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Original Article

Assessment of Public Space Quality of Tourist Destinations: Comparative Analysis of Cases in Bengaluru

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Abstract *- Tourist experiences are often influenced by the quality of public spaces near destinations. We therefore apply Jan Gehl's twelve-quality criteria framework for public spaces and conduct a descriptive and comparative assessment of six tourist destinations in Bengaluru. Through this method, some common challenges and drivers of public space quality are revealed. We use the framework to score three main criteria of protection, comfort, and enjoyment, twelve sub-criteria, and forty-two sub-criteria. We find that some crucial indicators of public space quality, including protection against unpleasant sensory experience, opportunity to experience positive aspects of climate, diversity of uses, accessibility for everyone, and elements of human scale, are lacking at most destinations. To mitigate the adverse implications of these aspects on tourist experiences and to improve public space quality, we suggest approaches that can be undertaken through future design or policy interventions. These include nature-based solutions, integration of informal vending, universal accessibility, and the development of tourist precincts.*

Keywords *- Urban Design Quality, Twelve-Quality Criteria, Assessment, Tourism, Public Space, Bengaluru.*

1. Introduction

Bengaluru, the vibrant capital city of the state of Karnataka, plays a key role in the tourism growth of the state. Karnataka has shown remarkable progress in the tourism sector in recent years, with a growth of domestic tourist footfall to 30.46 crore in 2024, building a strong 58% rise since 2022 [1]. Considering this rapid rise in tourism, it becomes imperative to assess whether the public spaces near tourist destinations meet the experiential needs of tourists. Bengaluru contributes to state tourism, with its multiple destinations such as gardens, historic institutions, thriving art scenes, and a lifestyle shaped by openness and diversity [2]. The Bengaluru urban tourist locations can be categorized as heritage, adventure, art & festivals, nature & wildlife, art & culture, religious places, museums, tourist attractions, and gateways around Bengaluru [3]. Most of these tourist places are surrounded by public spaces that are often experienced by tourists.

Public spaces play an important role in attracting tourists to a place. The public space immediately surrounding a tourist site is often the first of a series of experiences that make up the whole of a tourist's visit. These public spaces, which are in the form of parks, streets, squares, etc., are often derived from tourist activities and vice versa. They play a big role in drawing visitors, enhancing visitor experiences, and promoting sustainable tourist growth [4] as well as encouraging the participation of the tourist in the local history and culture [5]. In most cases, these spaces are shared both by the tourist as well as the residents of the city for leisure and entertainment [6]. The management of these public spaces is often shaped by tourism [7] and vice versa. In many cases, the visitors value the uniqueness or the urban identity of the place [8]. The vitality and liveliness of the public spaces are also valued by them with interventions such as pedestrianisation and spaces for socialization, boosting the presence of visitors [9]. The quality of the public space has a significant role when the tourist destination is accessed by public means of transport or on foot. Often, visitors seeking authentic experiences seek this authenticity in the spaces that they pass through as they access the tourist location. The quality of public space at tourist locations can therefore affect tourist experiences and impact how much time tourists spend in the public space. The aim of this research is to assess and compare the spatial and environmental factors that contribute to the public space quality of the tourist destinations in Bengaluru. The objectives are:

1. To identify whether changes in spatial quality exist, despite variations in the category of tourist destinations or changes in context.
2. To identify the challenges and drivers of the spatial quality of the selected tourist destinations.
3. To provide suggestions on policy or design that can improve public space quality and tourist experience.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Public Space Quality and Tourism

Public spaces such as streets, plazas, or parks are essentially spaces of leisure [10] that promote social activities and a sense of place. It is in these spaces that visitors find the opportunity to consume the culture and image of the city. It is not just specific sites of tourism that are of interest, but the city and its public spaces. [11] finds that the totality of streetscapes in Valletta, Spain, generates more interest in tourists rather than just single buildings. In their quest for authentic experiences, tourists try to perceive the everyday life of locals [11]. They often find this authenticity in observing the nuances of public life. Many tourists view the presence of local people as a point of visual interest [12]. What seems to be an everyday part of a resident's existence may fascinate visitors. For example, tourists in Valletta were more intrigued by common architectural features such as doorways, balconies, and stepped streets rather than monumental buildings [11]. According to [13], these elements of the built environment make interesting elements that encourage people to spend time in public spaces and add to the overall public space quality. The architecture of a place, whether iconic, unique, or just interesting, has the potential to attract visitors and generate an economy. The aesthetic value adds to the destination value. [14] considers architecture that is publicly viewed and accessible to be part of the larger realm of public art. The authors suggest that, in addition to the visual richness, public art also evokes emotional responses and creates experiences for tourists that are personally meaningful.

Unique architectural features can also become easily identifiable elements in urban space, making navigation and orientation simpler for a wandering tourist. Such features make a space memorable and contribute to the imageability and legibility of the public space, as visitors can easily construct mental maps in their mind that are oriented around these features [15, 16]. However, [16] finds that legibility also increases the rate of consumption of tourist spaces and suggests that other activities or functions need to be introduced.

Public spaces with diverse functions can also influence pedestrians' perception of safety [17]. Unlike mono-functional spaces, these spaces have a higher intensity of informal surveillance throughout the day. In the Indian context, informal activities such as street vending also contribute towards this, and there is a strong link between this activity and pedestrians' perception of safety in existing literature. In their study, [18] find that spatial quality is one of the key factors most associated with place satisfaction. Tourist satisfaction is key as there is a significant relationship between satisfaction and tourist expenditure [19]. The higher the dissatisfaction with the urban environment, natural landscape, and public safety, the lower the expenditure [19]. Jan Gehl's twelve quality criteria assessment toolkit [13] considers these aspects by assessing protection against crime, protection against traffic, the ability to enjoy positive aspects of climate, and positive sensory experiences.

The design of public spaces can affect tourist activities and experience. [12] Find that the sensory experience of tourist locations affects the long-term memories tourists hold of the location and the likelihood of repeated visits or recommendations to other travelers. The authors find the diversity of sensory experiences to be significant. Aspects of sensory experience include the smellscape, soundscape, and the visual environment. It also includes elements of both built and natural environments. Activating multiple senses can generate feelings of authenticity and influence overall tourist satisfaction [20]. While it is well established that architectural design has a strong influence on tourists' visual experience [11, 12, 14, 16], elements of the natural environment also affect this and other senses. The qualities of landscape are often recalled by tourists several months after visiting the Destination and have a significant influence on memories of the sight, sound, smell, and touch [12]. This suggests that spatial quality is shaped equally by both the natural and the built environment.

