



The role of urban furniture in citizens' leisure time

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Abstract

One of the most important urban management programs in the cities today is the leisure of the citizens and one of the options welcomed by the citizens is the urban parks. Urban furniture is one of the most important factors that can be effective in attraction of the citizens for the leisure. In this study, using the combined method (observation, interview, questionnaire) we investigated the factors of designing, locating and choosing furniture and cultural and psychological factors of Sabzevar urban parks and its spatial quality and subsequently in the section on inferential statistics using the linear Regression method we explored the relationship between the variables and in the end came to the conclusion that the quality of furniture (designing, locating and choosing) along with the spatial quality and the cultural and psychological factors resulting from that have a direct effect in attracting citizens for the leisure of the citizens while the furniture of Sabzevar urban parks doesn't have a proper quality.

Keywords: Urban Furniture, Spatial Quality, Leisure, Citizens, Sabzevar



Introduction

Since early in the twentieth century urbanized humans once again paid attention to nature and the green space whose clear appearance is in creation of practical gardens instead of recreational gardens which meets the new demands of the citizens (Pirmoureh, 1994: 72). The residents of the cities today are not only in need of food by meeting whom the problem can be considered as finished; rather, good residence, proper space of life, peaceful environment and breathing clear air are considered as the main and major needs today (Shokoui, 1979: 41). However, the rapid growth of the cities can be viewed as one of the major threats to the environment whose effects will harm the residents of the cities, that is, humans and will leave a corrosive impact on the soul and body of the urbanized humans (Bahram Soltani, 2002: 41).

Establishment of urban parks is worthy of a wide study on the one hand due to the effects they have on the quality of urban life and achievement of sustainable development and on the other hand due to the financial load without return of capital and profit that they leave for municipalities (Maniun, 2003: 31). In most discussions the parks and urban green space have been emphasized has a very important solution that can increase the quality of urban social life) (Girardet, 1925: 25). The green space can provide many social and psychological services and can act as a factor that can have a highly significant role in empowerment of new cities and also their citizens (Urich, 1981: 2).

Urban furniture includes all the elements that are primarily located in the urban open spaces and have public functions and secondly whose existence in the urban spaces meets one of the public needs of the citizens (Agssteh, 2000: 207). Equipments of public services in the city include the lights, traffic signs, traffic booths and telephones and ash bins that form practical equipments of the city (Seifaldini, 1999: 472). Urban furniture is a set of equipments and facilities that improves the quality and efficiency of life in the city and streets (Tavassoli and Bonyadi, 1992: 18).

Designing the furniture

In designing the urban furniture consistency and symmetry and meeting the needs of the environment are two important principles that must be heeded by designers and planners since a design is successful and persistent which can be consistent with the features and nature of the concerned place and function and also can permanently meet the needs of its users as a dynamic design and act in accordance with the environmental tensions (Qanbari, 2002: 60).

In addition to the items above in designing the urban furniture and compliance with the standard in that, attention to elements that can be divided to the two physical and non-physical groups is noteworthy:

Physical elements: parameters that contain the physical and manifest features of a product which include: shape, context, color, cover of connections and consumables; non-physical elements: parameters that don't have physical content and are rather considered when using the product which



include: coordination with the environment, safety, ergonomics, access, low number of the parts, ease of construction, permanence, resistance to destruction, usability for different social groups, being economical and the strength of the structure (Qolam Pour, 1990). Accurate planning for locating of urban furniture is required as a certain strategy for creation of a sustainable and healthy environment in accordance with the local conditions and in this regard the factor of environmental sustainability must be given special attention.

Observing the points below can be to some extent a guide for the urban planners and authorities in locating of the urban furniture.

- Taking into consideration the goal of comfort and convenience for the users.
- Prevention form visual disturbances and pollutions
- Locating of the elements such that they have the least collisions with the pedestrians.
- Observation of the spatial distribution in accordance with the environmental capacity and the number of local users.
- Prevention from high or low density in locating of kinds of furniture.
- Observation of proper distances in establishment of types of furniture according to the conditions of the environment and the use rate of users.
- Easy access to the required furniture (Kaveh, 2010).

Choosing and selecting the furniture:

One of the most important points that must be noted more in choosing and selecting the furniture, is different addresses and users, age groups (children, the youth, the elderly), social classes with certain physiological conditions, certain climate and not just considering economic aspects and low costs (Qanbari, 2002: 59).

