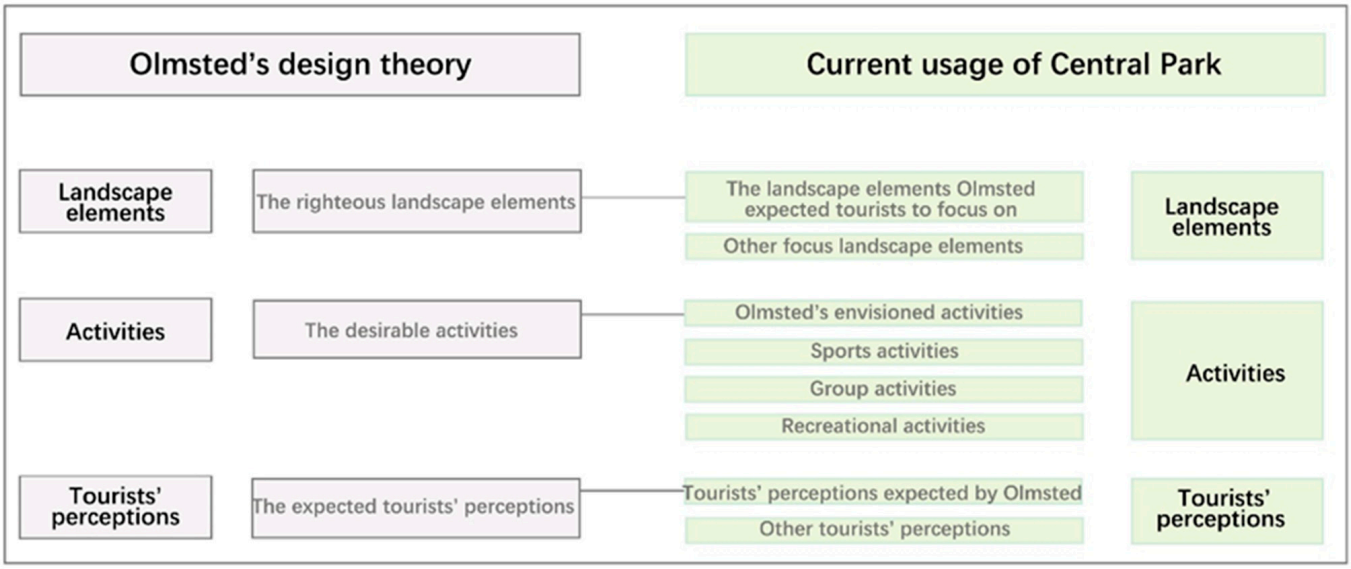

Figure 2. Study framework (Source: drawn by authors).

2.2. Olmsted's Design Theory Extraction from Literature

The data on Olmsted's design theory used in this study mainly come from the following sources:

1. The first source is *Frederick Law Olmsted: Essential Texts*, which was purchased by one of the authors on the AbeBooks website (http://abebooks.com/ accessed on 12 January 2021.). This book mainly collects 16 essays by Olmsted from the 1950s to the 1990s, revealing his thoughts on cities, residential sites, and the history and theory of urban parks. Most of Olmsted's design theories cited in this study are derived from this book.
2. The second document source is the official website of New York Central Park (https://www.centralparknyc.org/ accessed on 20 June 2022), which contains the historical records of the park, the description of the current uses of the park and the introduction of maintenance and management. In addition, in order to facilitate the research and protection of Central Park by tourists, students, teachers, scholars and professionals, the Central Park Conservancy provides a guide to researching Central Park and the Central Park Conservancy (https://www.centralparknyc.org/central-park-research-guide accessed on 20 June 2022). The research guide lists a large number of research materials in detail, including books on general park history, biographies, memoirs and papers, guidebooks and descriptions, annual reports, Department of Parks files, management reports and other official documents, and news about Olmsted's design ideas and the planning, design and management of Central Park. This study thus acts as an important source of literature and information.
3. The online website of the Library of Congress (https://www.loc.gov/ accessed on 20 June 2022) and the Official Website of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (https://www.nycgovparks.org/news/reports/archive accessed on 20 June 2022) were used to search for resources. There are various electronic materials in the Library of Congress, such as newspapers, books, printed material, photos, prints, drawings, and manuscripts about Olmsted and Central Park. Olmsted's manuscripts, historical photos, newspapers and historical maps of Central Park were selected from this website. The Official Website of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation contains historical reports, press releases, and minutes related to all parks and public places in New York, and was thus also an important source for our research.
4. Finally, the Web of Science (https://www.webofscience.com/wos/alldb/basic-search accessed on 20 June 2022) database and China's National Knowledge Infrastructure

(https://www.cnki.net/ accessed on 20 June 2022) were used to search for research papers by other researchers. "Olmsted" and "New York Central Park" were selected as keywords. The research results regarding these scholars, as well as the papers and resources related to our research that they referred to, were used as a source of information here.

2.3. Current Usage of the Park Extracted from TripAdvisor Comments

2.3.1. Post-Occupation Comments Extraction from TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor, a worldwide travel guidance website, has been ranked first among all Google travel review websites [9]. Therefore, TripAdvisor posts were the main textual data we used; 11,501 pieces of comment data were obtained in the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017. The study only selected content independently disclosed by users for an aggregate analysis, and excluded users' personal information.

2.3.2. Comment Processing and High-Frequency Word Coding

First, a code book was developed inductively by the authors by reading the comments separately, resulting in three categories: tourists' focus landscape elements, activities, and tourists' perceptions. Generally speaking, the nouns related to park use were recognized as the tourists' focus landscape elements, verbs as user activities, and adjectives as users' perceptions. For example, in the comment "Happy to get into this park. At this time, I am lucky to walk around with a different views and trees. I too try to bike around the park which are nice workshops", "views" and "trees" were recognized as the landscape elements focused on by tourists, "walk" and "bike" were activities in the park, and "happy" and "lucky" were the perceptions of the tourists.

Within the three main categories, the code book further developed eight sub-categories and 62 third-level categories (Figure 3).

1. Landscape elements. This category reflected the tourists' attention towards the park elements and facilities. This category was further divided into the landscape elements designed or mentioned by Olmsted (terrain, sound, color, material, view, waterscape, path, tree, lawn, etc.) and other elements (flower, plaza, sculpture, architecture, seating, lighting, service facility, playground, animal, etc.).
2. Activities. This category described the types of visitor activities undertaken in the park. It was further divided into four subcategories, including the activities envisioned by Olmsted (carriage, horse riding, relaxing and enjoying, sightseeing, talking, walking, sitting, sleeping, skating, rowing, traveling, eating), sports activities (exercise, run, bike, swing, climb, ballgame), group activities (wedding, gather, concert and show, political activity, religious activity, sing and dance), and recreational activities (draw and read, movies and theatre, market, photo-taking, entertainment games, exhibition, zoo and aquarium, museum).
3. Tourists' perceptions. This category was further divided into the categories described by Olmsted (natural, healing, picturesque, quiet, spacious) and other perceptions (fascinating, funny, reminiscent, love, glad, busy, crowded, dirty, disappointing, expensive).

2.4. Data Analysis

In this study, the Big Data Workshop program developed by the researchers' team was used to analyze data. The website is www.benzhi-studio.com: 7501 accessed on 25 June 2021. This program has three functions: 1. Statistics of word frequency given out by month. 2. Statistics of word frequency given by working days and rest days. 3. Statistics of correlation between different words. During its actual operation, the relevant comment text and code book were imported into the program.