Considering the need to assess the qualitative dimensions of public space discussed above, Jan Gehl's twelve-quality criteria have been adopted to assess the public space quality near tourist destinations in Bengaluru. Details of the quality criteria are discussed below.

2.2. Twelve Quality Criteria

The twelve-quality criteria toolkit essentially evaluates the quality of the built and natural environment under the criteria of protection, comfort, and enjoyment. The entire toolkit consists of 3 criteria, 12 sub-criteria, and 42 sub-criteria. Under the criterion of protection, the three sub-criteria of protection against traffic & accidents, protection against crime & violence, and protection against unpleasant sensory experiences are assessed. Protection against traffic & accidents includes the sub-criteria of protection for pedestrians and cyclists, eliminating fear of traffic and the presence of safe crossings. Protection against crime & violence includes the presence of a lively public realm, presence of passive surveillance, diversity of functions, and a well-lit, human-scale environment. Protection against unpleasant sensory experiences includes protection against natural elements of wind, snow, rain, heat, cold, and protection against dust, noise, glare, and pollution.

The criterion of comfort has the most sub-criteria (six), which include opportunities to walk or cycle, to stop and stay, opportunities to sit, see, to talk and listen, and to play and exercise. Room for walking, presence of interesting facades, good surfaces, and accessible paths with no obstacles provide opportunities to walk or cycle. Attractive & functional edges, defined spots for staying, objects to lean against or stand next to, and facades with good details that invite staying provide opportunities to stop and stay in public space. Defined zones for sitting, pleasant views that allow people watching, a good mix of public and outdoor seating, and the presence of resting or waiting spaces provide opportunities to sit. Reasonable viewing distances, unhindered and interesting views, easy orientation, and adequate lighting provide tourists with opportunities to see. Low noise levels and seating that support social talking support opportunities to talk and listen. Temporary activities such as markets, exhibitions, and spaces that allow spontaneous activity provide opportunities to play and exercise.

Under the criterion of enjoyment, the three sub-criteria of dimensions at the human scale, opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate, and positive sensory experience are assessed. Under the sub-criteria of dimensions at the human scale, elements of the built environment that are comparable to human dimensions are assessed. Opportunities to enjoy aspects of the natural environment, such as sun, shade, and wind, are assessed under opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate. Good design and detailing, good materials, fine views, and rich sensory experiences contribute towards aesthetics and positive sensory experiences. The assessment of public places near tourist destinations according to the above twelve sub-criteria and three criteria can reveal the challenges and need for future interventions.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Study method, Data Collection, and Analysis

This study uses a descriptive case study method based on [21]. This method is applied as it allows an in-depth inquiry into real-world cases that are rooted in context and can be used to reveal patterns of people's behaviour that are crucial to understanding public space quality. Data for the study were collected using naturalistic inquiry methods [22]. The advantages of direct observation, photographs, and street view images were harnessed.

Direct observations are useful to understand how people behave in public spaces, and photographs are a tool that aids in this process [23]. The use of street view images has been found to be reliable, especially when it involves the rating of micro-scale elements of public space [24]. The overview of materials and methods is provided in Figure 1.

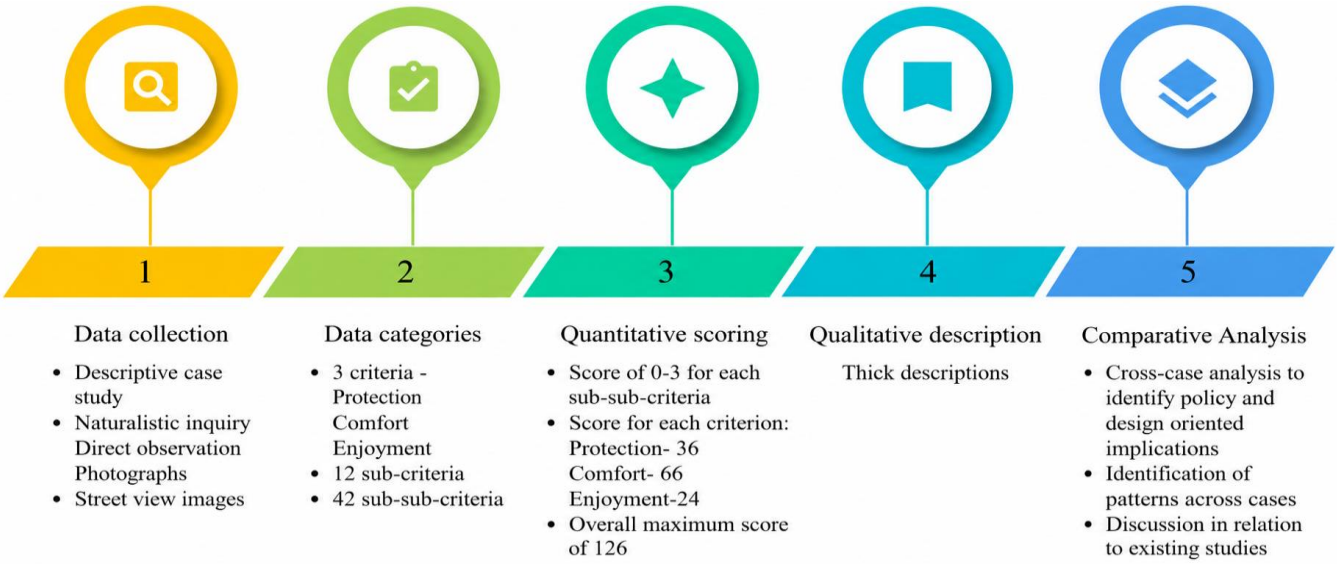

Fig. 1 Overview of materials & methods

Source: Author

3.2. Quantitative Scoring of Twelve Quality Criteria, Qualitative Data, and Comparative Analysis

The study follows scoring strategies like those adopted by [25, 26]. The smallest unit of the twelve-quality criteria, which is the sub-criteria, is scored on a scale of 0 to 3. 0 indicates the absence of an indicator. In contrast, 3 indicates that the indicator is fully present. The scores are presented in Table 1. The overall maximum score is 126. The maximum possible score for the criterion of protection (criterion A in Table 1) is 36, the maximum score for comfort (criterion B in Table 1) is 66, and the maximum score for enjoyment (criterion C in Table 1) is 24. The criterion of protection has three sub-criteria

with maximum scores of 9, 12, and 15 (A1-A3 in Table 1). The criterion of comfort has six sub-criteria with maximum scores of 15, 12, 12, 15, 6, and 6 (B1-B6 in Table 1). The criterion of enjoyment has three sub-criteria with maximum scores of 3, 9, and 12 (C1-C3 in Table 1). The scoring was completed based on observations in the field and the use of street view images that augmented field observations.