In fact, it can be said that by an increase in the quality of the urban furniture specifically in terms of locating, designing and choosing and an increase in utility of the urban space and attention to cultural and psychological factors, we might be able to witness attraction of the citizens for leisure but urban furniture in our country doesn't have the necessary quality and utility and the reasons for this are non-observation of the principles of designing, locating and establishing, choosing and selecting the furniture in the urban spaces which cause the citizens not to be inclined to spend their leisure time in these spaces. As the second largest city in the northeast of the country after the holy city of Mashhad, Sabzevar city is not an exception while due to having a unique geographical and communicational position and moreover having a rich historical and cultural heritage, it welcomes millions of passengers and pilgrims annually and this has added to the importance of efficiency and quality of urban furniture specifically the furniture of parks regarding the needs of the citizens and users; therefore, in this study it is attempted to analyze the quality of furniture of the urban parks in the Sbazavar city regarding the leisure of the citizens by identification of the qualitative factors of the furniture and its investigation in the case study of the Sabzevar urban parks so that by a proper knowledge of the present conditions and identification of the shortcomings and flaws we can take steps for improvement of the urban furniture of the Sabzavar city.

In this regard, the books and studies conducted in Iran can be referred to such as:



The book "designing the urban spaces and furniture" by Ahmad Saeidnya in 1990 which has only referred to the names of each of the urban elements and has briefly explained them; the book "approaches in designing the urban furniture" by Reza Mortezaei in 2002; this book has firstly discussed the source and history of urban furniture and has subsequently mentioned each of the elements of urban furniture and has hence investigated the features and technical considerations of each of the elements; the book "urban furniture" written by Hussain Kalantari and Payam Ensafian published in the summer 2011 that elaborates in detail on urban spaces and position of the furniture, necessity and accordance and considerations of the furniture in the space and vandalism regarding the furniture.

The article "special analysis of the urban furniture and its impact on the citizens' satisfaction (case study: Saei Park in Tehran) by Hussain Azizi and Mohsen Hasel Talab that explores the present urban furniture and the citizens' satisfaction in Saei Park and in the end provides solutions in this regard.

The article "spatial evaluation of the urban furniture of the tourist spaces of Shiraz using the topsis decision-making model" by Muhammad Sadeq Afrasiabi Rad & Amir Sabbahi, the master of geography and urban planning and military geography of Imam Hussain University (PBUH) that investigates the urban furniture of Shiraz regarding tourism and in the end describes the furniture of the study area to be improper according on the tourism feature of Shiraz.

The article "the role of the urban furniture in giving identity to the cities" by Dr. Ali Zangi Abadi et al. that explores and analyzes the elements and equipments that have a very basic role in giving identity to the space;

The thesis "organization of urban furniture of the central part of Sabzevar city (case study: Kashefi Street)" in 2010 by Zahra Beihaghi in Azad University of Tehran as a master of geography and urban planning attempts to explore organization of urban furniture of the central part of Sabzevar and in the end concludes that the furniture of the study area has a considerable difference with the common standards.

The master's thesis "urban furniture as a reflection of the culture and identity of the city (case study of Mashhad)" by Maedeh Qasemzadeh has been written in September 2011 in Sabzevar Tarbiat Modarres University in geography and urban planning.

General goal in this study:

Our goal is the impact of the furniture of Sabzevar urban parks on leisure of the citizens and our minor goals include the following:

- 1- Investigation of the designing of the furniture of Sabzevar urban parks regarding the leisure of the citizens
- 2- Investigation of locating in establishment of furniture of Sabzevar urban parks regarding the leisure of the citizens
- 3- Investigation of the qualitative elements of the furniture (color, gender, etc.) regarding the leisure of the citizens



The research question

How can furniture of Sabzevar urban parks be effective in leisure of the citizens?

The hypotheses

It seems that there is a direct relationship between the quality of furniture of urban parks and presence of the citizens for spending the leisure time. Apparently, the furniture of Sabzevar urban parks doesn't have a good quality.

The data collection method

1-Library including: theses, books, articles, documents, maps, magazines, publications, technical and research reports, Internet websites, table and form, krokei, etc., 2-Field and combined including: observation, interview, questionnaire or simple classification sampling.

The data collection tools

The data collection tools include the observation card, questionnaire, interview, list, table, sampling, databases and Internet sites, computer, satellite networks, etc.

The data analysis method

The collected data is first classified and subsequently the data is shown and analyzed using the computer and SPSS statistical software in the section on descriptive statistics by means of the table and the diagrams. In the second section of this analysis, that is the inferential statistics, we investigate the relations of the research variables by means of the linear regression method. Our study started with investigation and analysis of a set of qualitative factors and eventually in order to assess their reliability we need quantitative techniques (as the questionnaire); as a result, the present study is in order to increase their reliability and validity of the combined study type.

In this study in the sections that are related to the qualitative study tools such as the interview and the observation are used and in order to come to conclusions in sections that are quantitative we use the questionnaire.

