

Assessing the Applicability of Kevin Lynch's Framework of 'the Image of the City' in the Case of a Walled City of Jaipur

Authors : Jay Patel

Abstract : This Research is about investigating the 'image' of the city, and asks whether this 'image' holds any significance that can be changed. Kevin Lynch in the book 'The image of the city' develops a framework that breaks down the city's image into five physical elements. These elements (Paths, Edge, Nodes, Districts, and Landmarks), according to Lynch assess the legibility of the urban spaces, that emerged from his perception-based study in 3 different cities (New Jersey, Los Angeles, and Boston) in the USA. The aim of this research is to investigate whether Lynch's framework can be applied within an Indian context or not. If so, what are the possibilities and whether the imageability of Indian cities can be depicted through the Lynch's physical elements or it demands an extension to the framework by either adding or subtracting a physical attribute. For this research project, the walled city of Jaipur was selected, as it is considered one of the futuristic designed cities of all time in India. The other significant reason for choosing Jaipur was that it is a historically planned city with solid historical, touristic and local importance; allowing an opportunity to understand the application of Lynch's elements to the city's image. In other words, it provides an opportunity to examine how the disadvantages of a city's implicit programme (its relics of bygone eras) can be converted into assets by improving the imageability of the city. To obtain data, a structured semi-open ended interview method was chosen. The reason for selecting this method explicitly was to gain qualitative data from the users rather than collecting quantitative data from closed-ended questions. This allowed in-depth understanding and applicability of Kevin Lynch's framework while assessing what needs to be added. The interviews were conducted in Jaipur that yielded varied inferences that were different from the expected learning outcomes, highlighting the need for extension on Lynch's physical elements to achieve city's image. Whilst analyzing the data, there were few attributes found that defined the image of Jaipur. These were categorized into two: a Physical aspect (streets and arcade entities, natural features, temples and temporary/informal activities) and Associational aspects (History, Culture and Tradition, Medium of help in wayfinding, and intangible aspects).

Keywords : imageability, Kevin Lynch, people's perception, assessment, associational aspects, physical aspects

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