



AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

Imageability of cities in regards of attractiveness: A case of Salt City in Jordan

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ABSTRACT

Imageability is the quality of a place that makes it distinct, recognizable, and memorable. It defines the character and identity for cities. However, the fast expansion of urban development affects the image of city and its fabric toward the mega scale and transforms cities local cultural life as losing most of their historic fabrics. These make cities lose their images gradually. Hence, the aim of this paper is to explore the main physical elements that contribute toward attractiveness as one of imageability character in Salt City in Jordan. Historical review and site analysis were the main methodology used in this study. This paper shows some of the physical elements that contribute to attractiveness connected with the image of the Salt City in Jordan, these elements are: building appearance (material, façade design) and landscape (topography).

KEYWORDS

image of city, attractiveness, heritage city, Salt City in Jordan

ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER



1. INTRODUCTION

The image of a city is an outcome of two-way interactive processes between an observer and the environment. The image of a city is shaped according to the response between the residents and the environmental, economic, social and technological developments that reflect the local climate in the cities [1]. In general, a place has high imageability when specific physical elements and their arrangement capture attention, evoke feelings, and create a lasting impression for the users [2].

The development and growth of a city is a continuous process, hence its form, character and image evolve with time, as a result of expanding urbanization with the shift in paradigm [3]. The image of a city is related to a sense of orientation and feelings of security and comfort in the city [4].

There are four important functions served by a clear image of a city, firstly, the mobility function, which allows people to move around easily. Secondly, image serves as a broad frame of reference to the structural knowledge of the city and the activities in it. Thirdly, there is the emotional function in which a clear image allows one to move about in the city with a sense of comfort, ease and emotional security. Finally, the urban image serves a symbolic function by providing symbols and strong associations with place [5, 6]. This facilitates communication between people within a common environment. Hence, to maximize man's relationship with his environment, cities should be planned to maximize their imageability through highlighted factors that shape the image of the city [7].

The visual image of a city is a powerful meaning to the planner as the city is known to people. It provides a visual identity for the city and creates an everlasting unforgettable experience for tourists and a sense of civic pride for residents [5].

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The physical features and appearance play an important role in influencing the image and the sense of place. They contribute to making places more legible and memorable to the users and which can be identified, organized and navigated by people.

1.1. Imageability attractiveness

In other hand attractive is related to the qualities more associated with eyes, which include aesthetic values, pleasing attributes and entertainment quality. It is an important factor that encourages people to use the place [6]. It is also related to how interesting or dull the place is, the diversity of activities, the places of interest with the building and its architectural elements reflecting place character [7].

However, imageability is related with capture attention, evoke feelings, and create a lasting impression. In support to this, the importance of attractive public spaces in urban areas is clear in producing a feeling of comfort or well-being to the users [8]. Additionally, its livable and vital places in the cities will create desirable conditions, which will engage people who in turn will make these spaces more pleasant. Thus, attractiveness is part of imageability of cities, and both should take in account in order to save city identity.

According to the literature, many elements affect attraction in building appearance mentioned that distinctive building styles, which include: façade, material, color, signs with different shapes and colors, articulation, interesting scene details and texture are the features also lack of decay that make a building enjoyable for people to use and look at and leave memory the building [9–15].

In terms of aesthetic value, it emphasizes the importance that attracts users and defines why and how people use public space, the local style and the sustainable building materials particularly [9]. To improve the visual image for the place, all elements should be pleasing. These include landscape elements of varied and diverse greenery flowers, type of pavement and the location and quality of greenery [10, 11]. Also planting has strong effect on the livability of place as it enhances the quality of place and provides pleasant feel by cooling the place and protecting it from the sun [12, 13]. In other hand topography as well is main element of pleasing that create attractive environment, it offers interesting view to the place [14].

Added together landscape elements are significant in physical settings of successful attractive imageable places. These include seating, hard and soft landscaping as well as planting, paving, street furniture, subspaces, protection and shelter lighting, as well as public art [15]. So the physical element have the ability to emphasize a non-physical factors as meaning, image and character for the place [16].

This research focus on the physical factors that effects the attractiveness and enhance the imageability of the city choosing heritage place as the concept of heritage in its fundamental definition, stimulates a certain sense of belonging, recalling a shared memory that relates nations to their past and create a strong image for places [17].

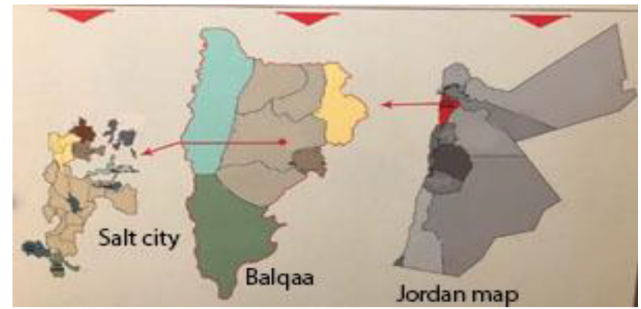


Fig. 1. Salt City in Jordan
(Source: Author)

1.2. Case study

The city of as-Salt is located approximately 27 km north west of the capital of Jordan Amman. An ancient town it was once the most important settlement in the area between the Jordan Valley and the Eastern Desert (Fig. 1). Salt has attracted settlers since the Iron Age at least. It was continuously inhabited, its history as an important trading link between the Eastern Desert and the west, and it was a significant place for the region's many rulers. The Romans, Byzantines and Mamelukes all contributed to the growth of the town but it was at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, during Ottoman rule, when As-Salt enjoyed its most prosperous period.