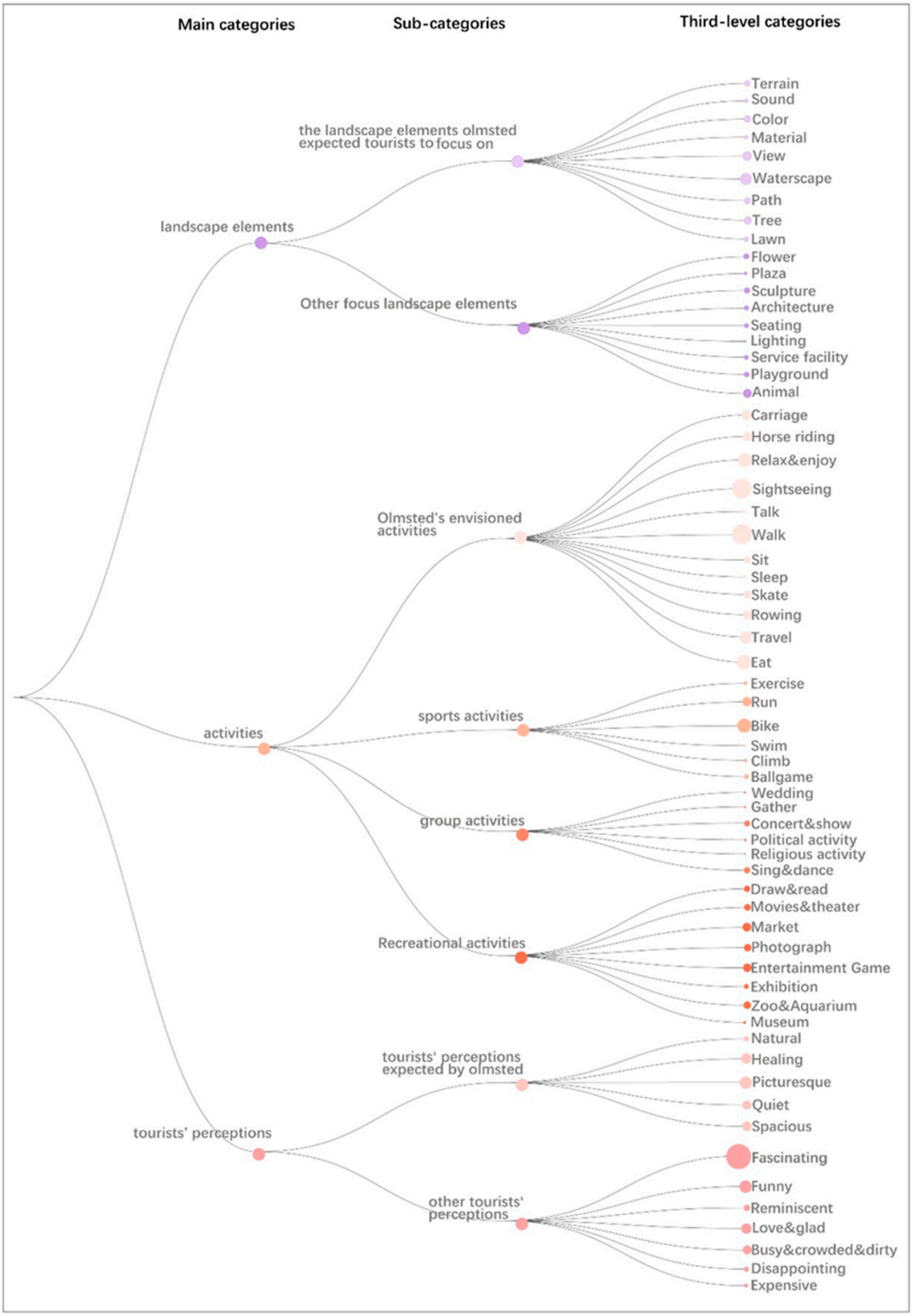

Figure 3. The code book (Source: drawn by the authors).

The Big Data Workshop program's ability to count word frequency by month was used to count the word frequency of each third-category word every month (discussed in Sections 4.1–4.3 of the article). The landscape elements that tourists focused on, activities

they participated in, and their feelings and perceptions of Central Park in 2017, could be obtained. The final results of each word's frequency are shown in Table S1 of the attachment file. We have uploaded this to the submission link.

The third function of the program—to analyze the correlation between different categories of words—was employed in Sections 4.4–4.6 of the article. Words appearing in the same comment are here considered to have a correlation. For example, in the comment "I think that renting a bike looked like a fun way to see more of the park", "bike" and "fun" would be considered to have a correlation. Then, the exported data be processed. The correlation data between words in the same category were deleted, and only the data relevant to different categories of words were retained. Finally, the correlation data between landscape elements and activities, landscape elements and perceptions, and activities and perceptions be obtained. The specific data are shown in Tables S2–S4 of the attachment file.

Finally, we visualized the data. According to the chart, we can see more clearly the specific distribution of the three primary indicators, and their correlation mode and strength, which can reveal the qualitative causal relationship between park elements, activities and perceptions.

3. Olmsted's Design Theory

By reviewing Olmsted's original articles and archives, Olmsted's design theory was revisited under the topics of landscape elements, activities, and perceptions.

3.1. The Righteous Landscape Elements

Olmsted admired "picturesque" landscapes, so he worked on creating "natural-looking scenery". Landscape elements in a park should be arranged to take on a pristine appearance, in which visitors could feel "surrounded by the beauty of nature".

He believed the most essential elements of a park were the lawn, forests, and waterscapes—"The most essential element of park scenery was turf in broad, the two natural sceneries to be developed in public ground of great extent are forests and water" [10]—as these could create an idyllic atmosphere. In his mind, a lawn was necessary to creating picturesque park scenes [10]. The forest created a lush and mysterious effect that was more interesting and entertaining than an urban enclosure [10]. The waterscape could reflect the natural dynamics of wind and roll clouds [11]—"water will be best situated where it can be seen from the greatest number of widely distributed Points of view" [10]. Regarding the plant design in the park, the planting forms included solitary planting, group planting, and patch planting [10]. Plants could be used as the background or the main focus of the scenery. When used as the background, group planting and patch planting could be adopted, and the overall landscape formation was very important. When it was the main feature of the scene, solitary planting was favored to form a good individual viewing effect [10]. In terms of tree species selection, high branch points and large crowns were preferred, with more native species and less delicate, neatly trimmed plants. "Trees should be high-stemmed and umbrageous; conifers should be excluded, and flowers and delicate plants little if at all used except in vases and baskets or as fringes of architectural objects" [10]. The surface of the park should be smooth rather than rugged, and gently undulating rather than hilly. Plains, gentle slopes and grassland are the most suitable forms of terrain in the park [10].

Artificial elements were designed in organic forms or blended with natural elements. Olmsted thought that winding and rolling roads were more interesting, and straight roads were boring [10]. Therefore, the roads he designed were curved with smooth connections, creating various roadside sceneries [12]. He thought "the objection to monumental and architectural objects in works of landscape gardening is that they are not adapted to contribute to any concerted effect". He believed that elements such as architecture and sculptures should be kept to a minimum so as not to draw visitors' attention and detract from the overall effect [10], and they should be carefully integrated into the natural design to reduce any damage to the integrity of the scenic views [10]. The buildings should keep a low profile, and

be consistent with the form of the landscape. The location, direction, elevation and contours of the buildings should be determined according to the characteristics of the surrounding sites. The locations of paved roads, the locations of trees blocking lines of sight and the locations of open lawns were all considered, as a gentle, quiet, dynamic, prominent and picturesque landscape is required [10]. Botanical gardens, zoos and other gardens should not be placed in parks. Their purposes are different from those of parks. They are two different kinds of entertainment. It would be better for them to be separate [10].

In short, Olmsted stressed the dominance of landscape scenery, while plants, waterscapes, roads, buildings, and other elements should form a coordinated landscape picture subservient to the overall theory [10]. The careful organization of simple elements should give visitors a profound sense of the landscape [10].