A descriptive table was then created, where thick descriptions of observations were recorded for each sub-sub-criterion. The descriptive data and the scores were used to perform a comparative analysis of the public space quality around the selected tourist destinations. The cross-case analysis enabled the identification of patterns that emerge, despite variations in the category of tourist destinations or changes in context. This data then became the evidence for the interventions in policy and design suggested in section 5.2.

4. Overview of Selected Tourist Destinations

The tourist locations are selected to ensure the representation of each major category of Bengaluru urban tourist destinations. The categories are heritage sites, open spaces, museums, shopping streets, and religious destinations. The significance to tourism, Bengaluru, and description of the setting are discussed below.

4.1. Vidhana Soudha

Vidhana Soudha is a Neo Dravidian-style building that houses the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly [27]. This structure was conceived by the second Chief Minister of Karnataka, Kengal Hanumanthaiah, in 1956 [28]. This building, envisioned to reflect the power and dignity of its citizens, drew its inspiration from regional temples, houses, palaces, and even a dam [27]. This building continues to function as the administrative headquarters of the state of Karnataka.

4.1.1. Destination and Setting

This landmark is located on Dr. Ambedkar Road (Figure 2) and across the high court. Vidhana Soudha shares its boundary with other administrative buildings of the city, like the Vikasa Soudha and the residence of the governor and other members of the assembly. Being a building of great importance, this building does not entertain visitors within the premises except on days of scheduled tours. On regular days, visitors are permitted to enjoy the building from the public space designed in front of it. The visitors reach the Destination by means of private vehicles or by public transport, such as a bus or metro.

4.2. Lalbagh Botanical Garden

Lalbagh is an expansive botanical garden sprawling across 240 acres of land in the heart of the city [29]. This garden has taken various forms; it was initially envisioned as a royal orchard at the time of the Sultanate of Mysore [27] and was later occupied by the British, under whose supervision it expanded with the addition of ornamental plants, cash crops, and architectural elements. Addition of landscape features like urns, sweeping carriage ways, terraces, and octagons for creepers helped in elevating the garden's image from that of a royal orchard to that of a formal English Garden [27]. At present, Lalbagh functions as a botanical park under the supervision of the Department of Horticulture, hosting flower shows and cultural events.

4.2.1. Destination and Setting

This landmark is surrounded by residential and small-scale commercial establishments. As Lalbagh sprawls across acres of land, it has multiple gates to access it. Most of these gates lack visibility or parking facilities, making them the least preferred points of entry (if not for the user's proximity to them). The most frequent entry is its main entry gate from a Y junction formed by Lalbagh Main Road, Hosur Road, and Krumbigal Road (Figure 2). This entrance is selected as it is the main pedestrian-only entrance with a large accessible public space before it. The space has a ticket kiosk and staff parking. Entry is controlled through a chained barrier. Informal vendors are present just outside of this barrier.

4.3. Visvesvaraya Industrial and Technological Museum

Visvesvaraya Industrial and Technological Museum, Bengaluru, was built in honor of the late Sir M. Visvesvaraya [30]. He was a key figure in developing public infrastructure for the state of Mysore and is often regarded as "the maker of modern Mysore"[31]. This museum was built to showcase India's advancements in the fields of industrial products, scientific models, and engines [30].

4.3.1. Destination and Setting

The museum is situated within Cubbon Park, and it shares its boundary with the Government museum and private establishments on all other sides. The museum can be accessed by walking from within the park or from the main road. Vehicular access to the site is through Kasturba Road (Figure 2). The proximity to the skywalk and bus stop makes it easy to access the facility.

4.4. Commercial Street

This street was a commercial hub designed in the 19th century for the British settlers in India [32]. It gets its name from London, where any shopping street goes by the name 'Commercial Street' [32]. This street offered the British a diverse range of goods that were affordable for any user group. It quickly became a favorite shopping destination among the British, so much so that the street was closed to the public on Sundays, notes historian and author Suresh Moona [32]. The street continues as a leading commercial center in urban Bengaluru by retaining its character, which also spills over to its bylanes.

4.4.1. Destination and Setting

This shopping street extends from Kamaraj Road to

Jumma Masjid Road (Figure 2). Commercial Street is not a major thoroughfare, and it functions as a one-way street to reduce traffic and permit easy user movement. As part of the Tender Sure street design guidelines under the Smart Cities Mission proposal, this stretch was redeveloped to enhance the experience of both users and street vendors [33]. This stretch has mostly commercial establishments, with the exception of a police station situated towards one end of the road. Overall, the street has a vibrant character with active frontages.

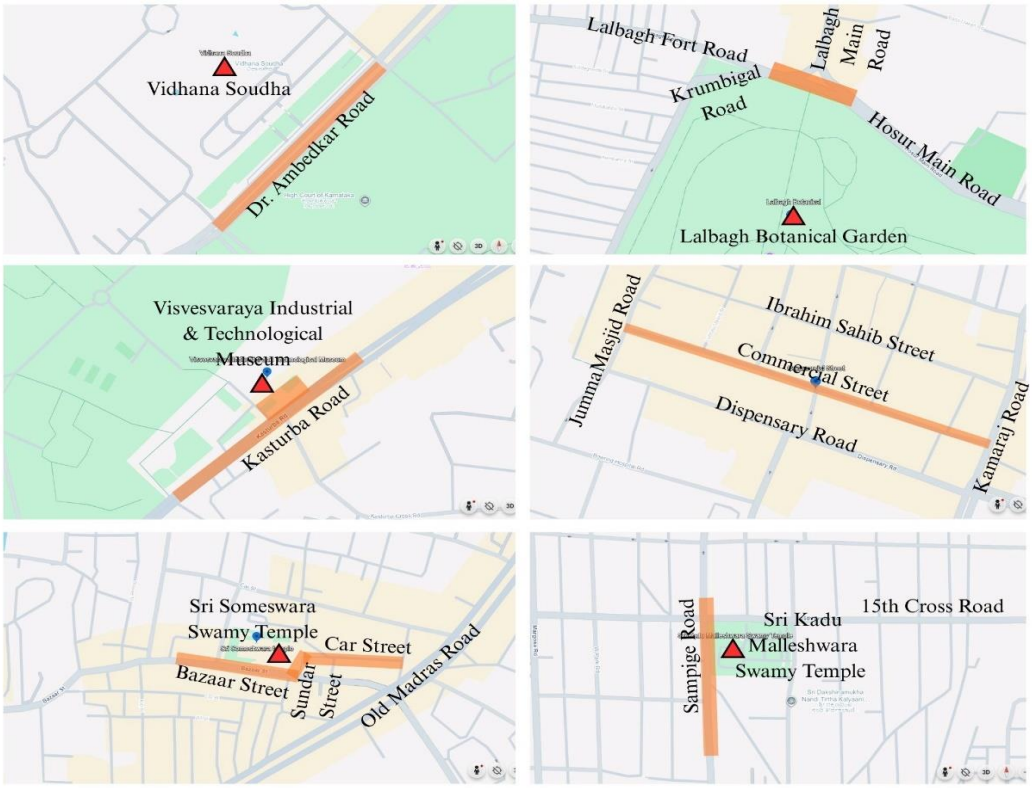

Fig. 2 Map showing the location of tourist destinations and the public spaces under study