Firstly we explain the factors introduced based on their quantitative or qualitative nature. In designing the furniture and the issue related to that and also locating and establishment of the furniture the two qualitative methods of observation by researcher and interview of the specialists and also the quantitative method of the questionnaire which is using the citizens' views is used so as to learn of the views of different users and addresses in dealing with and using the elements.

In the section that is related to choosing and selecting of the urban furniture due to specialization of the discussion and also lack of information and awareness of the users regarding the issues related to that it is attempted to use the method of the interview in which the relevant specialists are asked the concerned questions.



In the next section we assess the urban space by the method of the questionnaire according to the users that make use of it and we also try to assess the spatial utility using observation according to the author.

In the third section which regards the presence of the citizens in the urban spaces for spending the leisure time, the qualitative method of observation (by the researcher) and the quantitative method of the questionnaire (regarding the citizens) are used.

In the related questionnaire we select the five factors of designing, locating and spatial quality of the furniture, cultural and psychological factors of the environment in both Laleh and Eram parks and will try to analyze them. Our study area is the urban parks of Sabzevar.

After introducing the methods and the fact that for each of the factors what method is used, we subsequently present all the collected data during the research process and analyze them. Our population consisted of people who visited Sabzevar urban parks and make use of these spaces. Our selected parks among 42 urban parks of Sabzebar for observation, interview and questionnaire are the two Eram and Laleh Parks which were selected based on the concerned factors. These will be subsequently mentioned. Most of these parks are among the regional and local parks which weren't considerable regarding attraction of the citizens and facilities and immensity; therefore, our focus is on the parks that operate on an urban scale and by the simple classification sampling our concerned samples are selected.

Sample

By the classification sampling method and considering factors such as the immensity of the park, easy access, existence of the least required park equipments, history, permeability, urban scale, presence of citizens for the leisure time, welcoming of different addressees and eventually accordance of the items above with the two Eram and Laleh parks, both were selected as the sample.

Urban furniture

Elements like benches, bus stations, signs, light sources, mailboxes, ash bins, vases, etc. that are used for more convenience and comfort and beauty, presentation of information and control of movement and creation of safety and welfare of the users in the urban space, are called urban furniture (Zangi Abadi and Tabrizi, 2004: 5 & 6).

Leisure time

Leisure activities are selected and optional activities that are required in the proper conditions and desired situation of people. We have considered walking in the open space, stopping in the recreational place, sitting and resting in attractive and tourist places and presence of the citizens for the leisure time as the dependent variables in this paper so as to explore their relationship with other factors and elements (of the independent variable) during the research. Our independent variable in this study includes the items considered in designing, locating and cultural factors of the furniture.



Conclusion

In the first hypothesis "it seems that there is a direct relationship between the quality of the furniture of the urban parks and the presence of the citizens for leisure." The results obtained from observation of the author and the questionnaire of the citizens and interview with the urban experts and managers can be confirmed. As a result, it can be said that an increase in the quality of the furniture of the urban parks (the factors of designing and locating and choosing of the furniture) as a result of an increase in the quality and utility of the urban space along with its cultural and psychological factors will have a direct impact on increasing the attraction of the citizens for leisure; that is, if 0.280 is added to the factor of the designing of the furniture, 0.466 to the spatial quality, 0.127 to the psychological factors of the environment and 0.088 is deducted from cultural factors, one unit is added to the presence of the citizens for leisure in these spaces and this means that there is a direct relationship between the quality of the furniture of the urban parks and presence of the citizens for leisure. Therefore, the first hypothesis is proved.

In the second hypothesis "it seems that the furniture of the urban parks of Sabzevar doesn't have a satisfactory quality". Now after comprehensive study and investigation of the hypothesis presented by the multiple methods of observation, interview and questionnaire it can be finalized and as was investigated in the section on questionnaire, more than 78% have answered below average to the question of how much of the selected colors of the park furniture is in harmony with the environment and also 85% have answered the appearance of the furniture existing in the park to be below average and also in observation we witnessed the improper repetitive and common and sometimes worn-out designs. As a result, the second hypothesis is confirmed as well, that is, the urban parks of Sabzevar don't have a satisfactory quality.

In the end, it can be noted that by an increase in the quality of the urban furniture in terms of designing, locating and choosing them in the parks and the urban space and an increase in the utility of the urban space in terms of the quality of the spaces and by attention to the cultural and psychological factors of the environment we will witness more presence of the citizens for leisure and this is the very direct relationship between the quality of the furniture of the urban parks and the presence of the citizens for leisure; yet unfortunately the quality of the furniture in the urban parks of Sabzevar was evaluated to be below average.

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