3.2. The Desirable Activities

Olmsted believed that peaceful recreation should be the main activity in an urban park, while noisy and exciting games and bad behavior should be prohibited. He believed it was necessary to make up for people's boring work through undemanding and quiet activities in the park. The enjoyment of scenery employs the mind without fatigue, and yet exercises it; it tranquilizes it and yet enlivens it. Through the influence of the mind over the body, this gives the effect of refreshing rest and a reinvigoration in the whole system [13]. Therefore, he advocated that the public should be guided through the park landscape to unconscious relaxation, rather than through noisy and exciting games or sports. Olmsted referred to this as "tranquilizing" recreation [13]. Olmsted believed that the park, as a complete landscape artwork, should maintain a pleasing state. If any activities undermined this work, it would reduce its attractiveness to tourists. Therefore, he formulated the rules and regulations of Central Park to ensure the park was used in the "proper way". Olmsted drafted the following rules, and had them posted in the park: "Not to walk upon the grass; Not to pick any flowers, leaves, twigs, fruits or nuts; Not to deface, scratch or mark the seats or other constructions; Not to throw stones or other missiles; Not to annoy the birds; Not to publicly use any provoking or indecent language; Not to offer any articles for sale" [14]. Over time, activities such as fishing, swimming, playing musical instruments, giving speeches and climbing walls were added to the activities he prohibited [2,14–16]. In addition, Olmsted had liked horse riding, rowing and skating since childhood, and he did not think that these activities were sports activities, but forms of transportation, so he designed enough space for these activities [17–19].

3.3. The Expected Tourists' Perceptions

Olmsted indicated that the greatest value of public pleasure grounds for large cities is in the rest they offer to the eyes and mind, and to the heart and soul, through their soothing charm, their fresh and inspiring influence, and the impersonal, non-overstimulating pleasure that only nature can offer to man [14]. As the closest place to nature in the city, urban parks should provide a place for spacious, quiet, natural, and picturesque experiences that restore calm [10]. He insisted scenery be use used to treat "excessive materialism" by alleviating "vital exhaustion", "nervous irritation", "constitutional depression", and the "loss of faith and lowness of spirit" [10]. Olmsted had a great sense of social responsibility, and took an active interest in the development of society and the public [20]. He believed that the overall health of society and cities depended on people's mental health, which could be guaranteed by rebuilding the connection between humans and nature [21]. Olmsted believed that urban parks served to create the same degree of "poetic beauty" as the original natural features present in urban areas [10]. They should present a feeling of "spaciousness and tranquillity" with a "variety and intimacy" of arrangement, thereby affording the most agreeable contrast to the "confinement, bustle, and monotonous" street-division of the city [5], and bring "the beauty of contemplation in the natural landscape" to the public. They provide a healthy form of recreation for city-dwellers and help park visitors to forget their mundane concerns [14]. As a natural landscape for the city, the park acts as a tranquil

resting place for the soul, and brings people "tender, subdued and filial-like joy" [22]. Finally, the summary of all Olmsted's design ideas is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Olmsted's design theory.

Category	Specific	Design Theory
Landscape elements	lawn	1. Lawn was necessary to creating picturesque park scenes
	forest	2. The forest created a lush and mysterious effect that was more interesting and entertaining than an urban enclosure.
	waterscape	3. Waterscape will be best situated where it can be seen from the greatest number of widely distributed Points of view.
	plants	4. The planting forms included solitary planting, group planting, and patch planting. High branch points and large crowns were preferred, with more native species and less delicate neatly trimmed plants.
	terrain	5. The surface of the park should be smooth rather than rugged, and gently undulating rather than hilly.
	road	6. Winding and rolling roads were more interesting, and straight roads were boring.
	architectures and sculptures	7. Elements such as architectures and sculptures should be kept to a minimum.
	buildings	8. The form of the buildings should keep a low profile and be consistent with the form of the landscape.
	Botanical gardens, zoos and other gardens	9. Botanical gardens, zoos and other gardens should not be placed in parks.
Activities	Activities he agreed to	1. Peaceful recreation should be the main activity in an urban park.
		2. The public should be guided through the park landscape to unconscious relaxation.
		3. Olmsted had liked horse riding, rowing and skating since childhood, and he did not think that these activities were sports activities, but forms of transportation, so he designed enough space for these activities.
	Activities prohibited by him	1. Noisy, exciting games, and bad behaviour should be prohibited.
		2. Not to walk upon the grass; Not to pick any flowers, leaves, twigs, fruits or nuts; Not to deface, scratch or mark the seats or other constructions; Not to throw stones or other missiles; Not to annoy the birds; Not to publicly use any provoking or indecent language; Not to offer any articles for sale.
		3. Fishing, swimming, playing musical instruments, giving speeches and climbing walls were added to the activities he prohibited.
Perceptions		1. Urban parks should provide a place for spacious, quiet, natural, and picturesque experiences that restore calm.
		2. Urban parks served to create the same degree of "poetic beauty" as the original natural features present in urban areas.
		3. Urban parks should present a feeling of "spaciousness and "tranquillity" with a "variety and intimacy" of arrangement.
		4. Urban parks act as a tranquil resting place for the soul, and brings people "tender, subdued and filial-like joy".

4. Big Data Analysis Results

The word frequencies of all third-level indicators were integrated into an analysis of the word frequencies of the three first-level indicators. The activities category was mentioned the most, 42,376 times (52.22%), followed by the perceptions category, 25,698 times (31.67%),

and the landscape elements of focus category, with a word frequency of 13,069 (16.13%). These large numbers indicate the popularity of Central Park, showing that visitors' post-occupation comments about the park focused more on descriptions of activities and their own perceptions.

4.1. Analysis of Tourists' Focus on Landscape Elements

The landscape elements that tourists focused on in the park are shown in Figure 4. The waterscapes received the most attention, followed by the overall view of the park and the animals, trees and colors it contains.

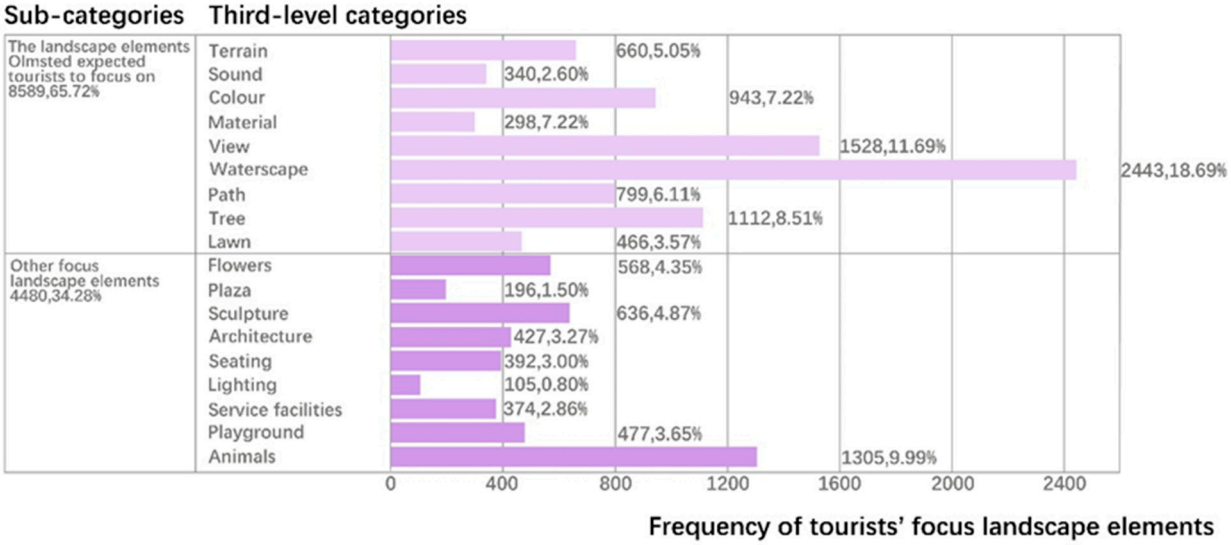

Figure 4. Distribution of tourists' focus on landscape elements (Source: created by authors).

