



Photo Credit: Jennefer Teo

Dementia- friendly Signages for Wayfinding

Neha Prakash

Dementia is the term to describe a broad range of brain diseases, including conditions such as Alzheimer’s disease, vascular dementia, Parkinson’s disease dementia and dementia with Lewy bodies (DSDC, 2021). Dementia affects our memory, but can also impact on sight, hearing, balance, gait visuospatial understanding, tonal differentiation, wayfinding and hallucinations (Brawley, 1997). **Wayfinding signages is an important part of design philosophy which helps the people with dementia orient themselves and find their way independently without confusion** (Wiener and Pazzaglia, 2021).

Wayfinding and Dementia

Good enabling dementia signage can have a significant benefit for people living with dementia, by supporting independence, confidence and wellbeing. Enabling signage:

- is clear, easily visible, with good colour contrast;
- has easily recognised symbols;
- leads people on a pathway to their destination;
- should not be surrounded by other signs and information

Types of Wayfinding Signs

- Directional Signs (includes arrows, pointing in direction of location);
- Locational Signs (includes icons and texts indicating location);
- Multiple Locations Signs (menu like list with arrows for direction)

“Wayfinding design for those who have dementia is about providing environmental cues and scaffolding for moving independently from one spot to another”.

(Brawley, 1997)



Photo Credit: Immortal

Figure 1: Khatib Central, Hongkong, Dementia friendly community



Directional Signs



Locational Signs



Multiple Locations Signs

Khatib Central and Chong Pang City, Singapore Dementia-Friendly Wayfinding System

In keeping with the Singapore government’s initiative to enable ageing in



Figure 2: Signages at Chong Pang City, Singapore



Figure 3: Residential Blocks colour coded for wayfinding, Khatib Central, Singapore

place, a dementia-friendly wayfinding solution was devised for Khatib Central and Chong Pang City, which were identified as residential estates with ageing populations. To assist seniors and those afflicted with dementia in navigating around their neighborhoods safely and independently, colours and symbols were used (Archidiaries, 2020).

The residential blocks were sectioned into zones and each was assigned a bold colour – either red, green or blue. The zone colours were painted on the facade of the blocks, along with block numbers prominently displayed in large fonts, making them easily legible from a distance.

Super-sized graphic walls and pillar signage with universal icons, directional components, and stencilled symbols of pineapples, tropical fish, and rubber trees—all chosen for their strong ties to the region’s history—are among the other highlights of the wayfinding project. The symbols helped those who might be colour blind or have any difficulty in recognising different colours due to eyesight or cataract.

In addition, directional signage on aluminium panels are integrated with concrete seats that double as resting spots for senior residents. The signage system was applied seamlessly to the existing infrastructure, making for a community-friendly approach that prioritises the well-being of the elderly demographic (Immortal, 2020).

Toa Payoh Bus Interchange, Singapore

Since June 2021, the public transport operator and Dementia Singapore have been working closely on Toa Payoh Bus Interchange to make it dementia-friendly for seniors. Persons with dementia were consulted in this effort with SBS Transit where they advised to colour code the bus berths and include murals with corresponding colours (Dementia Singapore, 2021).

Murals of childhood games or activities that are reminiscent of the yesteryears for seniors were used at Toa Payoh Bus Interchange. Persons with dementia can hence identify the bus berth to take their service using the corresponding mural and colour, together with floor directional signs. The symbols were simple and helped those with colour vision deficiency.

“Dementia is not just the business of the people living with dementia, but it's a business of everybody because one day, you know, everyone will age.”

Emily Ong, 2022



Figure 4: Wayfinding dementia friendly signages at Toa Payoh Bus Interchange, Singapore

Figure 5:
Dementia
Signages
at Buxton
Station,
Derbyshire,
UK



Photo Credit: Northern Press

Figure 6:
Mural painted
on walls for
dementia elders
as wayfinding
signages, Keban
Baru, Singapore



Photo Credit: Immortal

For every person with dementia, one or two family caregivers have to change their entire lifestyle, or give up work, to care for the person with dementia.

Jason Foo, 2022

Pilot scheme for dementia-friendly signages at Buxton Station, Derbyshire by Northern Railway, UK

Friends of Buxton Station and local dementia support groups worked together with Northern railways on the pilot scheme, which is designed to make signs much easier for someone with dementia to understand. This includes fewer signs to avoid 'information overload', strategic placement of signs at important 'decision points' and wider use of symbols to reinforce the wording chosen (Northern Trains Press Office, 2022)

Kebun Baru: Inclusive dementia friendly community in Singapore



Photo Credit: Immortal

Figure 7: Blk 116, food box, Keban Baru, Singapore

The pilot project aimed to paint murals on strategic walls at the void decks of HDB blocks in two Residents' Committees (RC), namely Heights RC and View RC in Kebun Baru. The murals featured familiar, retro items to aid persons living with dementia and the elderly in easily recognising their surroundings and finding their way home (Dementia Singapore, 2021). The murals feature different cheerful designs such as food box, a tortoise-shell shaped traditional pastry, or the nostalgic White Rabbit candy etc., all 37 walls painted with different mural, spanning 10 blocks of flats in the neighbourhood.

Murals are a form of pictorial communication for people living with dementia as the human brain captures visual information like the murals better than written language, thus helping those with dementia to maintain independence when navigating (The Straits Times, 2022).

Final Thoughts

The case studies here represent the various forms of wayfinding signages that can be used for helping the people having dementia. Incorporating the wayfinding system of murals with bold colours and directional signs can help the elderly demography to gain confidence to navigate the spaces independently. The symbols and murals also enables a colour blind person to feel safe by helping them orienting and making them less anxious, hence allowing them to use public spaces frequently and independently.

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