BUILDINGS BY THEIR STRUCTURE, DESIGN and details, can simultaneously articulate what ought to happen in them and symbolically represent an attitude about what is taking place inside. Building entrances are no exception; they have certain qualities that can evoke a strong image in any observer. They convey silent, non-verbal messages reflecting the inner life and activities of their structure. Their image and appearance is important and can have a profound emotional effect on the building users – being inviting or repelling. We often feel emotionally triggered by an entrance and if we look more carefully for the reasons for our preferences, we may find associations between our present feelings and past experiences.

Entrances carry different significance to people, depending on their own experiences and interactions with architecture. An entrance’s meaning goes beyond the fact that it is an opening that reaches the interior. There are cases where the entrance design reveals who uses the building and what happens inside. Visitors are able to draw associations and conclusions when the architectural vocabulary used already holds some meaning about certain people who inhabit the building.

During the last 15 years there has been a surge in the construction of tourist facilities along the Northern Coast, the Red Sea and Sinai peninsula. These facilities are shaping these regions’ skyline and waterfront. Entrances are the first indication of how the coastlines are being developed. When looking at the entrances and gates of tourist facilities in Hurghada, whether hotels or villages, questions are raised: Should the entrance of a tourist facility convey the message that it is a special place for tourists? Should it be welcoming for both tourists and locals? Should its size and scale reflect the number of the occupants? Should it reflect our heritage, the tourists’ heritage, or current technological advancements? These and other related questions form the basis for understanding the imageability of entrances of tourist establishments.

Sixteen entrances have been photographed and examined in an attempt to investigate some aspects that pertain to visual pleasure and meaning. Visual order or unity, proportion, scale, contrast, balance and rhythm have the capacity to unleash feelings, trigger emotional reactions, feed the memory, and stimulate the imagination of the tourists as well as the public. In this respect, designing entrances in the case of tourist establishments is an activity that should concern itself with giving visual pleasure and delight.

The aesthetic experience and visual appeal of entrances for tourism depend on some factors that can be exemplified by 1) the quality of the setting or the context of the entrance, 2) the physical form and the patterns of decoration, 3) the circumstances under which the entrance is seen such as the weather conditions and the quality of light, and 4) the perceptual framework of the tourist, his/her current mood, and his/her previous visual experience. If we look at the building as essentially an enclosure that separates an interior private space from the exterior public space, the entrance of a tourist facility is an interface. It is the crucial meeting place where the outside connects with the inside. Thus, the image of the entrance allows the public and the visitors to anticipate the interior world.

The context or the building’s setting is an important feature that makes the visitors’ experience more pleasing. It can be exemplified by several visual attributes such as character, size, material, texture, and the relationship to the surrounding physical environment. Generally speaking, the character of the entrances in the facilities examined reflects the overall tone/character of the project. However, there is some confusion where the image evoked by the design of the entrance or the gate contradicts other masses in the project, as in the case of the Marlin Inn and Aladin Beach Resort where the inconsistency of the design creates an unfocused overall scheme that usually misleads the public.

In contrast, the Intercontinental Hotel (8) has treated its entrance more successfully. The design of the outside gate complements the main buildings’ interior and exterior, creating a harmonious project. In the entrances examined most of the contexts in which they exist have elements that provide environmental and visual pleasure such as softscape elements, routes, parking spaces, pavements and signage. How the entrance is seen and the angles of vision are also important factors that make the experience more pleasing.

Regarding the physical form, many of the entrances have good visual qualities in terms of order, balance and hierarchy, such as the Sofitel, Intercontinental (8), and Hilton. Few of the resorts have failed to address these aspects except in the cases of the Marlin Inn and Grand Hotel. Moreover, none of the examples given have used patterns of decoration. All are in good natural lighting and weather conditions, but forms from an urban vernacular often do not suit the sea side. The glare produced by the sun hitting the white washed walls is blinding – as with the Hotel Sofitel, Grand Hotel, and Beach Albatros. Basic environmental and climatic conditions are consistently ignored in architectural design of the hotels.

Although the perceptual framework of tourists may vary due to their cultural backgrounds, it is worth mentioning here that they are expected to be in good moods, coming from affluent cultures for a vacation, and thus are expected to enjoy a visual environment that differs from the environment they are experiencing in their own countries. However, examining this visual environment in the eyes of the locals abides by a different set of qualifications and considerations.