Among the natural landscape elements expected by Olmsted to attract attention, waterscapes were the most popular with visitors, accounting for 18.69%, which confirms Olmsted's theory that "the waterscape should be designed in the most prominent position" [10]. The comments included not only descriptions of waterscape features, such as "The frozen lake is so scenic", but also of activities performed on the lake. The trees and lawns in the park also received some attention, accounting for 8.51% and 3.57%, respectively; as the current research results show, people usually preferred a natural environment with plants [23]. These comments not only included the praise of trees and the lawn—"The colours of the trees were amazing", "It was nice to see lawn and trees in a big city"—but also descriptions of related activities—"You can sing along with someone playing a guitar strummed Beatles song or lay out on the grass and have a special pic with your family". There were also some expressions of emotion—"When I actually go to the park and sat down to rest a little bit on the law. I gradually felt so calm and happy, just like in a movie". Sheep Meadow, the oldest green space in the park, was originally used as a pasture for raising sheep (as shown in Figure 5a). It was used to enhance the British pastoral quality of Central Park, and was only used as a place to enjoy the scenery, rather than for entertainment. After the sheep were moved out of Central Park in 1934, Sheep Meadow became a gathering place for public activities. The lawn is now not only part of the picturesque scenery of the park, but is also a place for people to undertake activities and socialize, as shown in Figure 5b. The terrain of the park was often mentioned by tourists in their comments, accounting for 5.05%. The gentle sloping terrain ingeniously designed by Olmsted is still considered beautiful in the minds of tourists—"Some great views from the castle. Random stair leading to the top of rock formations. Thick tree areas and open plains".

(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 5. (**a**) (**left**). Sheep in Central Park, c. 1900 (Source: Central Park Conservancy, 2021). (**b**) (**right**). Sheep Meadow, 2009 (Source: Central Park Conservancy, 2021).

The road cleverly designed by Olmsted also achieved the desired effect. In order to prevent the city from invading the park, he flooded all the transverse roads in the park to reduce and eliminate the presence of the urban landscape and sound [24,25]. Such an arrangement did not affect people's activities, nor hinder the traffic around the park. Tourists also paid attention to roads, with this constituting 8.51% of observations. Walking along the path, tourists could experience plenty of fun, away from the noise of the city—"It provides continuous enjoyment as you wander around the endless paths and avenues that criss-cross the park", "The screech of sirens was muffled as we leisurely wandered along the pathways".

Tourists also paid significant attention to the overall view in the park, with this accounting for 11.69%. The park landscape received praise for its scenic beauty, which was evident in comments such as "very clean park with unreal views!" and "we thoroughly enjoyed the beautiful view the park had to offer". Tourists also focused on the elements of color (7.22%), sound (2.60%) and materials (2.28%) in the park, which together formed the beautiful environment of the whole park—"Central Park is the greatest work of art in New York. Everywhere you go, at each turn, there is a wonderful vista which shows the eye of a landscaping genius".

People's attention towards flowers comprised 4.35% of observations, and their evaluations were very high. "There are flowers, making it romantic, fun and family friendly at the same time". Typhina's research also showed that parks with gardens are more popular [26]. However, Olmsted thought that parks should use less or no delicate flowers, because the colors of these flowers would disrupt the peaceful atmosphere in the park.

The sculptures (4.87%), playgrounds (3.65%), architecture (3.27%), plazas (1.50%) and other artificial elements in the park were also mentioned by many tourists, and comments indicated that these could enhance the attractiveness of the park—"The pounds, sculptures and bridges make this park stand out from others", "Belvedere Castle offers a territorial view of the park and the Merry Go Round is sweet". Just as in the current research, younger people have previously been found to prefer the artificial facilities in the park [27]. The park is more popular when containing more conveniences [28]. However, Olmsted believed that these elements were not in harmony with the natural landscape of the park and should feature as little as possible.

Central Park is an ideal place for bird watching and photography because of its diversity of animal species. Animals were the focus of 9.99% of the comment about Central Park. Birds, squirrels and other animals were described more frequently. Some comments praised them—"The squirrels running around was spectacularly"—and some described related activities, such as "You could hear birds singing and squirrels in the leaves", which increased the vitality of the park—"We had the added bonus of bumping into Big Bird too amongst the glorious changing colours of the trees and lovely peaceful landscape". In Olmsted's original design ideas, however, animals are not mentioned.

4.2. Analysis of Activities

The activities of tourists in the park are described in Figure 6. Among all activities, sightseeing and walking were the most popular, followed by eating, cycling, and relaxing in the park.

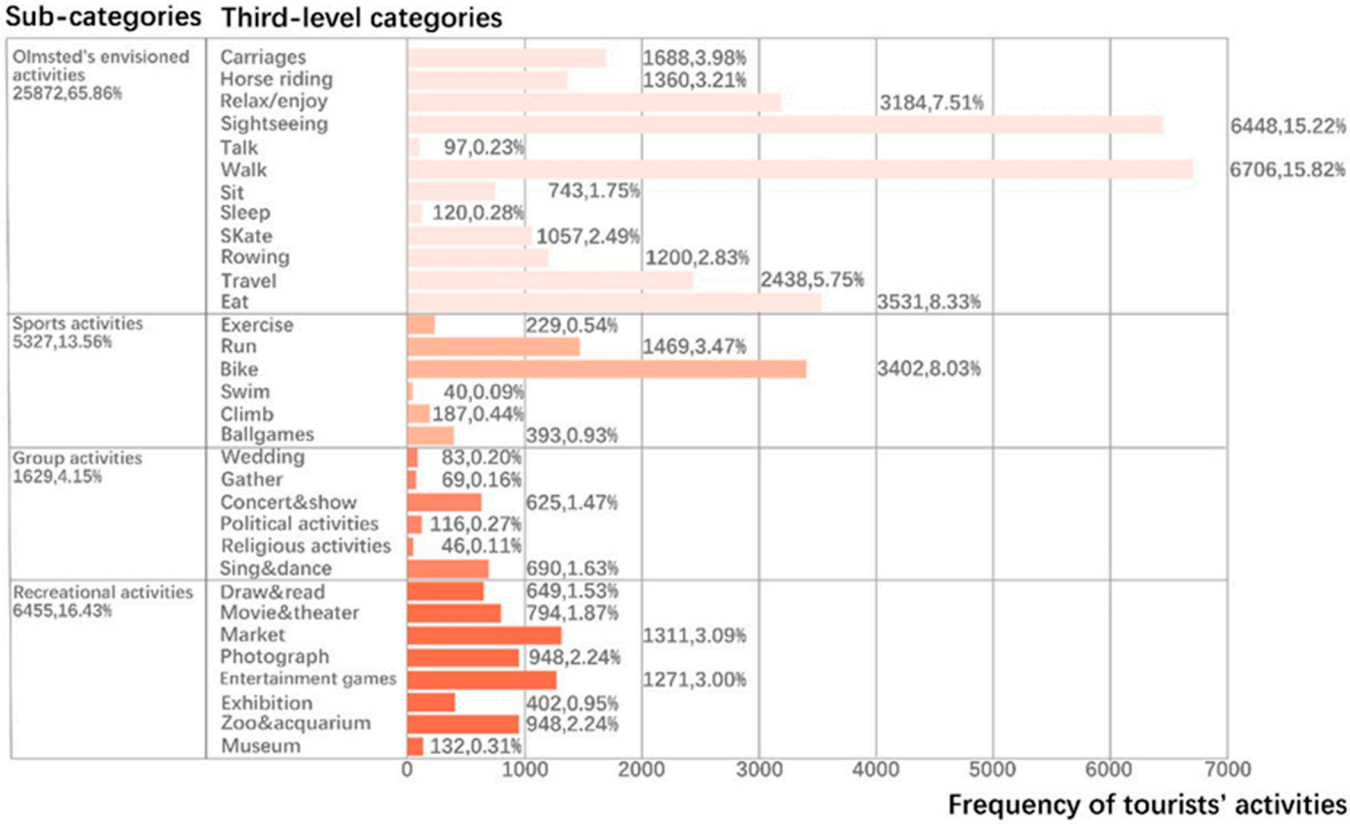

Figure 6. Distribution of activities (Source: created by authors).

