

WALKING THE WALK: AN EVALUATION OF PEDESTRIAN TOURISM ON THE 'MALL ROAD' SHIMLA

Sonia Khan*

Abstract *The present study revolves around exploring the pedestrian culture that exists in the city of Shimla, in north western Himalayas of India. Shimla, a popular hill tourism destination has had a long tradition of walking since colonial times and has a unique pedestrian-only-shopping-street known as the 'Mall Road', which is also a prime attraction that provides a quintessential experience to tourists. The paper investigates the pedestrian patterns, activities and opinion of tourists about this pedestrian street. The study concludes that tourists are generally pleased with their pedestrian experience on the 'Mall'. However some features of this pedestrian street can still be further enhanced. The city's popular Mall Road should be studied by tourism planners of other destinations, as an ideal example of a pedestrian street, in order to explore the possibilities of introducing pedestrianization with the aim of enhancing cityscapes, and also for slowing down today's fast paced life to the 'right speed', in the interest of enriching the quality of life of the individual and society.*

Keywords: Pedestrianization, Tourists, Pedestrian Mall, Shimla, Mall Road

INTRODUCTION

Shared public spaces, where people can relax, walk about freely and socialize, are gaining increased importance to counter the effects of the fast paced lifestyles of today's world. Hence the concept of 'pedestrianization' has aroused keen interest and curiosity amongst the common people and urban planners in the last few decades. Pedestrianization is recognized as the ideal solution to counter the invasion of traffic related stress of the present motorized society and also has been identified as a key to enrich the quality of life of people by providing environments that are good for walking. Besides, pedestrianization is becoming important in view of enhancing the attractions of a place, particularly in cities which have the added charm of a pleasant climate that makes a refreshing activity for both health and leisure purposes.

Shimla is a hill city in India where pedestrian culture in the main downtown has existed since long. The geographic location, natural environs and climate make this city ideal for pedestrians. Nestled in the north western Himalayas, Shimla, the capital of the State of Himachal Pradesh in

India, is situated at 30° 6' N latitude, 77° 11' E longitude, and is at 2397.59 meters above sea level. The town extends along several hills and connecting spurs and ridges that flank her from all sides. The city rests on seven hills namely, the Ridge, Elysium Hill, Summer Hill, Jakhu Pleasant Hill, Prospect Hill, Observatory Hill, and Annandale.

Shimla gained prominence during the British rule in India when *Shyamala* village (now Shimla) was identified as the '*Summer Capital*' by the British in the first half of the nineteenth century. To escape the sweltering heat of the Indian plains, every summer the British officers would move up to this hill station in order to surround themselves with an 'English climate and atmosphere'. This regular seasonal movement transformed the village into *Shimla town*, a favored destination for the English people. The homesick British officials found the aura of the town soothing and comforting and they traced a connection with 'back home' through similarities of comfortable climate, fresh crisp air, generous natural environment, a view of snow capped peaks, peace and quiet, all of which contributed to the 'English atmosphere'.

* Assistant Professor, Tourism, IVS, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, India. Email: khansonia@hotmail.com

Over the years the town has witnessed significant transformation on account of unprecedented development and expansion, and has grown into a 'city'. However she has been able to retain her colonial aura which is still reflected through the built British heritage dotting the town, combined with pleasant weather throughout the year, a soft spoken and cultured local population, an unwritten decorum that prevails in the town, all in the added backdrop of the natural beauty of physical environment. The city offers a quintessential experience similar to any European town, making the place uniquely different from other hill stations of the country. It is rightly said that 'Shimla's legacy of British control has left in somewhat of aesthetic anomaly: an Indian town, a State capital, no less that looks and feels like a village in Northern England' (Shimla, n.d).

For tourists to Shimla, the 'Mall Road', i.e. central downtown marked by a unique pedestrian only shopping street (POSS), is the prime identifiable attraction. This Mall Road is said to have a distinct personality. The name itself is adopted from the West, where a 'Mall' signifies a walking/shopping area that is covered or open air (like a British High Street). The street/road is the hub of activities centered around social interaction and shopping. The 'Mall Road' of Shimla as named by the British, is actually about a 6 km road stretch, starting from *Boileauganj* along *Vice Regal Lodge* (Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, that links *Peter Hoff*, *Cecil Hotel*, *Gorton Castle Building*, *Railway Building*, *State Bank of India*, *Telegraph Building*, *Town Hall*, *Gaiety Theatre*, *Clarkes Hotel*, *Chalet Day School Building*, *Oak Over* and *Post Office* and finally joins the *Cart Road* at *Chhota* (small) *Shimla*. The walk offers enchanting scenery throughout the stretch of the road skirted with deodar trees, historic buildings, shopping areas, trees of Pine, Himalayan Cedar and majestic Deodars. Encircling this beauty are the distant views of the long range of snow covered Greater Himalayas.

The 'Core Mall Road' i.e. hub of activity, however, is about only 'one and a half kilometer stretch' extending from the city's *Telegraph Office* to the *Lift*. *The Ridge*, located at an elevation of the 'Mall', commands the town. *The Ridge* is flanked on the West by *Lakkar Bazar* (i.e. Wooden Bazar selling wooden products), having the *Town Library* at its heart, the *Christ Church* (a neo Gothic structure, constructed in 1857) on the East, and the *Town Hall* towards the South. The 'Scandal Point' is the point on the Mall, the opposite end of the "Lift", from where the level walk of the 'Mall' begins. *Scandal Point* still remains a prime reference point for people to meet up on the Mall Road. As stories/rumor has it, it is said to be the location from where *Maharaja* (king) of *Patiala* eloped with the daughter of a British Commander in Chief. Though this tale remains an apocryphal story, it is rather more convincingly believed, that this was the point (on the Core Mall Road), during the colonial times, where people would meet up to share conversations and gossip,

hence named *Scandal Point*.