While the aesthetic qualities of entrances are to be respected, for a complete appreciation one must go beyond the visual appearance and examine meaning and content. Generally speaking, the inherent meaning of entrances can stand for the representation of place and/or the representation of the people occupying it. However, entrances of tourist villages have more than that to offer. They have physical variables that carry symbolic
meanings that can impart information and enhance legibility, making the complex easy to navigate. With the entrances examined one finds plurality of design trends emerging out of an interest in metaphorically reflecting on certain images or symbols. Some of them simulate Egyptian culture by reinterpreting the elements of heritage architecture, Pharaonic, Arabic, and Islamic, as in the case of the Sultan Beach, Hilton Hotel and Grand Hotel. While others simulate classical architecture or introduce images that pertain to the surrounding natural environment like the Samaka Beach Resort. One can argue here that the designers of these entrances try to use metaphors, identifying relationships between the present and the past, or between the natural and the man-made worlds. These relationships are abstract in nature rather than literal. However, this does not mean that all of them are meaningful, but at least they offer attempts toward introducing specific visual content that emanates out of the area for the purpose of tourism.

But does imbuing a building with a formulated identity give meaning? Identity is a collective aspect of the set of characteristics that makes a building recognisable. When tracing other attributes that incorporate meaning into visual pleasure, three aspects are achieved: permanence, distinction and recognition, which contribute to the entrance's identity. The aspect of permanence is observed in the Mashrabiya Hotel, Hilton, Sultan Beach, Hor Palace, and Intercontinental, where some symbolic physical elements are used such as the mashrabiya, the dome, and sloped walls in an attempt to link the present to the past. This is exemplified by interpreting these elements in a contemporary image. Aspects of distinction and recognition manifest in some entrances by the use of rough and hard surfaces as in the case of the Giftun Hotel and Yasmine Village, or by the sometimes confusing use of different arches.

The systematic investigation and comparative research needed to investigate how different entrances provide visual pleasure and meanings to groups of tourists of different ages and cultures begs attention. There needs to be a search for a deeper understanding of architectural symbolism as a visual (non-verbal) mechanism developers can use to communicate messages to the tourists and the public about their buildings. This suggests that a distinction between the terms image, symbol, and sign needs to be considered. An image is a fact and a reproduction of something. A symbol is something that stands for something else - the result of a cognitive process whereby an architectural element acquires a connotation or association beyond its instrumental use. A sign is a device that stands for something else in a literal rather than abstract sense. Meaning in this respect can be interpreted with regard to perceptual, cognitive and responsive meanings that pertain to users.
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1. Aladdin Beach Resort
2. Sindbad
3. Safitel
4. Marlin Inn
5. Princess Palace Hotel
6. Samaka Beach
7. Hilton
8. InterContinental
9. Beach Albatros
10. Giftun
11. Hor Palace
12. Grand Hotel
13. Yasmin Village
14. Mashrebiya Hotel
15. Intercontinental
16. Sultan Beach Resort

All photography by Ashraf Salama
المداخل الاستعارة للقرى السياحية بين المتعة البصرية والمعنى

أشرف سلامة

لا تتوافر فيها العناصر المهينة لتوفير المتعة البصرية، مثل التشطيب العشبي، الأواني، الأشراف، والرسوم الكبيرة، والأنشطة والترفيه، وغيرها، وننقل نشاطاتها بصورة أشراف تجاه الحضرات، وتتوافقها ونستفيد منها في تكوين هذه الحضارة التي تنتشر مختلاصة، تعد الأماكن، الطرقات، الهيئات، والمجموعات، وايضا في نقلها، استهدافها، وتجربتها.

مما تنتج في تقويم هذه القرى، ونأتي في نهايةเสมอ، ونستفيد منها، ونستفيد منها، ونستفيد منها.

وقد حدد تطور الأثر في السياحة في مصر، على مجالات السياحة، بالطبع، ولكن بقدر كبير على انتقاء السياحةすることで، يحصل هناك إقبال كبير على انتقاء السياحة، من قبل السياح، وتكون هذه السياحات السياحية النادرة في العالم.

وقد جددت متى إن معايير السياحة

والخدامة عند معايير تعمقنا في فهمها ودراسات، وتجارب، وتجارب، وتجارب، وتجارب، وتجارب.

وقد حدد طابع كبير على انتقاء السياحة

وطب السياحة الشاملة للحوار المتواصل، والداخل، وسياحة، وسياحة، وسياحة، وسياحة، وسياحة.

وقد جددت متى إن معايير السياحة

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