The greatest number of people participated in walking and sightseeing, with these activities accounting for more than 15%, which is very consistent with the original intention of Olmsted to allow people to derive pleasure through the landscape's guidance. The description of sightseeing in the comments was not only related to the landscape elements, such as "I spend over an hour watching squirrels and administering the view", but also referred to the perceptions the tourists had—"You can just watch the sunset over the Skyscrapers and be in the park in silence". In the comments about walking, descriptions were given of walking places, such as "We walked from the Upper East Side, past the reserve . . . to the West side of the park". Descriptions of time were also given—"Had a beautiful autumn walk". At the same time, there were also some emotional expressions, "we were glad we camera to walk around". The next highest level of participation was found for eating, at 8.33%, of which picnicking in the park and eating in nearby restaurants were the two most important forms. The next most highly favored activity was to relax in the park, at 7.51%. The beautiful environment of Central Park allowed tourists to fully immerse themselves in it, away from the noise of the city—"Central Park has it all. If you are traveling to NYC it is the place to see". Olmsted preferred carriage travel (3.98%), horse riding (3.21%), rowing (2.83%) and skating (2.49%). Now, these are forms of paid entertainment in the park, and they also experienced a certain degree of participation—especially taking carriages. Many tourists used carriages as a means of transportation to visit the park. There were both positive comments on such activities, such as "carriage rides taking people through the park was beautiful to see", and negative comments on prices, such as "Horse and Carriages are expensive $4 a minute".

In terms of sports activities, biking was the most popular, accounting for 8.03%. Tourists generally believed that cycling was a better way to visit the whole park—"We rode bikes which were so much fun and a must for at least half your day as the park is BIG!". Running participation accounted for 3.47%. Most comments were positive, such as "Wonderful place to run". However, running was prohibited by Olmsted in the initial design of the park. In addition, marathons are often held in parks, and the tourists' comments indicate that Central Park is very suitable for marathon activities—"I can't image a more beautiful place to come across the finish line of the NYC Marathon than in Central Park". Some daily sports activities, such as exercise (0.54%) and ball games (0.93%), also featured to some extent. Although participation in swimming (0.09%) and rock climbing (0.44%) was low, the evaluations were positive—"My girls loved climbing on the rocks and seeing the family landmarks from movies", and "Swimming at Ladder Risk in the summer, and you can enjoy the park with nothing to do".

Group activities were sporadic, and the overall participation rates were low. Among these activities, the participation rates in concerts and performances (1.4%) and singing and dancing (1.63%) were relatively high—"We were highly promoted by the number of nooks where folk would aggregate to play music or dances or dance". Other group activities, such as gatherings (0.26%), political activities (0.27%), religious activities (0.11%) and weddings (0.20%), were not highly attended, but they did feature. This shows that Central Park is a place with strong inclusiveness, and different activities are undertaken in the park—"It can provide you with most any activity".

In terms of the entertainment activities, the participation levels were more uniform. Among them, shopping (3.09%) featured most highly. Tourists like to buy souvenirs and snacks at roadside stalls. In addition, every year from Thanksgiving to Christmas, there is a Christmas market in the park, with a very strong holiday atmosphere. Travelers can buy all kinds of things, and generally have very positive thigs to say—"The popup Christmas market was really big with lots of different items for sale". The participation rate in entertainment games (3%) was also high, and the evaluations were also very good—"We have masses of games and is a great place to warm up". Visiting zoos and aquariums (2.24%), and watching movies and plays (1.87%), are activities newly introduced by park managers during the decline of the park in the 20th century, and they are still enjoyed to a certain extent today.

In short, Central Park is an inclusive place where most people can enjoy themselves. Due to differences in gender, age, and other characteristics, different tourists had different preferences for activities. Studies have shown that women are more likely to be interested in picnics, horse riding and park sightseeing, while men are more likely to participate in mountain biking, rock climbing and horse riding. Compared with the elderly, young people prefer high-intensity sports activities, such as rock climbing and mountain biking [29]. For the park's designers, it was important to create an environment suitable for different people's favored activities. For example, flat sidewalks and fitness equipment are very important for sports activities in the park, while catering facilities and cafes are important for social activities [30].

4.3. Analysis of Tourists' Perceptions

The tourists' perceptions of the park are shown in Figure 7. The results show that among Olmsted's expected perceptions, the park was mostly "picturesque" and "healing". Among other feelings, the positive evaluation of "fascinating" was cited the most, followed by the evaluation of the park as "funny".

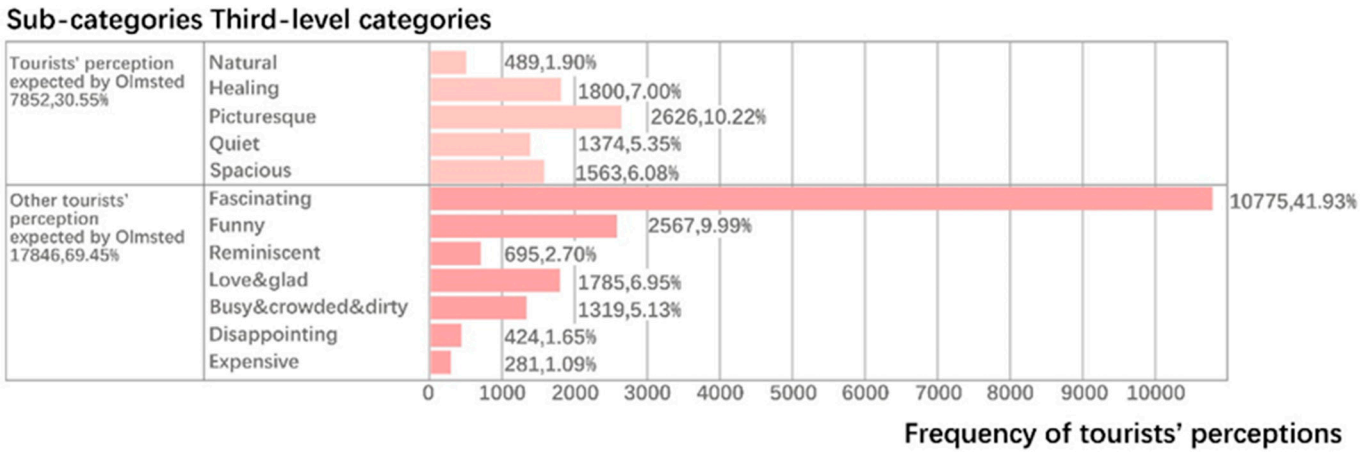

Figure 7. Distribution of tourists' perceptions (Source: created by authors).

Among Olmsted's expectations, the proportion of people who thought that the park was "picturesque" was the largest, reaching 10.22%. The comments mainly focused on the overall view of the park—"Everything is picturesque" and "I had no idea the park was this picturesque". Secondly, the park was considered "healing", "spacious" and "quiet", accounting for 7.00%, 6.08% and 5.35% of evaluations, respectively. The beautiful landscape of the park allows people to escape from the hustle and bustle of the city—"It's a safe and peaceful place to get away from the hustle and slow down and enjoy the scene". It was also seen as a kind of healing space for New York City—"This is how NY gets back to face and hearing from all the hustle and bush in the city". Finally, the park was evaluated as "natural", accounting for 1.9%. Central Park is considered an oasis in New York City—"Visited here in November and was blown away by the natural beauty of this park".

"Fascinating" accounted for the largest proportion of comments, at 41.93%. These evaluations contained a series of positive words, such as "great, wonderful, amazing, awesome, fame, popular, gorgeous, charging . . . ". This comprehensive evaluation of the park shows that the overall perception of Central Park is good. Tourists also used words such as love and happy (6.95%), fun (9.99%) and reminiscent (2.70%)—"Row the boat! Romantic and fun experience!", "The park has so many intelligent and movie memorable places within . . . so glad we came here". Here, the description of "fun" is beyond Olmsted's expectations, being cited via words such as "exploring, adventurous, intruding, interesting, fun, attractive, magnetic, characteristic . . . ".

In addition, negative comments accounted for 5.13% overall. Tourists thought that the environment of the park was dirty and messy—"It was altogether dirty and fluent with rush". The second-most common was "disappointing", accounting for 1.65%, and this view was mainly related to the maintenance and management of the park environment. "Central Park was a little dismantling. A little run down with a lot of grey instead of the lush green I was used to". In addition, a few of the assessments mentioned that the park was expensive (1.09%), mainly because of such features as the carts in the park.