The 'Mall Road' ever since British times has been completely pedestrian and has served the purpose of recreation, leisurely walks, social interaction and shopping. At one point of time this road was regarded to be as fashionable as the finest streets of London, Paris or St. Petersburg and every morning, the tarmac was washed down by 'Mashkis' carrying goatskin bags full of water. During British times, a few horses and manually pulled 'rickshaws' were used to carry across the street, some elite officials and other people (who could not walk). When cars arrived in twentieth century, these were allowed only to a certain elevation to access the Mall Road at various points from where people would later walk or take the *rickshaws*. It is noted that before 1947, only three carriages and selected cars belonging to the Viceroy, the Commander in Chief and the Governor of Punjab were allowed up to the access point.

After the British left, the local administration of the town carried on the legacy of keeping the Mall Road 'strictly pedestrian' (barring only select cars, ambulances and fire engines to be allowed through the street in emergency cases). Hence, till date, the pedestrian culture of Shimla Mall Road forms a unique and distinctive character of the downtown, which is rare to find anywhere else in the country.

The Core Mall Road is the centre of attraction of Shimla on account of its location and as the centre of commercial space. It is one of the cleanest open public stretches in the entire country. It maintains its unique personality through a streetscape that runs parallel to a uniform double storey structure of buildings (on one side of the road), characterized by architecture similar to a small English town market place, reflecting a typical west European touch. The buildings have gabled roofs in timber framed construction (some now renovated with modern building material, but retaining the core uniform structure). The attractive windows range from bay, sash, barred, to diamond cut panes, all of which add to the 'English' character. The long stretch of these double story buildings largely house attractive shops, eateries, banks, ATMs (automated ticketing machines), coffee houses, some accommodation (on the upper storeys) and business offices. At comfortable intervals along the stretch of the road, street furniture has been aesthetically planted in the form of cast iron benches, wooden benches (on the Ridge) and seating is also available in rain shelters. At night the street is lit with exterior decorative lighting that contributes to maintaining a lively atmosphere. The lighting further enhances the character of the captivating architecture of building facades of *Christ Church*, *Gaiety Theater* (both neo gothic structures) and the *Town Hall*. Throughout the day and in all seasons, the streetscape sees palpable crowds of both tourists and locals at leisure. It provides the picture of an ideal merry street where the rich and poor walk shoulder

to shoulder, enjoying pleasures of life, like fresh air, crisp sunshine, snow, a hot cup of coffee, snacks and social time.

On account of her being a beautiful and popular hill station of the country, the economy of Shimla relies heavily on tourism. Every year thousands of domestic and foreign tourists flock to the city, which has now become a year round tourism destination. For all visitors, the Mall Road is the prime identifiable attraction and there is not a tourist who has not walked the Mall several times during his/her visit.

In view of the magnetism of this street, that is one of its rare kind of pedestrian's paradise in the country, this study aims to explore the pedestrian patterns and pedestrian experience gained by the tourists on the Mall Road.

BACKGROUND

Pedestrian zones designed for walking are gaining growing importance in today's 'motorized society' where automobiles have invaded our lives, and have lead to isolation of people in the cubicles of their vehicles. This motorization is making man inherently lazy, sedentary and aloof, and also has been the prime cause of adverse effects on physical and psychological well being of man. To counter this effect of detachment and dissociation of man from his environs and society, and to add to the quality of life of people, pedestrianization is being recognized as the ideal solution.

The history of pedestrianization is not recent. Five decades back, some countries incorporated pedestrianization in their town/city planning, realizing the need of providing quality environments for people and also in view of enhancing the visual character of the cities. The Scandinavian countries were one of the earliest to introduce pedestrianism. In Europe, the concept of pedestrian streets first appeared in 1950s. In early 1960s a large number of European cities transformed parts of the city's area into 'car free' zones. Copenhagen is cited as one of the prime examples to have introduced pedestrian streets in central Copenhagen in 1962, by converting one of the largest streets of *Stroget* from a car traffic area into a pedestrian shopping street. *Stroget* however, is not a single pedestrian street, but a series of interconnected avenues, which together form a large pedestrian zone. At several points this street is crossed by other streets that have vehicular traffic. Today Copenhagen hosts 100,000 square meters of car-free streets and squares (Gehl & Gemzøe, 2001; Gehl, Gemzøe, & Stennhard, 1999).

Pedestrianism encourages a relaxed behavior whereby people can move about at their desired pace, without having to fear dodging vehicular traffic, worrying about parking spaces, rushing with shopping or other chores. Over the years, in many countries, pedestrianism has caught up as a favored phenomenon supporting the activity of 'walking'. The importance of walking revolves around the fact that

it is the fundamental form of mobility which is accessible to all. Walking is considered important as it has a social, contemplative and exploratory dimension associated with it. The importance of walking is propagated by health advocates, psychologists and environmentalists. While the World Health Organization demonstrates that walking is the best exercise for maintaining good health and a quality of life, environmentalist emphasize that walking is the only pollution free mode of transport, an ideal response to climate change, and the best solution for maintaining sustainable cities. Due to its multifarious benefits, city planners, geographers, and tourism scholars, among others, have shown keen interest in the growing importance of encouraging walking through favoring pedestrianism (Helbing et al., 2001; Hine, 1996; Lew, 2007; McManus, 1998; Melia et al., 2010; Onibokun, 1975; Pugalís, 2006; Rahaman, Lourenço, and Viegas, 2012; Robertson, 1991; Yuen and Chor, 1998; Wooller et al., 2012). Pedestrianism conveys the importance of slowing down in a fast world, in order to enhance the experiences and quality of life of people, so that they can change their lifestyle from one which is 'rushed and time compressed', to one which revolves around doing things at the 'right' speed (Lumsdon and Mc Grath, 2011).