Source: Author

4.5. Sri Someswara Swamy Temple

Sri Someshwara temple is ascribed to be a 13th-century Chola temple dedicated to Lord Shiva by historian Dr. S.K Aruni [34]. The temple is located in Ulsoor in central Bengaluru. It is believed to have been re-constructed by Sri Jayappa Gowda, King of Yelahanka, upon receiving a divine vision during a brief period of rest at Halsuru [35]. The temple is considered to house a linga retrieved from the site where the temple currently sits [36]. Due to its religious and historical significance, the temple attracts large crowds of devotees, especially during its annual chariot festival [27].

4.5.1. Destination and Setting

Sri Someshwara Temple sits in a residential neighbourhood. The temple has two entries, one from Someshwara Swamy Street and a second one from Bazaar Street. Both of the above-mentioned roads are secondary roads that branch off from Old Madras Road (Figure 2). The preferred Entry to the temple is mostly through a bazaar street, which is a highly commercial street that has buildings that are built edge-to-edge. The temple view from Bazaar Street is limited as a high boundary wall runs along the temple perimeter.

4.6. Sri Kadu Malleshwara Swamy Temple

Sri Kadu Malleshwara Swamy Temple is a 17th-century Dravidian-style temple built in Malleswaram [27]. This temple is dedicated to Mallikarjuna, a form of Shiva, and hence the temple also goes by the name Kadu Mallikarjuna temple [27]. Historical records on the temple indicate its connection to the Maratha empire [37]. It is from this temple that the surrounding neighborhood has derived its name "Malleshwaram".

4.6.1. Destination and Setting

The streets surrounding the Kadu Malleswaram temple are characterized by their intimate nature, with a mix of residential, commercial, and private establishments surrounding it. Though the temple can be accessed from all three sides, the main entry point is from Sampige Road (Figure 2). The width of this road and the presence of a bus stop make it a more convenient entry point than the other sides.

5. Findings and Discussion

In this section, the spatial and environmental factors that contribute to the public space quality of the tourist destinations based on the scoring of Jan Gehl's twelve-quality criteria are assessed. A comparative analysis of the spaces was also conducted to identify the common challenges and drivers of spatial quality and the subsequent implications for policy and public space design (section 5.2).

5.1. Assessment of Spatial Quality

For each public space, the findings are discussed under the criteria of protection, comfort, and enjoyment, and in order of highest score. The scoring for each criterion and sub-criteria (Table 1) is also discussed along with the description of the factors of the built and natural environment that contribute to the score.

5.1.1. Vidhana Soudha

Amongst all the tourist destinations, the street in front of Vidhana Soudha has the fourth overall score of 93 (73.8%). The highest score is for the criteria of comfort (52, 78.7%), considering the sub-criteria like opportunities for walking and opportunities to see. Wide pedestrian paths on both sides provide enough room for walking. The prime reason to attract tourists to this public space is the presence of Vidhana Soudha, which is a strong and interesting facade to look at, as shown in Figure 3. The public space is positioned in a way that the viewing distance is also appropriate to appreciate the building from both sides of the road, and the views are not interrupted by any visual disturbances.

Fig. 3 View of Vidhana Soudha from the High Court side
Source: Author

The monumental scale of the buildings makes it a landmark for easy orientation. The presence of landscape lighting at the front garden of Vidana Soudha, street lighting, and the general lighting at the intersection make the place well lit, which also adds to the parameter of protection. Figure 4 shows the good-quality paver surfaces used with ramps provided at the intersections and at the entry points of the nearby metro station. The restriction of the space being the foreground of administrative buildings results in poor diversity of activities, thus limiting the occupancy of street vendors, which confines the possibility of defined spots for staying. This also affects the protection parameter for passive surveillance. No defined seating has been provided. People sit at the space along the railings, under the little shade of park trees, and at the plinth of metro station entries, as shown in Figures 5(a), (b), and (c). Street vendors are limited to moving vendors selling ice creams, water bottles, and photographers (Figure 6(a), (b), and (c)).

The second highest score is achieved by the criteria of enjoyment (17, 70.8%). Aesthetic qualities and positive sensory experiences in the form of the strong architecture of Vidhana Soudha on one side and the presence of High Court Park on the other side of the street contribute to the high score. The metro station entry and the service blocks along the street also follow the architectural detailing of Vidhana Soudha as seen in Figure 4. The scale of the public space is monumental. Human-scale elements are almost absent except near the metro station entries. The opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of the climate are also limited because of the absence of shade from the sun and shelter from the wind.

Fig. 4 Ramps at the entry points of the metro station
Source: Author

Fig. 5 People sitting along the limited spaces available. (a) Along the shades of trees on the park side (b), Along the railing, and (c) Along the metro station entry plinth
Source: Author

The absence of trees or any other shade or canopies makes the public space completely exposed to the sun and rain. The only canopies that are observed along the stretch are the metro station entries and the small patches of shade provided by the tall trees along the park edges, as seen in Figure 5. The street, being part of a larger open space around, experiences considerably high wind. Absence of tall structures or trees within the space also increases the experience.

Table 1. Scoring assessment of public space around tourist destinations in Bengaluru according to Jan Gehl's twelve-quality criteria

S.No.	Criteria and Sub-criteria	Vidhana Soudha	Lalbagh Botanical Garden-Main entrance	Visvesvaraya Industrial and Technological Museum	Commercial Street	Someswara Temple	Kadu Malleswaram Temple
A	**Protection (Max score - 36)**						
1	Protection against traffic & accidents— feeling safe	8	5	8	6	2	5
2	Protection against crime & violence— feeling secure	9	6	10	11	9	12
3	Protection against unpleasant sensory experiences	7	4	10	10	4	12
	Total Protection Score	**24**	**15**	**28**	**27**	**15**	**29**
B	**Comfort (Max score - 66)**						
1	Opportunities to walk/cycle	15	8	14	13	6	9
2	Opportunities to stop & stay	8	4	12	12	4	11
3	Opportunities to sit	7	3	11	6	3	11
4	Opportunities to see	15	10	13	14	10	11
5	Opportunities to talk & listen	3	2	5	4	3	5
6	Opportunities for play & exercise	4	4	4	5	3	5
	Total Comfort Score	**52**	**31**	**59**	**54**	**29**	**52**
C	**Enjoyment (Max score – 24)**						
1	Dimensioned at human scale	2	2	3	3	2	3
2	Opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of the climate	3	4	6	6	3	9
3	Aesthetic qualities + positive sensory experience	12	6	12	11	5	10
	Total Enjoyment Score	**17**	**12**	**21**	**20**	**10**	**22**
	Overall score (Max score - 126)	**93**	**58**	**108**	**101**	**54**	**103**