4.4. Analysis of the Relationship between Tourists' Focus on Landscape Elements and Activities

The relationship between tourists' focus on landscape elements and activities is shown in Figure 8, where the thickness of the lines represents the intensity of the correlation. The results show that Olmsted's envisioned activities (walking, sightseeing, relaxing and enjoying, and eating) had the highest correlation with the landscape elements (waterscapes, views, and trees) mentioned in his design theory, followed by biking and running in terms of sports activities. Among other landscape elements, animals, sculptures and playgrounds were the most relevant to activities.

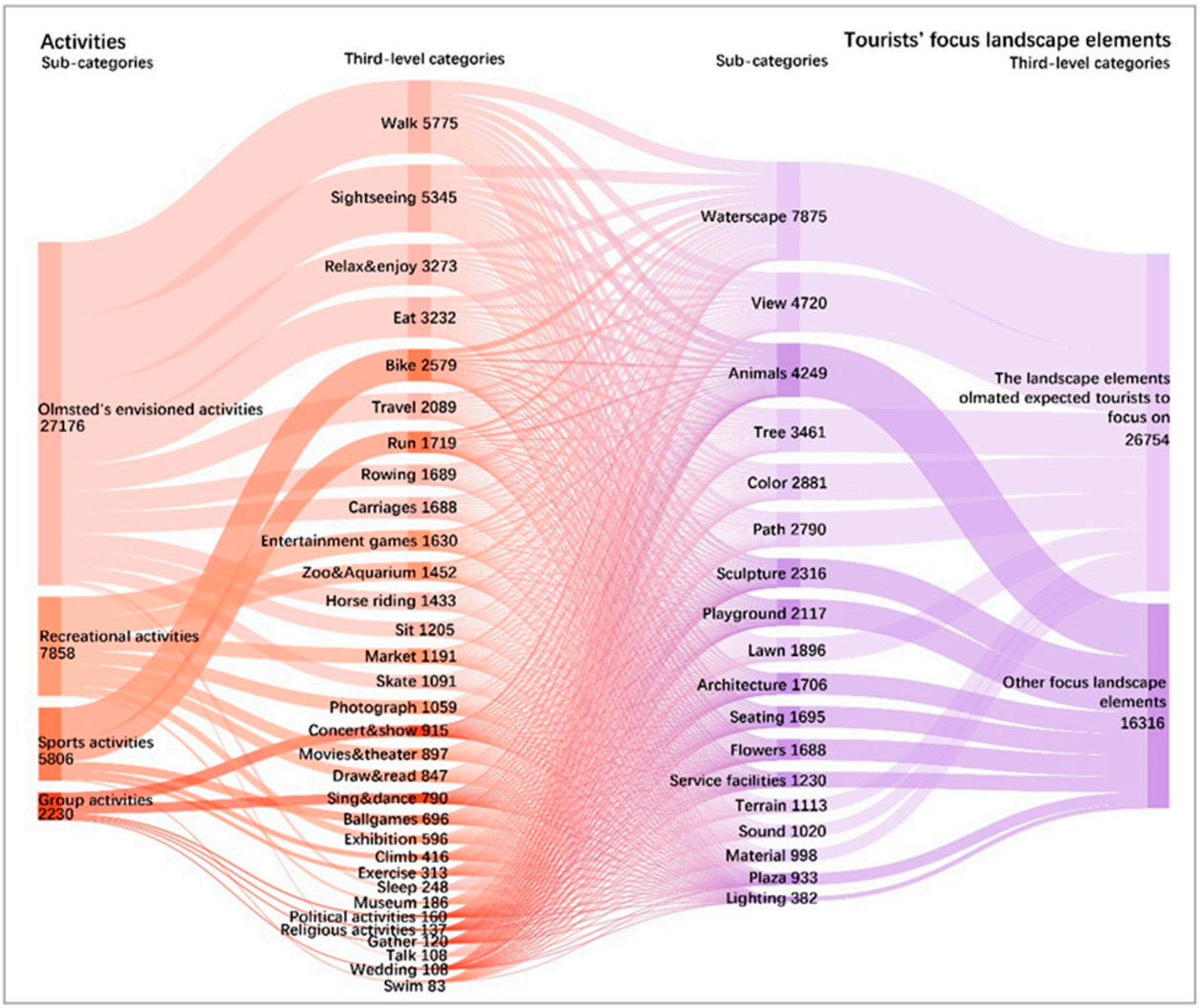

Figure 8. Sankey diagram of the relationship between the favored landscape elements and activities (Source: drawn by authors).

Among the landscape elements expected by Olmsted to be important, waterscapes were seen as the most relevant to activities. In the comments on the waterscape, 1014 mentioned "walking", 939 mentioned "sightseeing", 685 mentioned "eating", and 519 mentioned "relaxing and enjoying". The well-designed waterscapes could stimulate activities in the park, and people were more likely to pay attention to the waterscape when carrying out certain activities. The lake was a place that people often chose when rowing, eating, walking, skating, or undertaking other activities, "so many places to see so many different experiences Boating, eating by the lake and walking around to see the beautiful scene". The exquisite fountains were also considered good spots for tourists to rest and enjoy the scenery. These became the most attractive scenic spots in the minds of tourists, "Bethesda Fountain attracts my attention most. I come here every time". Next, the overall view of the park was also relevant to the activities. When "walking" (671), "sightseeing" (632) and "relaxing and enjoying" (427), tourists pay attention to their view of the park. "Spend hours walking around. Breaking taking views day and night". In this beautiful environment, it was easy for tourists to unconsciously participate in more activities, and partake in quiet entertainment in the picturesque scenery. Trees were also closely related to specific activities. The tree-lined paths were places in which people could enjoy the beautiful scenery and walk—"Plenty of beautiful park views as you walk through tree lined paths". The big trees in the park were also ideal places for people to relax and enjoy—"I find that

just being amongst the towering trees and the beautiful foliage revitalizes me and brings me peace and grounds me".

Among the other landscape elements, animals were the most relevant to the chosen activities. Of the comments on animals, 608 were related to "walking", 572 to "sightseeing" and 313 to "enjoying and relaxing". As a living element of the park, they easily attracted tourists' attention. Sculptures, playgrounds and other artificial facilities were also highly related to activities. This shows that the park needed not only a picturesque static landscape, but also diverse facilities to increase interest and enrich people's activities in the park, and to enhance the interactions between people and the landscape, as well as between people.

In actual design, designers should coordinate plants, buildings, terrain changes and the proportion of water, as well as balance the relationship between natural and artificial elements, and consider more activities and interactions to offer people a rich range of emotions [31].

4.5. Analysis of the Relationship between Tourists' Focus on Landscape Elements and Perceptions

The corresponding relationships between tourists' focus on landscape elements and their perceptions are shown in Figure 9. The results show that the landscape elements (waterscape, view, trees) described by Olmsted could stimulate tourists' perceptions more effectively. Among all the perceptions, "fascinating" was the most relevant positive evaluation, followed by "picturesque", as Olmsted envisioned, and then "fun". Among other elements, animals, sculptures and flowers were the most relevant to perceptions.