Though the word pedestrian means 'on foot', it is interesting to note that the term '*Pedestrian Zone*' is used in several contexts and hence confusions remain regarding the usage of the term (Melia, Barton, Parkhurst, 2010). To the extent a pedestrian street is pedestrian, depends upon policy and restrictions of the local administration. Based upon the nature of rules and regulations for the pedestrian zone, pedestrian streets are divided into three types (Iranmanesh, 2008), i.e. a). *Full time*: where entry of vehicles is strictly prohibited but only emergency service vehicles may be allowed; b). *Part time*: vehicular access may be allowed on certain hours of the day only and/or certain days of the week i.e. vehicle restricted; and c). *Traffic calming*: streets where vehicular traffic is discouraged but not restricted (calming streets have wide walking paths, limited space for car parking and require vehicular speed to be slowed down through indications like use of different road textures or road segment colors). In several pedestrian streets vehicles like utility (trash removal), delivery, emergency, or those belonging to certain officials are allowed. In terms of purpose, pedestrian streets can be categorized as commercial, non commercial, both, or neither.

The term *Walkability* is a new word that has emerged in the parlance of pedestrianization. Walkability determines the degree to which an environment is friendly for walking, as an activity that is valuable for health, environmental and economic benefits. Pedestrianization in relation to walkability has become an integral part of sustainable modern urban design (Adkins et al., 2012; Barani, et al., 2008; Rahman, et al., 2012). Pedestrianization was introduced with the aim of

promoting a culture of walking among people and to provide the best opportunity for recreation centered around social interaction on foot. Over a period of time, the simplistic pedestrian recreation in open spaces and pedestrian streets has transformed to providing a richer and varied experience through enrichment of pedestrian paths with mushrooming of shops, cafes, restaurants and even some public offices and private businesses. All of these attract both locals and tourists to walking streets in increased numbers (Iranmanesh, 2008). Pedestrian streets are enjoyable environments that are safe, accident free, traffic noise free, where people flock together in common space, thereby reflecting the liveliness of an area (Best Practices, 2011). Pedestrian activity as a form of leisure can also be associated with the emerging concept of “Slow Tourism” (Dickinson, Lumsdon and Robbins, 2011; Myer and Knox, 2006; Nijkamp and Baaijens, 1999; Salvo, Mogollon and Clemente, 2013).

A *Pedestrian Mall*, is the most common form of a pedestrian zone in large cities (Rubenstein, 1992). A Pedestrian Mall is characterised by exposure to climate and is a street lined with storefronts, closed off to most automobile traffic. In such a street, emergency vehicles have access at all times and delivery vehicles are restricted to either limited delivery hours of the day or through entrances on the back streets if any (Wallar, 2007). Onibokun (1975) concurs that Pedestrian Malls are a variant of shopping areas. Restricted to pedestrian usage they offer safe and pleasant environments allowing pedestrians to move about freely. Referred in many countries as ‘*Pedestrian-Only Shopping Streets*’ (POSS), these are usually crowded with shoppers, window shoppers, tourists and other people of all ages, from all walks of life, who come to shop, window shop, observe, stroll, eat, recreate, socialize, relax, have some fresh air, or simply have some fun (Rodriguez, 2011). Hence Pedestrian Malls are a reflection of ‘livable’ streets. The environment of POSS is often enhanced by beautification through planting of water fountains, sitting areas, sculptures, eateries and outdoor cafes. Being safe due to the absence of traffic, such streets are usually buzzing with ‘lots of happy-looking people everywhere’. It is noted that during special celebrations and events, POSS are particularly busy and vibrant.

Pedestrian Malls can provide ideal settings for studying pedestrian behavior and activities. An observation of behavior exhibited by pedestrians can provide insight into the comfort level experienced by them on pedestrian streets. A deeper insight into experience of pedestrians at any pedestrian street can be further valuable to provide clues to planners about aspects like, the ideal desired length and breadth of pedestrian streets, patterns of peak crowd time, nature of pedestrian movement, requirements of beautification, demand for street furniture and other activates that can be provided along the pedestrian streets to keep them livable.