The criteria of protection score the least (24, 66.6%). Though there is the presence of wider pedestrian paths on both sides of the road, thereby eliminating the fear of traffic, lack of diversity in activities, and the absence of provisions to protect from unpleasant sensory experiences like wind, sun, etc., contribute to the low score for protection. A defined median with barriers along the edges efficiently regulates the crossing of people along the section. Designated crossings are present at traffic signals located at intersections before and after the building.

Fig. 6 Moving vendors along the sidewalks. (a) Photographer (b) Vendor selling water bottles, and (c) Ice cream vendor

Source: Author

5.1.2. Lalbagh Botanical Garden Main entrance

Overall, this space has the second-lowest score (58, 46.0%). The criterion with the highest score is enjoyment (12, 50%). In terms of good aesthetic experiences, the only good views are towards the inside of the garden, as seen in Figure 7. Trees present near the edge of the garden, and birds feeding near the staff parking area, provide a rich visual and sensory experience. Additionally, a few human-scale features at the main entrance, such as informal vendors and ticket kiosks, make the entrance space moderately relatable. However, the junction leading to this space is very large, and the street has very poor architectural detailing.

Fig. 7 Views towards the inside of the garden

Source: Author

The second highest criterion is comfort (31, 46.9%). While there is potentially a lot of room for walking, ill-defined pathways mean that other pedestrians, vehicles, service infrastructure, and informal vendors may become obstacles and hinder accessibility. While buildings providing interesting facades are not present, the edge along the garden is attractive, and a semi-porous boundary wall allows some views of the garden. However, it is functional only during hours when the garden is open.

Fig. 8 Visitors lean against the barricade

Source: Author

Fig. 9 Visitors lean against chains that are used as a barricade

Source: Author

Signages indicating 'Lalbagh Police outpost' help visitors locate themselves. Orientation towards other locations is poor but aided by a high mast light placed at the center of the junction. The peripheral wall of the garden is also lit by lamps placed on the wall. Noise levels are high due to the high volume of traffic and the traffic signal at the Y-junction. Spontaneous activity, such as bird feeding, may take place. However, poor delineation of pedestrian space makes it difficult to undertake all types of physical activity.

The criterion for protection has the lowest score (15, 41.6%). While metal bollards and chains delineate the parking area and create a temporary safe space for waiting pedestrians

when parking is not full, protection for pedestrians who are walking or differently abled is poor. Since traffic is slow-moving, there is no immediate danger of vehicular-pedestrian accidents. Pedestrians find it difficult to go across the space provided for the main entrance when vehicles are parked there, and only one defined crossing leading to the main entrance.

Lalbagh, being a major open space in the city, attracts both local and foreign tourists. This, in turn, attracts informal vendors selling coconut water, fruits, cooked food, accessories, etc. The vendors add to the liveliness of the space as it encourages visitors to spend time in this space (Figure 10). They also act as a form of informal surveillance. However, this is limited to when the garden is open, and since the main entrance is located close to a large junction, surveillance from the other side of the street is not possible. There is also very little protection against harsh aspects of the natural environment. Whatever protection is available is because of canopies of trees planted inside the garden that protrude onto the public space outside.

Fig. 10 Visitors spend time near vendors
Source: Author

5.1.3. Visvesvaraya Industrial and Technological Museum

The public space in front of Visvesvaraya Industrial and Technological Museum stands first in the overall score of 108 (85.7%). The space, including the museum garden and the sidewalk of Kasturba Road, is mainly used by the public visiting the museum and by the moving population towards one of the Cubbon Park entries along the side of the museum. The public space scores highest in the comfort parameter (59, 89.3%). The low height and highly porous boundary wall allow a clear view of the museum garden, as shown in Figure 11. It also allows pedestrians to enjoy the architectural details of the buildings, especially the colonial-style Government museum, situated next to the Visvesvaraya Museum, which also contributes to the enjoyment parameter. Good quality paver surfaces are used with the footpath turning into ramps at the intersection of entries. However, tactile paving is not provided. The presence of street vendors at the entry points of both the museums provides opportunities for the people to stop and stay (Figures 12(a) and (c)). This also transforms it into a lively public realm, especially during the museum timings, and adds to the protection criterion. As seen in Figure 12(b), the railings of the museum boundary wall and the bollards next to the street vendors act as objects to lean against or stand next to. Some vendors even provide stools in front of their shops, all of which contribute to the comfort. The interactive landscape elements in the garden also act as pause points for the people entering the museum (Figure 13). The museum buildings, clear signage, and the pedestrian skywalk positioned next to the bus stop are elements for easy orientation. The space is well-lit during the evenings; streetlights are mounted in a way that caters to the pedestrian path on one side and the vehicular path on the other side. This also contributes to the protection. The presence of human-scale lighting inside the museum park also lights the place.

Fig. 11 View of the Museum Garden and the sidewalk
Source: Author

The street scores second highest in the enjoyment criterion (21, 87.5%). Elements like low height semi-porous boundary wall, informal street vendors, bollards, and the garden in front of the museum add to the human scale of the street. The tree with a large canopy at the entrance of the Visvesvaraya museum and the shades under the trees present inside the garden provide opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate, and also contribute to the score of the protection criterion. The trees along the edge of the museum garden also provide shade for the sidewalk. The garden provides rich sensory experiences for people to enjoy.

The lowest percentage is scored by the protection criterion (28, 77.8%). Pedestrian paths are wide enough to cater to the moving population. No separate cycle path is provided. However, there is no danger of vehicle-pedestrian conflict since the footpath broadens at the entrance, creating a safe waiting zone on either side of the museum gate. An elevated pedestrian walkway provided near the museum promotes safe pedestrian crossings. The high median controls the crossing along the road. The porosity of the boundary walls of the museums allows the street to be viewed by the people using the museum garden and vice versa. It thus acts as a form of passive surveillance. Informal vendors at the gate also act as a form of passive surveillance. However, there is no surveillance when the museum is closed. Being located next to a major city road, there is constant dust and noise, and there is low protection from unpleasant sensory experiences. However, the presence of trees helps to control it to a limit.