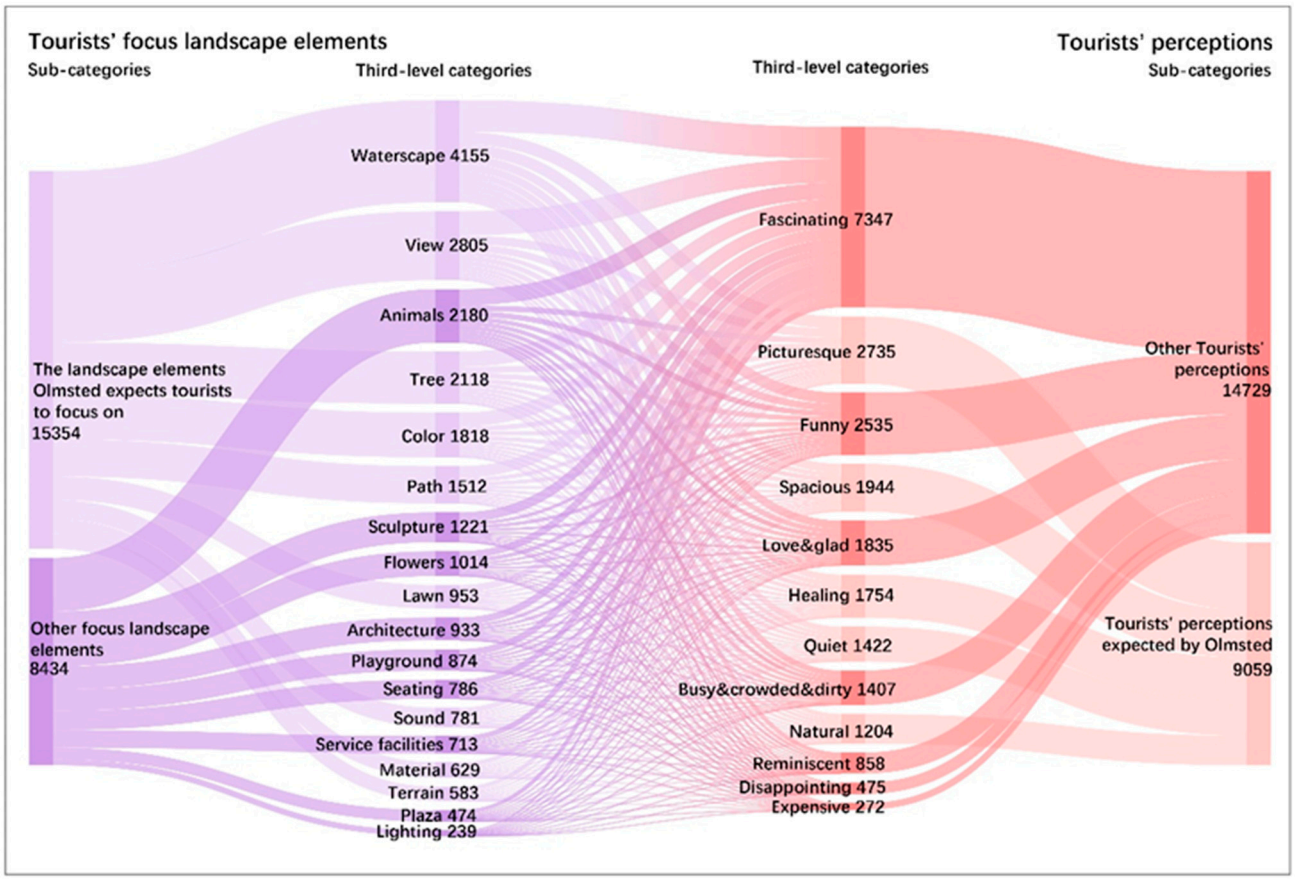

Figure 9. Sankey diagram of the relationship between focus on landscape elements and tourists' perceptions (Source: created by authors).

The waterscape had the highest correlation with tourists' perceptions among the landscape elements mentioned by Olmsted. In total, 1289 comments about waterscape were related to "fascinating", 499 comments were related to "picturesque", and 182, 244 and

268 comments were related to "spacious", "quiet" and "healing", respectively, followed by other perceptions, such as "love" and "fun". The waterscape occupies less than one fifth of Central Park, but it can offer tourists completely different perceptions. Some studies have also found that the waterscape can help people to decompress and relax, and improves the recoverability of the environment [32]. Aside from the waterscape, the overall view of the park, which Olmsted attached great importance to, had the highest correlation with tourists' perceptions. There were 357 comments related to the park being picturesque, as Olmsted expected, and others related to it being "fascinating" (983) and "fun" (289). Trees were also highly correlated with perceptions. More plants could bring induce positive emotions in people [32]. People who visit green spaces with higher plant diversity are happier [33]. The abundance of plants injected more vitality into the park, and the tourists in the park—"Love this beautiful park filled with amazing trees and plants and full of great energy. Amazing to see the city skyline behind all the greenness. The oxygenation of the city by all the wonderful green plants were important!".

Among the other elements, animals were most relevant to tourists' perceptions, and were highly related to descriptions of "fascinating" (659), "picturesque" (232), "fun" (226), "spacious" (184), "love/glad" (176) and "healing" (176). In addition to the wild animals in the park, the zoo was also very popular. It has become a must-visit attraction in Central Park—"Just wow, don't ever miss it and the zoo is just awesome, it's worth it". Cameron showed that urban green space with higher biodiversity are associated with more positive emotional responses [34], and a diversity of birds will reduce people's anxiety, depression and stress [35]. Sculptures also induced in tourists a variety of perceptions. There were 651 comments related to "fascinating", 237 comments related to "picturesque" and 242 comments related to "fun", which all made the scenery more completed, charming and interesting. In addition, Olmsted thought that the flowers and artificial elements, which should be reduced as far as possible, would also be strongly related to tourists' perceptions.

4.6. Analysis of the Relationship between Activities and Tourists' Perceptions

The relationship between activities and tourists' perceptions is shown in Figure 10. The results show that most of the tourists' perceptions are related to the unconscious and peaceful activities (walking, sightseeing, relaxing and enjoying) that Olmsted expected would feature in the park, followed by recreational activities and sports activities. The positive evaluation of "fascinating" had the highest correlation with people's activities, followed by "picturesque" and "fun".

Among the activities expected by Olmsted, walking was the most closely related to tourists' perceptions. "Fascinating" (3214) was the most relevant to walking, followed by "picturesque" (1143) and "fun" (946). When walking, tourists could immerse themselves in the beautiful scenery of the park and unconsciously reach a relaxed state. When sightseeing, they most commonly experienced the perception of "fascinating" (2980), followed by "picturesque" (1001) and "fun" (982). These data show that Central Park not only achieved the tranquil, "picturesque" effect expected by Olmsted, but also brought induced exciting landscape perceptions in people through the maintenance and transformations undertaken by later managers. The activities of relaxing and enjoying were also closely related to perceptions of "fascinating", "picturesque" and "fun", with 1615, 548 and 543 comments, respectively. Walking, sightseeing, relaxing and enjoying tranquility in the park are beneficial to health, particularly for the eyes, thanks to the refined and rarefied air produced by the greenery [36].

In terms of entertainment activities, entertainment games and shopping were closely related to perceptions. In terms of sports activities, biking was most closely related to tourists' perceptions, with 1524 comments related to "fascinating", 521 related to "fun", 480 related to "picturesque", and 362 and 361 related to "spacious" and "healing", respectively. Besides this, the playing of musical instruments, singing and dancing, which had been prohibited before, also induced more positive perceptions in tourists.

Now, the park is full of activities and vitality—"This park had it all, nature, museums, activities, concepts, rowing, running, every sport imaginable, vendors and much more, now go really explore it for yourself and have fun—it would probably take an entire week to see it all".