Pedestrian behavior has started attracting the attention of

planners, geographers and scholars. Bierlaire et al. (2003), Danalet et al. (2013) and Van Kooten (1993) have delved into enquiring aspects of pedestrian behavior, like how and why people gather and move out, what their walking speeds are, the ideal speed of walking, comfort of walking that can help in easily sensing and observing the sights around, and the nature of activities people engage in while walking. An interesting observation of pedestrian movement has been made by Wachowicza et al., (2011) who have identified ‘Pedestrian Flocks’ emerging from social interactions based around a group of friends, or sharing of some common interest. They explain moving flocks as groups of pedestrians (i.e. collectives) that move together as a result of close interactions, e.g. group of friends moving around a shopping area. They mention that flocks move together at a given speed. Other interesting aspects like the preferred distance that groups keep from each other in a ‘Preferred Pedestrian Flow’, the size of actual strolling groups, the strolling rate (in metres/second) that groups sustain in order to maintain distance from others, have been investigated by McManus (1998). Zanlungo et al. (2012), have further explored the pattern of movement of people in separate ‘counter flows’ in a ‘corridor manner’ on a pedestrian street. They note that flows may be generated both on the ‘right’ or ‘left’ side of the corridor, in a symmetrical way, emphasizing, that in most countries pedestrian flows follow an unwritten rule, being either on the ‘right side’ or the ‘left side’ as a form of ‘collision avoidance’ behavior. This observation of Zanlungo et al. (2012) is akin to the pedestrian movement on the Mall Road of Shimla as well, which shows a two lane counter flow of people walking on the ‘left’ in an unwritten norm of the street.

At tourist destinations POSS can hold a special attraction. It is often remarked that for tourists “the best way to experience and know a place is on foot”. Thompson (2004) suggests that an individual city tourist usually explores his/her destination by a combination of public transport and long walking distances. Walking helps to soak in the sights, sounds, fragrance and ambience of the places visited, and also provides an opportunity to experience authentic interaction with the local people and culture. A slow pace adopted by tourists can contribute immensely to availing a quality experience at the place visited. Therefore, walking to be chosen as a preferred way of exploring cities increases the importance of pedestrianization, particularly at tourism destinations.

A clean and safe environment backed by the added flavor of a comfortable climate conducive to walking, is ideal for pedestrianization. Taking Shimla city as the area of study, blessed with safe environment, attractive natural beauty and a comfortable climate, quite similar to any European destination, this paper sets out to explore and describe the pattern of pedestrian tourist movement and the pedestrian

experience gained by tourists at the popular "Mall Road", a quintessential POSS attraction in the country.

METHODOLOGY

Millonig & Schechtner (2005) suggest that the quality of pedestrian areas and the experience of pedestrians can be assessed using physical, psychological and mental route qualities. The physical qualities include distance, capacity, physical atmosphere; the psychological qualities include motivation, activities and perception of pedestrian safety; and mental qualities include subjective identification of landmarks, way-finding, navigating, not getting lost, etc. Using these categories among others, the methodology of this study was developed.

The study used an exploratory and descriptive research method to examine and explain the activity patterns and experience of pedestrian tourists. The study area selected was the one and a half kilometer "Core Mall Road" stretch of pedestrian Mall Road in the city of Shimla, State of Himachal Pradesh, in North Western Himalayas of India. The sample size comprised hundred pedestrian tourists. As Shimla is now a year round tourism destination and also attracts a lot of weekend tourists from neighbouring States, finding tourists was not a problem. Purposeful and random sampling was used to select respondents. Primary data was collected with the help of a structured questionnaire that was used for interviewing the respondents over a period of three months (August, September and October, 2013). The questionnaire was divided into various sections to procure information on aspects like, demographic profile, visiting pattern, activity pattern, facility and comfort level assessment, and overall opinion of the tourists about their pedestrian experience on the Mall Road. The data was analysed in a simplistic manner using descriptive statistics (frequencies/percentages) through SPSS.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the study it was found that 79 % respondents were Indians and 21% foreigners. As Shimla city is a 'must see' popular hill destination attraction also known as the "Queen of Hills", a lot of domestic tourists flock to the city. Being easily accessible from the neighboring States, the city witnesses a lot of weekend tourism. Tourists also come here in large numbers to take short breaks, especially the ones who drive up in their own vehicles. From other States in the country that are farther away, plenty of package tour companies bring in tourists throughout the year. As for foreign tourists, there is a regular inbound flow as well, but in lesser numbers, spread throughout the year. 67 % respondents were males and 33 % females. The respondents were spread over all age groups i.e. 23% (less than 20 years), 26% (21-30 years), 13% (31-

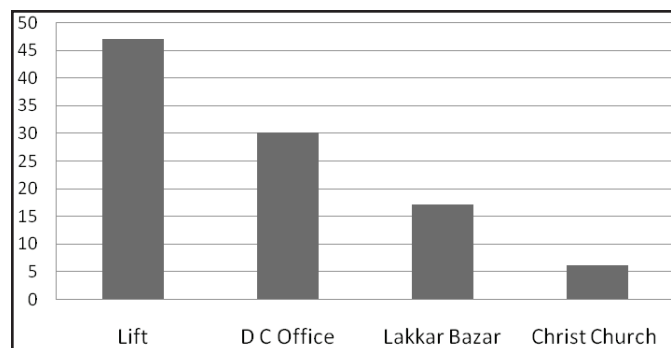
40 years), 18% (41-50 years) and 20 % (above 50 years). This signifies that Shimla city holds an attraction for all age groups of people.

Visiting Pattern

The visiting pattern of tourists to the Mall Road is gauged under various sub headings as follows.

Access Direction to the Mall Road: The Core Mall Road is considered to be the center of the city. It is a prime hub location accessible from various directions. Most tourist accommodation units are located in and around the city centre in such a manner that tourists find it easy to access the Mall Road.