Fig. 12 View of the vendor at the entrances of museums. (a) & (b) Vendors at the entry of the Government Museum and (c) Vendor at the entry of Visvesaraya Museum

Source: Author

Fig. 13 Interactive landscape elements inside the museum garden

Source: Author

5.1.4. Commercial Street

Commercial Street has the third overall score of 101 (80.1%). The street scores the highest in the enjoyment parameter (20, 83.3%). The ratio of street width to the height of the buildings (mostly buildings are G+2), and the elements like transparent shopfronts, porches, overhangs, planters, steps, which lead to the shops at higher or lower level, are directly associated with the human dimension in relation to size. The visual richness of commercial activities, its character being varied along the street, contributes to the experience in relation to the senses and enhances the lively character of the street. Usage of facade details in the form of icons, catching fonts with vibrant colors, and lighting contribute to the interesting facades for enjoyment, as seen in Figure 14.

Fig. 14 View of facade details showing vibrant colors and interesting signage

Source: Author

The Commercial Street police station, which is a relatively old building, reminds us of the architectural details of the past. The facade of Krishniah Chetty and Sons, a jewelry store, adds to the heritage character with interesting roof and parapet detailing and the usage of red brick color (Figure 15). This interesting design and detailing also contribute to the opportunity to walk and easy orientation, which adds to the parameter of comfort as well.

Good quality paver surfaces for walking, fine views of shops with active frontage, and narrow cross streets with lively public life all increase the enjoyment and comfort of the space. The portico and the roof overhangs of the shops provide options to stand and enjoy the rain, adding to the parameter of protection and enjoyment (Figure 16). Landscape features are limited to a few trees near the police station and in the form of planters outside some of the shops.

The second-highest score is achieved by the comfort parameter (54, 81.8%). Commercial Street, being at the center of the city, makes it accessible for both local and tourist communities. It also caters to all categories of people, which is one major reason for the public to get attracted to this street. The street is very lively with formal and informal shopping and food spots.

Fig. 15 The facade of Krishniah Chetty and Sons

Source: Author

Fig. 16 The portico and roof overhangs of shops that provide temporary relief during the summer

Source: Author

Commercial activities dominating along the edges make the street functional during the day and night, which boosts the parameter of protection as well. However, street furniture like benches is absent across the street, which makes people sit in tiny spaces in front of some shops. Informal vendors at the intersections act as defined spots for staying and are conducive as talkscapes (Figure 17). At the time of major festivals such as Christmas and New Year, the street is transformed with decorative lights and music being played through speakers placed along the street. The street is wide enough to allow a clear view across and along the street, though hindered partially by the parking provided on the street and the moving vehicles. Formal streetlamps are present on both sides. The decorative lighting provided along the ceiling of the street adds to the liveliness at night. The lights from the shops also provide some amount of ambient lighting to the street. The overall lighting also contributes to the criterion of protection.

Fig. 17 View of informal vendors at the street intersections
Source: Author

Even though a designated pedestrian path is provided, the spillover along the shop frontages (Figure 18) and two-wheelers parked on the footpath make it inconvenient for people to use it effectively during peak hours at many sections, thus forcing them to use the road during peak hours, which also contributes to the low score for protection. Universal accessibility features like tactile paving and ramps are provided along the pedestrian path. However, the slope of the ramps is often too steep and the width too narrow (Figure 18).

The lowest score is for the criterion of protection (27, 75%). Provision for cycle paths is not provided. Since this road is not a major thoroughfare for the city, the number of vehicles is less compared to other major tourist shopping streets in Bengaluru. However, there is always a continuous flow of slow-moving traffic that clashes with pedestrians using it. Defined crossings are present along the junctions, though the motorists are casual in observing the crossing. Being an active public realm, the presence of shopkeepers and customers along the street makes the street safe and secure. Provisions like trees or any buffer to address the dust and air pollution from vehicles are absent.

Fig. 18 View of universal accessibility features
Source: Author

5.1.5. Sri Someswara Swamy Temple

The overall quality of the public space adjacent to this temple is very poor and scores the lowest amongst the destinations being studied (54, 42.8%). While the percentage scores for the three criteria are very similar, the highest score is for comfort (29, 43.9%). The street does not offer many opportunities to sit, stop, or spend time. In terms of opportunities to see, initially, as one enters from Car Street (see Figure 2), the main entrance of the temple is visible (Figure 19). Thereafter, only a portion of the temple is visible as one walks along the street. The temple is covered by a high blank wall that has no openings along Bazaar Street, making for an uninteresting facade. The other side of the street has shops with few attractive signs. The overall comfort for walking or cycling is also poor. Cyclists are forced to move along with vehicles (Figure 20). While there are no obstacles along the temple's edge, the portion of the street that has a footpath is blocked specifically for the use of temple goers. Also, shopkeepers' goods spill onto the footpath on the commercial edge, and there is no footpath along the residential edge. The material used along the footpath is not uniform, thereby challenging easy accessibility. The materials vary between RCC paving blocks and granite or RCC drain covers. Accessibility for differentially abled is also limited as footpaths are not continuous, and there are no ramps or provisions for people with rollable equipment such as prams or wheelchairs. There is also no tactile paving. While accessibility of temple goers is prioritized along the temple edge, this too does not support differentially abled.

Fig. 19 Entrance to Someswara temple visible from Car Street
Source: Author

While there is a moderate diversity in functions along the street, the commercial edge is always active. Although there is a blank wall along the temple's edge, informal vendors abutting the wall make the space active. The possibility of staying is severely restricted, since the built edge does not have objects or furniture that support sitting or leaning. Additionally, because of the narrow footpath, stopping here would block other pedestrians. People are observed spending time where there are awnings or around informal vendors or in front of their own shops. Few shopkeepers place plastic or wooden stools outside the shop to sit (Figure 21). Other than this, there is no opportunity for sitting. Opportunities for viewing are also restricted. It is difficult to view from the pedestrian pathway abutting the temple, as the pathway along the temple is cordoned off using a high wall. Views are also blocked by parked vehicles and informal vendors. However, there are distinctive features of other temples along the street that make orientation easier.

The score for protection is 15 (41.6%). The approach towards protection against traffic and accidents in the street is at once inadequate and ineffective. On the one hand, pedestrians walking along the temple side are overprotected with a wall along the footpath. This path is restricted through a gate that is locked when not in use. While this may be a strong form of physical protection and directs the pedestrian directly to the temple, this feature does not allow for passive surveillance. While a footpath does exist on the commercial side of the street, the width is insufficient, and parked vehicles further force traffic to slow down, effectively forcing pedestrians to walk on the carriageway. This situation is further exacerbated by a complete absence of safe crossings.