The town is built on several hills, it lies on three hills Jada, Qala' and Salalem with the central city Plaza (Saha) at the meeting points of the valleys.

Most of the urban heritage residents and mansions date back to the period between 1890 and end of the 1920's. These were mainly built in soft yellow marl-lime stone by crafted local and migrating master builders, using local technologies and later introducing newly imported materials of metal sections and red tiles for roofing [18].

Golden-colored houses are clustered on the slopes of the mountains, and the unity and historical significance of the architecture date back to the city's golden age. The mixture of heritage, charm and potential for tourism is of great value to Jordan [19].

The town of Salt nominated to become the 6th UNESCO World Heritage Site in Jordan.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study examines the physical elements that contribute to attractive character that connected with imageability of Salt

City. The study was conducted field studies (fieldwork). The main techniques used included, observation literature study, and analysis of the site and documents of historical significance.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Qualitative studies have found that attractiveness connected with imageability involves three main factors, namely: building material, façade design and topography.

3.1. Building material

The building material is important element that gives a special character to the place and reflects the local style's aesthetic value [20]. As-Salt is unique in Jordan and probably the whole of the surrounding area. Golden-colored houses are clustered on the slopes of the mountains, and the unity and historical significance of the architecture date back to the city's golden age. The yellow stone tells a story of the place with its unique form and surreal color with different texture (Fig. 2); a trademark well known by Salt's architecture combining the Nabulsian architectural style as well as the yellow-colored Salt stone as well as buildings made from exceptional yellow stones of the grand Salt [18].

The visual analysis supported the aesthetic of the material building, which reflects the special character identity of Salt City. Hence, building material reflects the local style's aesthetic value. In addition, the variation in texture and pattern of stone serves its aesthetic purpose and gives unique homogeneity while the exchange of shadow and light, reflects the material's beauty.

Moreover, historical review shows that humans since the ancient era have been using stones as building material instinctively [21]. Stones were also used in Jordan in old buildings starting from the stone age, all through the copper age, bronze age, iron age, Hellenistic age, Byzantine age, Islamic ages, middle and modern age, as man used stone to build their houses [21].

In short, the beauty of building material and the building uniqueness reflects local identity, and they are important in

contributing to the imageability for cities; they create attractive and interesting environment. This study found that building materials that adapt to climate, easy to find and respecting the place character should be considered in the design and development for cities.

3.2. Façade design

Façade design include the opening pattern, Windows configurations, type of glazing the that allows the lighting transmission and allow visual communication with outdoors for the occupants of the building and effects the visual comfort [22]. Designing and detailing the elevations of stone buildings in Jordan is not only functional; it can also be described as a purposeful act of ornamentation. The art of stone building construction in Salt City plays an important role in enhancing the visual efficiency of buildings and articulating their meaning; as such, it fulfills aesthetic and social functions. It gives a unique view for the city architecture that strengthens the city image.

As it is shown in Figs 3 and 4, careful attention is paid to the location and size of windows that play both roles functional and aesthetic as it regulates the circulation of air through buildings and the entry of sun. This is evident in the placement of openings in the walls bordering, in allowing for cross ventilation and in the use of high-level windows to let the hot air out [19].

Visual survey shows that Salt City known because of its elegant architecture, which reflects the Salt style: its cubic form with beautiful balconies, arched windows and surrounded by mature trees and climbers. Besides that, the historical review shows that this city is famous for its heritage houses; it respects human scale and local environment material and merging trees and landscape with building, which makes the city users enjoy walking in the city and attract more users. Thus, the articulation of building adds attracting value to the city.

In short, the beauty of building material, façade design that reflects local identity and they are important in contributing to the character and local environment of the cities; they create attractive and interesting environment. This study found these elements that adapt to climate and



Fig. 2. Building material in Salt City golden yellow lime stone that makes the city it distinct and recognizable (Source: Author)



Fig. 3. Windows in Salt City
(Source: Author)



Fig. 4. Type of elevation in Salt City
(Source: Author)

respecting the place character should be considered in the design and developing the cities to save the city imageability.

3.3. Dealing with topography

Dealing with topography in Salt City took pride in the topographic nature of their city; they saw it as an integral part salt character, which made the city and its landscape unique.

The overall construction process of the old city of As-Salt City reflects a clear expression in the way of life and understanding of the As-Salt’s people themselves in relation to man and the natural environment. The sensitivity of the people there towards the natural environment and the way they plan the city within the special topography of Salt [23].

In other hand the compacted urban fabric of old city of As-Salt functioned as climate control as buildings are connected together.

Salt as traditional city deals with topography in a unique way by connecting houses and buildings with other parts of the city with many stone stairs (Fig. 5) that give Salt special



Fig. 5. Salt City stairs
(Source: Author)

character (imageability) and special views, also the topography this had a major impact on its urban fabric and its commercial and residential functions.

Thus, designing new cities or developing old cities must respect the city topography that give the cities special character.

4. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper is to determine the physical elements that contribute to the attractive character that connected with city image. These elements, namely: (i) building material and (ii) façade design and (iii) dealing topography. Thus, these are the factors that need to be considered in future guidelines and policies for planning and designing cities.

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