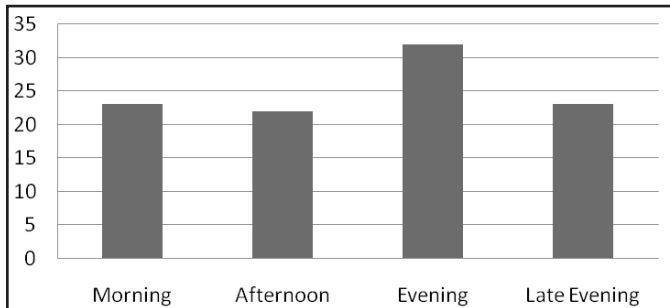
Graph 1. Access Direction to the Mall Road



The results in Graph 1 show the direction of access of tourists to the Mall. It is evident that most tourists (47%) have accessed the Mall Road by the 'Lift'. The 'Lift' is a preferred point of access as tourists can bring in their own vehicle, or any tourist cab, up to the 'Lift' parking area, and then conveniently take the Lift, to reach the elevation of the Mall Road. 30% mention to have accessed from the direction of the 'District Court' (DC) office, either having walked from their place of stay, or having taken the government run cab service coming in from the main bus stand and other areas of the city. The DC office is an ideal point of access similar to the Lift, as it brings people to a comfortable level walk, to the point from where the shops begin. 24% tourists report to have accessed from 'Lakkar Bazar'. These are tourists either staying at hotels near the Lakkar Bazar, or those who alight at the Lakkar Bazar bus stop to walk up to the Mall Road. Only 6% tourists have come in from the direction of the Christ Church, rightly signifying that there are lesser number of hotels towards this end, and also indicating that tourists do not choose to stay in accommodation towards the direction of 'Christ Church', as vehicular access to the hotels located towards this area is difficult due to most roads being restricted for public transport.

Preferred Time of Visit the Mall Road: Graph 2, conveys the preferred time of visit of the respondent tourists to the Mall Road.

Graph 2. Preferred Time of Visit to the Mall Road



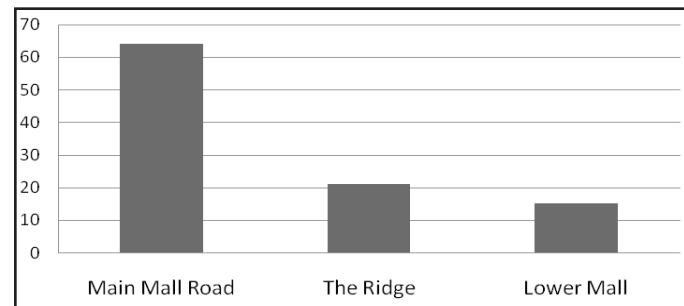
The results show that 'evening' is the most preferred time of the day for most tourists (32%) to visit the Mall Road. The reason can be attributed to the fact that the street is more lively and vibrant with a lot of people in the evening. Most local working population gathers on the Mall, to socialize and spend their leisure time after office hours, adding to the evening hustle and bustle of the city centre. 23% and 22% respondents have indicated a preference for visiting the Mall Road during 'morning' and 'afternoon', respectively. The reason can be that these 'day' hours (i.e. working hours for locals) allow the tourists to enjoy the weather, window shop, shop, or simply stroll along with friends and family and move about leisurely at ease, without having to worry about the rush hours of local crowd. Another reason to prefer the morning and afternoon is that as evening sets in, the temperature in the city dips down making it relatively 'cold' for most of the tourists to be out and about. Besides, tourists may also prefer day hours to visit the Mall Road, as the accommodation that they are staying in, is farther from the city centre and they prefer daylight to roam about. However, 23% have shown a preference for being on the Mall in 'late evening'. These are perhaps tourists, who are staying nearby or have their own vehicles, and even the ones who choose to dine out at one of the restaurants on the Mall, before retiring for the night in their accommodation units.

Preferred Point of Hanging Around on the Mall Road:

The Core Mall Road is about a one and a half kilometer stretch. There are three different elevations/gradients to this street that branch out from, and then reconnect to the main stretch, i.e. higher elevation known as the 'Ridge', central as the 'Mall Road', and lower as the 'Lower Mall/ Bazar'. The Ridge, as the name suggests, is an elevated, flat, wide central area, without shops, offering an almost 360 degree view of the city and distant mountains. It offers a wide open leisure space for walking, horse riding, photography, lazing, sitting, etc. Most of the important functions of the city like

State/National Day parades, summer festival, and other government fests are held here. The central street is the main Mall Road that is lined throughout on one side with branded showrooms, eateries, and other commercial establishments that attract both tourists and locals in large numbers. The Lower Mall is also a shopping area, but offers medium and low priced range products and household goods, preferred mostly by the middle class local population segment.

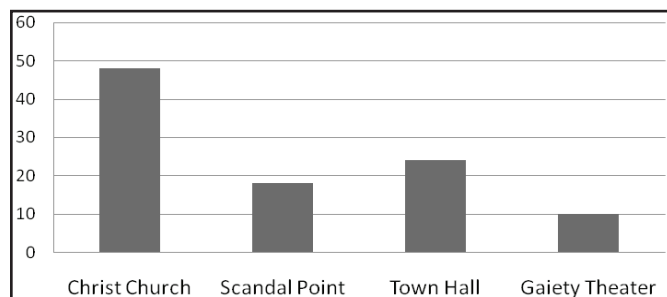
Graph 3. Preferred Place of Hanging Around on the Mall Road



The results in Graph 3 show that out of the three branching out streets, the central i.e. 'Main Mall Road' street is the most preferred (64%) place where the tourists like to hang around. The reason is that it is the hub of activity buzzing with people and shops. The place has a refreshing European ambience with British architecture, a civilized crowd, cafes, (a few with outdoor seating) and classy shopping outlets with attractive displays enticing the crowds through huge glass windows. 21% tourists have given a preference for the 'Ridge', and these probably are the ones who choose photography of the distant mountains and Christ Church, or the ones who like to have leisurely walks in a place where children can run around freely or take joy rides on horse backs. Few (15%) tourists have a preference for hanging around on the 'Lower Mall', probably because it is a relatively narrow street compared to the Mall, feels more crowded and therefore tourists like to avoid it. The few tourist who hang out here are the ones who are simply exploring the Lower Mall, or the ones who go about looking for cheap bargains.