Fig. 20 Cyclists are forced onto the carriageway
Source: Author

The street cross-section is at an intimate scale, with commercial shops built to the edge, making it easy to survey the street. This, combined with the presence of informal vendors selling fresh and cooked foods, creates a lively space. However, the edge of the temple is a blank wall that does not encourage any activities and makes surveillance difficult (Figure 22). There is no activity or surveillance on the street when shops are closed, and the temple is not open. The street is moderately well-lit with streetlights and lights from shops. At the time of this study, the installation of new street lights was taking place. The street has no trees or landscape elements, and except for a few awnings of shops, not many buildings provide protection during harsh sun or rain. Most steps of the shops do not have landings and enter directly in, and therefore provide no temporary protection from the sun or rain.

The lowest score is for the criterion of enjoyment (10, 41.6%). The commercial side of the street has shops with glass facades or openings that are at eye level, making for interesting views of the shoppers. The facades are also on a human scale, making this side of the street more relatable (Figure 22). However, the high wall along the temple edge and poor architectural detailing on this side of the street diminish the overall experience. Additionally, only a portion of the temple is seen as one walks along the street, and few canopies of trees overhang the street.

Fig. 21 Shopkeepers use wooden or plastic stools to sit outside the formal shops.
Source: Author

Fig. 22 Pedestrians walking along the temple edge are protected by a high wall. However, this wall does not encourage any activities or surveillance.
Source: Author

5.1.6. Sri Kadu Malleshwara Swamy Temple

Sampige Street, which is the main street from where the Kadu Malleswara Swamy temple is accessed, has the second-highest overall score of 103 (81.7%). The street scores the highest in the enjoyment parameter (22, 91.6%). Most buildings have elements at the human scale. The number of floors varies between one and three, with four being the highest number of floors. Even taller buildings have human-scale elements, such as awnings, porches, planters, low walls, steps directly accessible from the footpath, and leading to shops at a higher level. Buildings with porches, low walls used as informal seating, trees with large canopies, and shops in the basement all provide protection against sun, wind, and rain. Both the Sri Kadu Malleswara temple and the adjacent Sri Sai Mandali temple have interesting and unique facades. Other buildings also have interesting details. Houses, institutional and public buildings have raised plinths, planters, and traditional architectural elements that create a point of interest visually. The street is also lined with trees that have large canopies and define the vista as one walks along the street (Figure 23).

Fig. 23 Avenue of trees in front of Sri Kadu Malleshwara Swamy Temple

Source: Author

Sampige street scores the second highest in the parameter of protection (29, 80.5%). This is because while there is no separate path for cyclists, well-defined and wide footpaths on both sides of the street provide ample protection for pedestrians. Parking buffers also provide an additional sense of safety. However, vehicles parked on the footpath in some areas hinder the movement of pedestrians. Additionally, there are no safe crossings. The street supports a mix of uses, including residential, commercial, and public use. This attracts pedestrians and informal vendors to make a lively and engaging public space. The presence of shopkeepers, informal vendors, and visitors to the temple at the ground level ensures passive surveillance at eye level. Lodging and residential spaces above also serve as surveillance when shops or temples are closed. The bus stop opposite the temple also acts as passive surveillance throughout the day (Figure 24). The street is well-lit by streetlights and lights from shops. However, streetlights are not on a human scale. In terms of protection from natural elements, buildings with porches, low walls with informal seating, trees with large canopies, and shops in the basement all provide protection against sun, wind, and rain. While trees ensure some protection from air pollution, this is limited by the narrow buffer between the pedestrian path and carriageway.

Fig. 24 View of the bus stand across the temple

Source: Google Earth

The street scores the least for comfort (52, 78.7%). The factor most affected is the opportunity to walk or cycle. While footpaths are wide and surfaces are of good quality, some obstacles are interspersed along the street, combined with varying levels of the path, making continuous movement difficult. Many surfaces are also uneven and poorly maintained. These factors especially affect older adults and those in wheelchairs. Additionally, there are no accessibility features for blind people. Obstacles include vendors, an informal flower market (Figure 25), trees, and service infrastructure in the middle of the footpath.

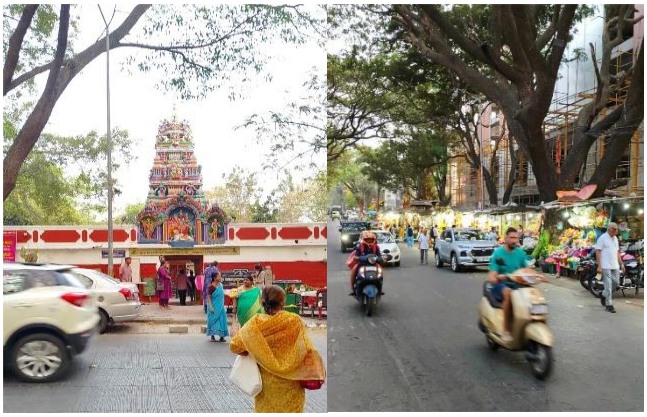

Fig. 25 View of flower vendors seen along the footpath

Source: Author

These obstacles also prevent long sight lines along the street. However, interesting architectural elements along the street that have been described earlier provide the pedestrian with fine views and contribute towards visual comfort. The street is also wide and allows clear viewing across and along the street, adding to comfortable viewing distances. The clear signage, buildings with easily identifiable features, make the street easily legible and easy to orient oneself.

Opportunities to spend time in the street are high. The bus stop opposite the temple, planters along the front of some buildings that provide informal seating, are active spots for sitting. People are also seen sitting on stairs that lead to shops placed on a raised plinth or leaning against service infrastructure, flagpole, or large trees.

Both formal and informal food vendors encourage people to spend time in public spaces and provide opportunities for people to watch. For example, some formal food shops encourage eating or drinking in public spaces.

5.2. Comparative Analysis and implications for policy and design

The comparison of the overall and criteria-wise scores of the six destinations can be seen in Figure 26. By analyzing the data in this figure, Table 1, and the description above, it is evident that there are some common challenges in public spaces around Bengaluru's tourist destinations.