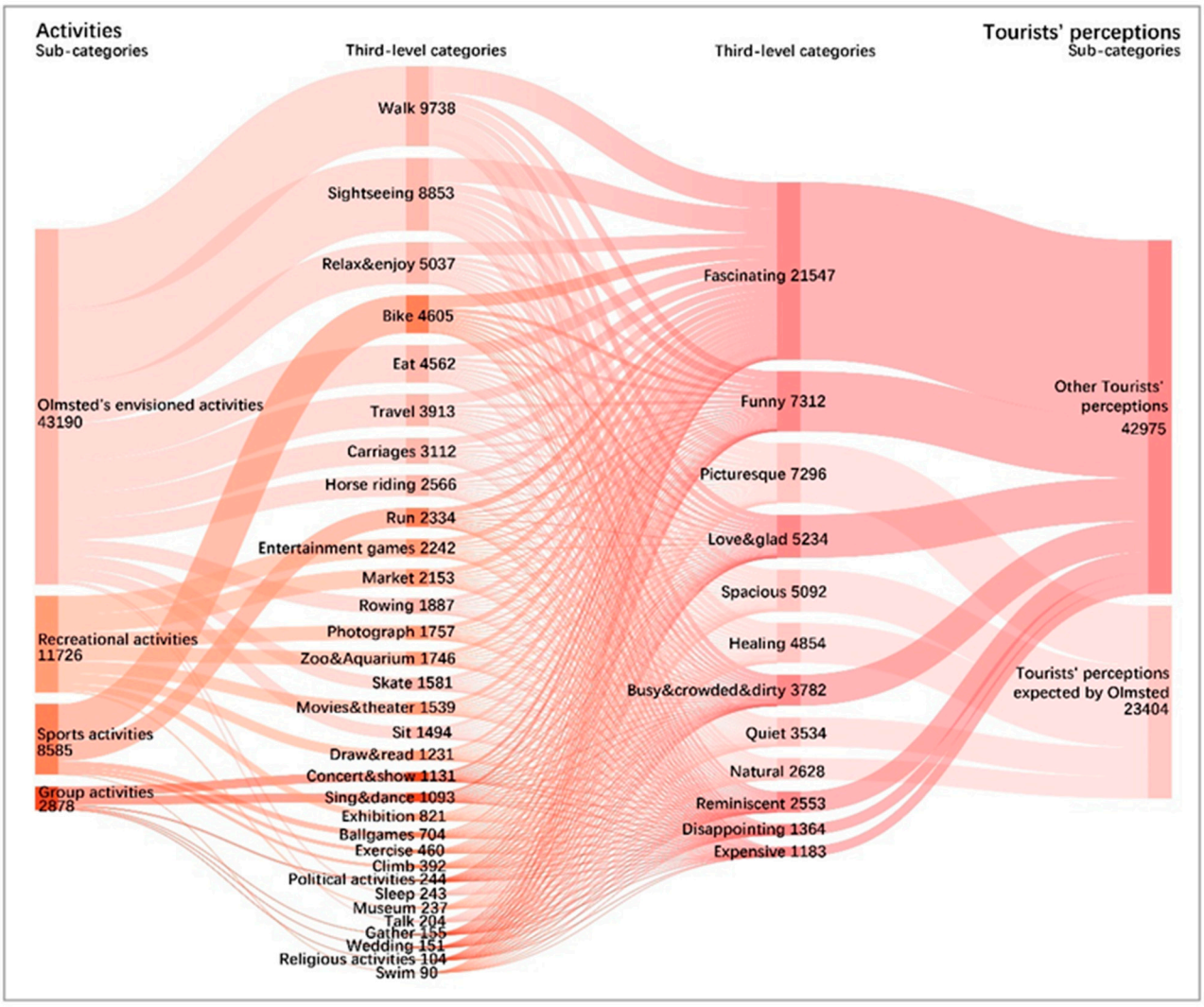

Figure 10. Sankey diagram of the relationship between activities and tourists' perceptions (Source: created by authors).

5. Conclusions

At present, the most featured elements are still those that Olmsted expected in the park, accounting for 65%. However, artificial elements and animals in the park received about 35% of the attention, which he personally opposed, or at least did not expect, at the beginning. Most of the sculptures in the park have certain culturally representative and symbolic meanings. People's attention to them reflects their attention to the history and culture of the park, and of New York itself. Sculptures have also become powerful mediums through which Central Park can promote cultural inclusiveness. People pay more attention to buildings, lights, etc., which may also be due to the upgrading of facilities and technological progress, making these elements more diversified. Flowers and animals add color and potency to the harmonious and picturesque landscape, making it more dynamically beautiful, which exceeded Olmsted's expectations.

The number of dynamic activities mentioned in the park comprised nearly 35% of all activities, which is far beyond Olmsted's expectations, and does not conform to his original intention that "the park was designed to enjoy scenery rather than entertainment".

The selling of items, running, playing of musical instruments and performing of activities that he banned at the beginning are also frequently seen in the park now, which induces in tourists a variety of perceptions. The activities he once allowed, such as horse riding, carriage riding and skating, which were considered means of transportation, have now become popular entertainment and sightseeing activities in the park.

Olmsted's expectations of "quiet", "spacious", "healing" and "picturesque" accounted for about 30% of those seen here, which shows that the park scenery could still bring tourists a soothing feeling. Now, though, the most popular comment made by tourists is "fascinating", which is a dynamic emotion, representing a strong recognition of the park. This goes beyond Olmsted's expectations. It shows that in the eyes of tourists, the beauty of modern parks lies not only in the picturesque static beauty that Olmsted expected, but also in the dynamic beauty of interesting entertainment activities and excited crowds. New York Central Park can attract a large number of tourists every year. In order to develop tourism moderately and not damage the quality of life of the local people, it should balance the activities of the four seasons. For seasonal large-scale gathering or sports activities, it should make arrangements and subordinates in advance to avoid overtourism [37].

Overall, Olmsted's design theory had a broad cross-generational vision that may have inspired the current park design. He believed that establishing a connection between people and nature can restore people's physical and mental health. This view was forward-looking, and had a subtle influence on the design of the current park. He recognized the important role of parks in healing urban populations, and this remains an integral value of urban parks. At the same time, one of the main reasons Central Park came back to life after so many twists and turns is that it has been flexible and accommodating enough to be redefined to meet the needs of social aesthetics, urban development, and people in different times. New York's Central Park is not a giant green isolated island in Manhattan, but an urban oasis of great public and social significance, which plays a vital role in the health of New Yorkers, and of New York City itself. It is not only part of the precious heritage left for us by Olmsted, but also the most famous and successful urban park in the world today, as well as a model of modern urban parks. The great influence of his practical works and design theory on the landscape architecture discipline, and on the whole of modern society, were not to be surpassed or even copied until many years later.

Big Data was used as a research tool, and tourists' post-occupation comments on the park were used as a data source to understand their preferences when in Central Park. The broad data collected directly recorded the elements, activities and perceptions of the park that they focused on. Comparing these data with Olmsted's design theory, and adding some reviews by modern scholars describing the park preferences of people, a conclusion could be obtained about the extent to which Olmsted's ideological heritage has been preserved today. At the same time, big data can also be used as a tool to improve the tourist experience. Through the big data platform, new tourist destinations can be found, the number of tourists or the surrounding hotels and restaurants can be queried, and the right time has been chosen to travel to avoid overtourism [37].

Our results also provide detailed guidelines for the design of natural landscapes and man-made structures, which are closely related to the field of landscape design [38]. This can help identify the content that needs to be improved in the early and late maintenance periods of modern park design, and in this way, more attractive and inclusive parks could be designed for contemporary people. Based on the results of this study, some suggestions could be made regarding the construction of modern urban parks: (1) In terms of landscape elements, users pay more attention to the waterscapes, animals and trees in the park, and to the overall appearance and colors of the park. At the same time, all elements should work together as in a beautiful landscape painting, with coordinated colors and composition. (2) Walking, sightseeing, and other static activities are the most popular. Plants, waterscapes, terrain and other elements can be used to create a suitable space and atmosphere during design. (3) Well-designed elements can promote tourists' activities in the park. In turn, people will be more likely to notice said landscape elements when they participate in

activities. Elements and activities reflexively stimulate each other, offering tourists a rich experience of the park. Compared with the landscape elements of the park, the activities performed in the park can affect the moods of tourists more significantly, and tourists pay more attention to their personal participation in and interactions with the park.

In later research, multi-source data such as those derived from Instagram or remote sensing could be combined, and on-site research can be carried out at the same time. In this way, more research directions can be opened up, on a wider range of sites, or with the combination of microclimate and Big Data. In addition, data with a longer time span could be used to explore whether people's entertainment experiences in the park change with time or the development of social events, such as epidemics.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at: https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/buildings12122217/s1, Table S1: Word frequency table; Table S2: Table of relationship between activities and landscape elements; Table S3: Table of relationship between landscape elements and perceptions; Table S4: Table of relationship between activities and perceptions.

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