Landmark Most Associated with the Mall Road:

Landmarks offer visual and spatial clues to people. They are used as natural elements in human way finding and navigating in unfamiliar environments. Landmarks also act as 'reference points' and 'iconic attractions' that are associated with the identity of a place. Shimla city is easily identified by a few such landmarks, most of which are concentrated on the Mall Road.

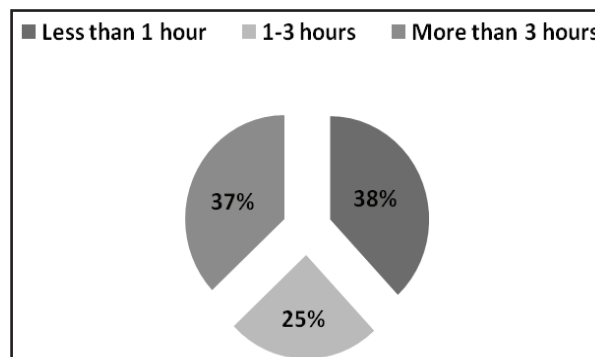
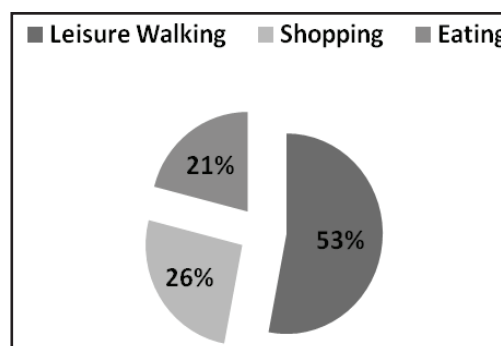
Graph 4. Landmark Most Identified with Mall Road

When enquired about the unique landmark on the Mall Road that the tourists most associate the image of the city with, 48% have reported 'Christ Church' (Graph 4). The Church is a pale yellow Gothic structure that stands out distinctly against a background of green hills. On account of its size, it is a commanding structure on the Ridge, typifying a classic example of European architecture and exudes a European atmosphere for the city. The Church is most widely depicted in all tourism promotion material of the city. The 'Town Hall' too, a typical British building structure, located in the heart of the Mall Road, occupies a dominating position and is associated as a landmark by 24% tourists. The attractive Town Hall stairs (like in many European countries) are a preferred seating point for most locals and tourists at leisure. 'Scandal Point' is a spot marked by a small circular umbrella shade for a single person (used by the policeman on patrol). Though the tourists know the tales about its historical significance, it is not much associated as a landmark (18%) due to its small size that renders it into oblivion. The 'Gaiety Theater' is reported by mere 10% tourists as a landmark association. This is an interesting observation, as, though it is commanding structure with unique architecture, tourists tend to pass it by in their leisurely stride, failing to distinctly identify/recognize it as a prominent landmark.

ACTIVITY PATTERN

The time the tourists spend on the Mall in a visit, and the activities they engage in, are shown in graph 5 and graph 6 respectively.

Results show that most tourists, i.e. 38% and 37% tourists spend more than 'three' hours or 'one to three' hours on the Mall Road, respectively. This is an indication that tourists come to Mall at leisure and do not wish to rush through. They enjoy the safe and relaxed atmosphere of this unique POSS. Mostly the tourists who spend this much time on the Mall combine a number of activities together, like leisure strolling, shopping, window shopping and even eating a snack at one of the restaurants.

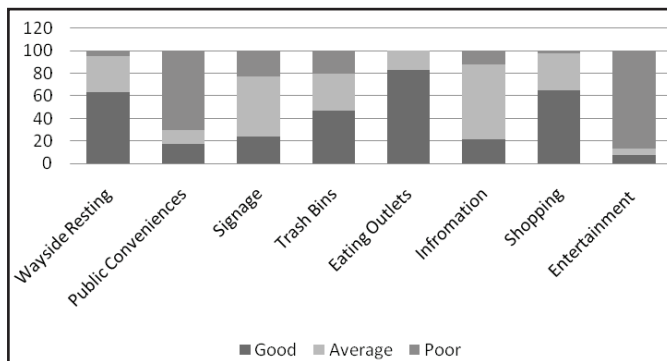
Graph 5. Time Spent in a Visit on the Mall Road**Graph 6. Activities Most Engaged in on the Mall Road**

Graph 6 shows that in terms of ranking of the top three activities on the Mall Road, 53% tourists give the highest rank to 'Leisure walking', followed by 'Shopping' (26%), and 'Eating' (21%).

Opinion on Overall Ambience of the Mall Road

The opinion of the overall ambience of the Mall Road is identified by tourists' assessment of the facilities and comfort level experienced on this street.

