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Landscape Design and Park Users' Preferences

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Abstract

Landscape design is described as the design of areas; it consists of the results of interaction and action of human and/or natural-cultural factors, by bringing together science and art, and is associated with human psychology in the processes, both of their design and use. The main aim of this study is the identification of user preferences in urban landscape design studies, according to psychological developmental stages (age). Accordingly, this study aims to conduct a survey in the biggest district of Ankara, Çankaya, to reveal the preferences of each age group, with regard to the characteristics of hard and soft landscape elements.

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1. Introduction

The user and their psychology are two of the main factors in landscape design, which is defined as the design of areas that are formed as a result of the interaction and action of human and/or natural-cultural factors, by bringing together science and art in the processes of both designing and using the landscapes.

Landscape architecture takes into account "age" as one of the factors which affects the psychology of users, while trying to meet the technical, social, cultural and natural requirements of the users, within the landscape design.

With this study, user likes and preferences relate to important factors in the landscape design, (e.g. color, texture, form, lighting and accessibility), and are defined as depending on their developmental stages (age).

2. Methodology

The method of this study depends on literature review and questionnaire study. The material which comprises the data of this study was obtained from the findings of the questionnaires. The questionnaire survey in this study

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was conducted in the district of Çankaya, in the city of Ankara, Turkey, between October and November 2005, among seventy three people in total, using the face to face interview method.

In comparing the age groups of the users with their preferences and likes, the khi kare test was used. $P < 0, 20$ values are accepted as meaningful. All statistical analyses are done by using the SPSS statistic packet.

The reasons why the questionnaires were conducted in Çankaya is that it is the biggest district of Ankara and users from different economic backgrounds of society live there (bottom, middle, high). According to the year 2000 population census, the population of Çankaya county is 758.490 (Çankaya Municipality, 2002) and the age and sex distribution of Çankaya County population is; 0-9 years: 42.206 women, 44.379 men; 10-19 years: 62.802 women, 67.327 men; 20-24 years: 43.172 women, 58.578 men; 25-64 years: 200.753 women, 185.703 men; 65 years and over: 31.718 women, 21.551 men; unknown: 132 women, 169 men.

Since the standard deviation among the age groups is 1%, conducting the questionnaire with 1/10000 of the population is adequate (Yamane 2001). By considering the possibility that children, who were 11 years old and younger, may give misleading answers to the questions, this age group was not included in the questionnaire. 301 people, whose age group was unknown, were also not counted in the questionnaire study. The number of people for whom the questionnaire should be applied is sixty seven, while the number of people to whom the questionnaire was applied is seventy three. The answers of the users to the questionnaire are evaluated by taking into account the age states of developmental psychology[†] as defined below (Onur 2001);

1. Childhood (0–2 years babyhood, 3–6 years early childhood, 7–11 years late childhood)
2. Adolescence (12–18 years)
3. Youth (19–25 years)
4. Adulthood (26–34 years early adulthood, 35–60 years middle adulthood, 61–65 years late adulthood)
5. Senility (over 65 years)

3. Findings

In the user questionnaire, users were asked several questions in order to learn their preferences and likes about open green areas. These questions were intended to address the sense organs (color, texture, form, smell, sound) of the users, accessibility, lighting and the users' developmental peculiarities. The findings obtained from these questions were;

- Users from all age groups wanted to see more colorful flowers in open spaces. Pink, however, was the least favorite of the colors they wanted to see.
- The users from all age groups generally preferred to see grassy fields and tree cover in equal amounts in open green areas. Users do not want open areas to be totally covered with trees.
- Plants appealed to the users from all age groups with their colors, as compared to their other qualities, such as odor, size, form and texture. For the age groups of 26–34, 61–65 and 65 plus, the texture of the plant was more appealing, and, for the age groups of 61 and above, it was the size of the plant that impressed the users.
- The primary sense organ for enjoying the plants in all age groups was eyesight. Secondary were the senses of smell and touch. The most effective design element to enjoy the plants for all age groups was the color.
- The age groups of 12–18, 19–25, 26–34 and 61–65 years liked both the evergreen and deciduous plants. On the other hand, the age groups of 35–60, 65 years and above liked evergreen plants the most.
- Grass is the most preferred material for park walkways, compared to other materials, such as concrete, wood, brick, soil, asphalt, stone facing, pebbles, etc. The reasons why grass was preferred was because of its being natural (50%), being soft (43%), and being solid and smooth (7%). The least preferred material

[†] Developmental psychology, one of the sub branches of psychology, analyses the relationship between the chronological age of the individual (states) and the type of his/her behavior in a multi-directional way (Cüceloğlu 2003). States do not change, show consecutiveness and are universal in all cultures (Onur 2001).

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