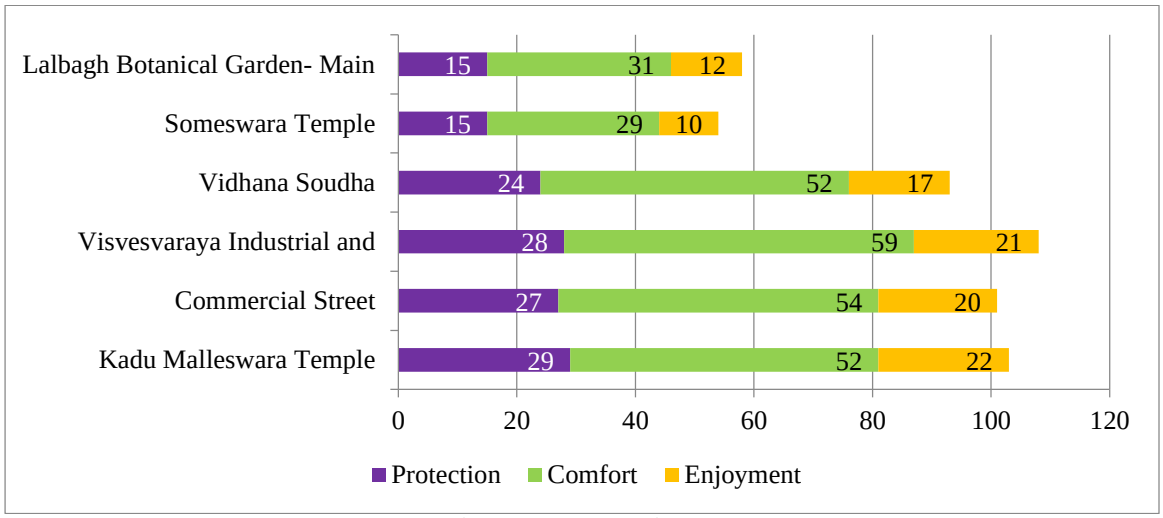

Fig. 26 Comparison of criteria-wise scores for the selected destinations

Source: Author

A key concern that emerges is the need for protection against unpleasant sensory experiences and the opportunity to experience positive aspects of the climate. Protection against pollution, dust, noise, and glare is also very poor in most public spaces. In most streets, protection is provided through the design of the built edge. However, there is a need for nature-based solutions that can mitigate the harsh effects of climate change. The implementation of policies that promote nature-based solutions for architecture and public spaces can have far-reaching implications for health and well-being. It can also benefit the economy when public spaces with nature-based solutions are used as marketing strategies to attract more visitors [38]. Such solutions also boost climate resilience and mitigate the impact of urban heat islands [39].

In the absence of heat-mitigating strategies, tourists who perceive the harsh effects of urban heat engage less with public space and have poorer destination satisfaction [40]. Future renovations in tourist areas or the construction of new buildings need to consider this when designing the buildings or the interface between the public street and private edge. Solutions can be designed in the form of blue-green roofs, green walls, and integrations of water bodies. These can improve the overall sensory experience of the public spaces and also tourists' long-term memory and tourist satisfaction [12, 20].

The second concern that arises is the absence of diversity of functions at most destinations. Public spaces that integrate diverse uses are lively, engaging, and support spontaneous activities [41]. They also support constant surveillance and contribute to perceptions of safety [17]. There is therefore a need to encourage a mix of spaces that can support diverse activities. However, considering Bengaluru's dense urban nature, it is difficult to alter the functions of most formal spaces around tourist destinations. Informal vendors providing perishable goods, such as cooked food or other non-perishable goods, can be encouraged in such contexts. Although nascent, there is increasing research linking informal vending and pedestrian experiences. Evidence suggests that tourists value the experience and novelty of street food near destinations and that the quality of food can influence tourist satisfaction [42].

The design for those with alternative mobility needs is often overlooked in the design of tourist experiences, and this seems to be true in most of the selected cases in this study, where universal accessibility design was found to be especially poor. This is a serious concern, and future tourist policies and public space design approaches must strive to be more inclusive. People with disabilities, older adults, parents with prams, and travelers with suitcases are all at risk of having poor experiences and lower rates of destination satisfaction. Destination experiences that are accessible to all

types of people are linked with creating a sense of place and giving tourists the opportunity to immerse themselves in authentic experiences [43].

Many tourist destinations have buildings on a monumental scale, e.g., Vidhana Soudha, Kadu Malleswara, and Sri Someswara Swamy temple. At such destinations, it is important to bring in human-scale elements into the public space. The size, texture, and patterns of the materials of fixed and movable elements on the floor, walls, and the ceiling of the public spaces help in achieving the human scale, which is linked to the feeling of enclosure of these spaces. Fixed elements like building edges, walls, trees, or semi-fixed or movable elements like awnings, canopies, and parked vehicles can create a sense of enclosure [44]. The other features contributing to human scale are the number of long sight lines, the amount of street furniture, the proportion of first floor with windows, the height of the building, the depth of setbacks in the case of tall buildings, the amount of small planters, the intricacy of the paving pattern, the level of building ornamentation, and door window spacing [15]. The human-scale elements may also be some form of public art, which can improve the aesthetic image of the space [14].

[45] propose the concept of tourist precincts. This idea is a useful tool for the development of areas within the city that are of tourist significance. These areas support a high density of tourist activities and contribute towards the tourists' sense of place. The development of such precincts can be achieved through public-private partnerships in Bengaluru. Karnataka Tourism Infrastructure Limited (KITL) can invite private partnerships for the development of public spaces near tourist locations, as they do for the development of tourism sites.

6. Conclusion

This study explores the public space quality around tourist destinations across Bengaluru by comparative analysis and adopting Jan Gehl's twelve-quality criteria framework for public spaces. Observations drawn from the selected destinations show that most of these spaces lack elements of public space quality that can boost tourist experience. The comparative analysis revealed that though challenges observed were similar and recurring in nature, they varied in intensity between destinations.

Despite the assessment of spatial quality in this study, certain limitations remain. This study explores the quality of only a few selected tourist destinations across Bengaluru. Assessment of a greater number of tourist destinations can reveal challenges that are specific to different categories of tourist destinations and reveal findings that are more generalizable. Spatial quality through the tourist lens can also be evaluated to gain more insight into what must be implemented.

In accordance with the findings of this study, the following are the recommendations for policy and design:

1. Provide nature-based solutions near tourist destinations to eliminate unpleasant sensory experiences.
2. Mandatorily implement universal accessibility standards in all future proposals to increase footfall and enhance user accessibility and satisfaction.
3. Introduce human-scale elements in areas that purely rely on monumentality as a method to display power and grandeur. This approach would transform a monumental building from that of an object to that of a place that is more relatable.
4. Introduce policies that integrate informal vending in areas of public interest. This would bring diversity and thereby increase tourist engagement and perceptions of safety.
5. Develop dedicated tourist precincts near tourist locations in conjunction with private agencies to enhance tourists' sense of place.

Implementation of a policy or design that addresses the above can improve public space quality and tourist experience.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Ethical Statement

The authors declare that no ethical review was required for this study, as all data required were collected directly by the authors, and the study did not involve any human subjects.

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