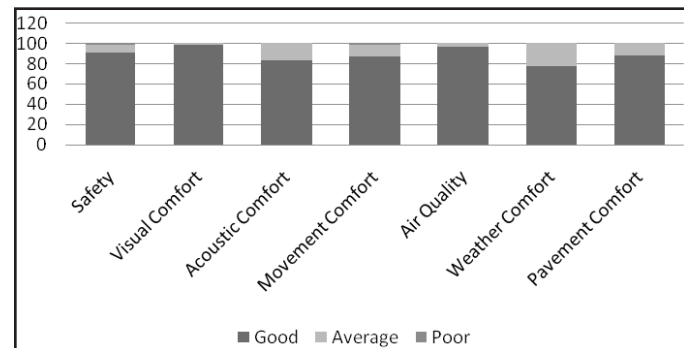
Assessment of Facilities on the Mall Road: Graph 7 shows the various facilities on the Mall Road, each assessed by tourists as 'good', 'average' or 'poor'. The results show that facilities like 'eating outlets', 'wayside resting', and 'shopping', are largely rated 'good' (i.e. 83%, 63% and 65 %, respectively) by most of the tourists. The Mall has a wide choice of restaurants and cafes, enough street furniture for resting (in view of the long walk) and a variety of medium to high end shopping outlets. The availability of 'trash bins' along the road is also rated 'good' by 47% tourists. No doubt the Mall Road is often remarked to be one of the 'cleanest streets of the country'.

Graph 7. Assessment of Facilities on the Mall Road

It is seen from the results that the facilities rated highest as 'poor' by most tourists are 'entertainment activities' (87%) and 'public conveniences' (70%). It is true that though the Shimla Mall pedestrian street is a natural attraction of the city, except for shops and the vibrant atmosphere of a lively walk, the street lacks entertainment avenues for tourists. Unlike European streets, where the interest of tourists is often maintained by street musicians, artists, other performers and happening activities, the Mall Road lacks this feature. Besides, being a cold and quiet hill station, the city wakes up late and sleeps early. Hence there is a lack of night entertainment too. It is often complained by tourists, that after a few days they get 'bored', as both the city and the Mall Road do not have much to offer to tempt them to stay longer. The tourists are also not happy with the facility of public conveniences on the Mall, which besides being few in number, are not clean, and hence tourists avoid using them. On a one and a half kilometer pedestrian walk of Mall Road stretch, this facility is much more desired. The other facilities like signage and information have received a high to average assessment by tourists.

Assessment of the Comfort Level of the Mall Road: In their studies in Europe on understanding walking comfort and improving walking conditions, Ovstedal and Ryeng (2002) have identified several factors that may be detrimental to comfort of pedestrians. Using these factors, the comfort level of pedestrians has been assessed in the present study. Each respondent has rated each comfort factor in 'good', 'average', or 'poor'. The results clearly indicate that all factors are highly rated as 'good' (more than 70%) by most respondents. Taking the factors individually, the tourists seem very pleased with the 'visual comfort', 'air quality comfort' and 'safety' of the Mall Road, with 98%, 96%, and 90% respondents respectively, rating them as 'good'. The apparent lack of any kind of crime in the city raises the confidence and safety feeling of tourists. Moreover, the local population is very gentle and helpful. To add to this, the location of a police reporting room right in the centre of the Mall, and the regular presence of two-there policeman on

patrol on the street, adds to the perceived security feeling of tourists. The air quality is rated 'good' on account of minimal pollution. Besides, as for visual comfort, the Mall Road is so designed with low building structures, that an unobstructed view of the city and the distant mountains is easily allowed without having to strain one's neck. Further, as the city has enough natural beauty, the visual surroundings are appealing to the eyes.

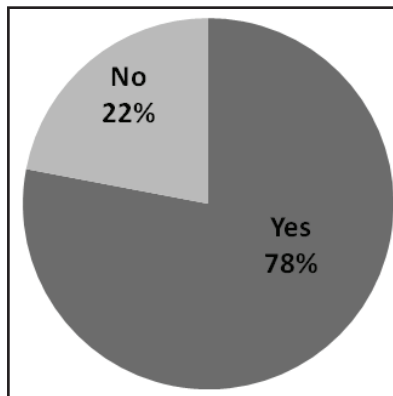
Graph 8. Assessment of Comfort Level on the Mall Road

Other comfort dimensions like 'acoustic', 'movement', 'weather' and 'pavement comfort' have also been largely rated 'good' by maximum respondents (i.e. 83%, 87%, 77% and 88% respectively). On account of the street being car free, it is obvious that there is no sound pollution. As the Mall Road is located high above and away from the other main roads of the city, there is no traffic noise from the surrounding areas. Besides, the local people are soft spoken, which adds to the soothing serenity of the atmosphere. As for movement, the wide breadth of the street is comfortable for walking, and the street follows an unwritten norm of 'walking to the left', that allows for comfort. The street is characterized by 'two parallel flocks of people' walking comfortably in 'two corridors' (each in opposite direction), avoiding collision, without having the necessity to be separated by any built physical divider. Such easy movement also allows for maintaining individual personal space and personal territory (Bell *et al.*, 1996). The walking pavement is level, metalled and well maintained, and even the gradient leading to The Ridge and Lower Mall is rather gradual and comfortable, not being a strenuous a steep climb. As for weather, the tourists certainly find it ideal as it contributes to the 'walkability' of the city street. However a few tourists have rated the weather as 'poor' (13%) presumably because these tourists come from warm / hot places of residence, and find Shimla 'rather cold'. But overall, the Mall Road pedestrian experience is rated positively on its comfort level.

Opinion on Mall Road as a Unique Street that Contributes to City's Touristic Appeal

On the question to assess the opinion of tourists, whether they think or not, that the Mall Road is a unique street that contributes to enhancing the touristic appeal of Shimla city, the results (Graph 9) show that 78% tourists agree it does. These tourists feel that this kind of street is rare to find in India and definitely adds to the touristic charm and appeal of the city.

Graph 9. Contribution of the Pedestrian Mall Road to the City's Touristic Appeal



A few (22 %) tourists however report 'no' as an answer. These are perhaps the ones who have had experiences of similar such streets in other cities in India or abroad, or the ones who regardless of having an enjoyable pedestrian experience in Shimla, still prefer the comfort of motorization.

CONCLUSION

This study has investigated the pedestrian patterns and experience of tourists in the city of Shimla. It concludes that the pedestrian street, of "Mall Road", Shimla, is a 'one of its rare kind' of pedestrian streets in the country which provides a unique experience for tourists. In the view of Oliver, Schuurman and Hall, (2007) it is the characteristics of the local environment, as aesthetics and built environment factors that tend to influence an individual's decision to engage in physical activity like walking. The Mall Road of Shimla possesses such environment and aesthetics. Besides, the natural beauty and the comfortable climatic conditions of the city are a major strength that favor pedestrian activity which tourists enjoy, rather than find cumbersome.

The British history and aura of the Mall Road, add to the rare pedestrian experience. The local administration of the city rightly realizes that this street is a unique and plans to continuously enhance this POSS as an attraction. Looking forward in this direction, the local administration has plans

to soon embark on a project to transform the whole stretch of the core Mall Road into a 'European style leisure road' by replacing the asphalt road surface with European cobbled stone. However the administration needs to consciously address the lack of public conveniences, and provide the same. Efforts can also be made to encourage some form of light entertainment on this street to make the street livelier. Signage on the street can be improved too.

The fact should not be overlooked that in today's fast paced life pedestrianization must be adopted as essential component of planning urban spaces, so that pedestrianism can slow down peoples' life to a desired pace in the interest of maintaining quality of life. It should also be incorporated in order to enhance the character of cities by creating 'environments that pulsate with people and life', as opposed to 'cities that resound with a continuous din of traffic'. Pedestrianism should be seen as a key to sustaining pollution free physical environments, facilitating individual health benefits through encouraging walking, and contribute to social welfare by attracting people to common pedestrian streets for 'real' social interaction, in a fast transforming society where the social dimension of an individual's life has been relegated merely to superficial technology aided 'virtual' social media interaction. In essence, pedestrianization should be looked upon as a 'single solution' to mitigate several problems. Therefore cities must create rich pedestrian environments and try to seduce pedestrians into its public space (Reid, 2005). The Mall Road of Shimla is an ideal example of a street that has succeeded in doing so. Other cities and tourism planners can learn from the example of this unique 'pedestrian only shopping street' and aim to create similar attractions for tourists. Though a shortcoming of this study has been the small sample size of respondents, future research should be an extension in the direction of broadly investigating with a larger sample size, the views about both locals and tourist regarding pedestrianism. Taking up case studies of cities where pedestrianization has already been incorporated, general research should focus on exploring and widely communicating the benefits of pedestrianization for society and environment, and also encourage planners to seriously consider the transformation of parts of cities into pedestrian attractions.

REFERENCES

- Adkins, A., Dill, J., Luhr, G., & Neal, M. (2012). Unpacking walkability: Testing the influence of urban design features on perceptions of walking environment attractiveness. *Journal of Urban Design*, 17(4), 499-510.
- Barani, P. K., Daniel, A., Rodriguez, & Khattak, A. J. (2008). Space syntax and walking in a new urbanist and suburban neighbourhoods. *Journal of Urban Design*, 13(1), 5-28.

- Bell, P. A., Greene, T. C., Fisher, J. D., & Baum, A. (1996). *Environmental psychology* (4th Ed.). Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- Best Practices (2011). *Public space and pedestrian realm*. Retrieved September 5, 2013, from http://www.bettermarketstreetsf.org/docs/BMS_P2-1_BestPractices_12072011.pdf
- Bierlaire, M., Antonini, G., & Weber, M. (2003). Behavioral dynamics for pedestrians. In: K. W. Axhausen, (Ed). *Moving through nets: The physical and social dimensions of travel* (pp.81-105). Elsevier.
- Danalet A., Farooq, B., & Bierlaire, M. (2013). *Towards and activity-based model for pedestrian facilities*. Paper presented at 13th Swiss Transport Research Conference (STRC), Monte Verità, Ascona, Switzerland, 2013. Retrieved August 22, 2013, from http://www.strc.ch/conferences/2013/Danalet_Farooq_STRC13.pdf
- Dickinson, J. E., Lumsdon, L. M., & Robbins, D. (2011). Slow travel: issues for climate change. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 19(3), 281-300.
- Gehl, J., & Gemzøe, L. (2001). *New city spaces*. Copenhagen: Arkitektens Forlag.
- Gehl, J., Gemzøe, L. & Stenhardt, K. (1999). *Public spaces, public life*. Copenhagen: The Danish Architectural Press.
- Helbing D., Molnar P., Farkas I., & Bolay, K. (2001) Self-organizing pedestrian movement. *Environment and Planning, B*(28), 361-384.
- Hine, J. (1996). Pedestrian travel experiences: Assessing the impact of traffic on behaviour and perceptions of safety using an in-depth interview technique. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 4(3), 179-199.
- Myer, H., & Knox, P. L. (2006). Slow cities: sustainable places in a fast world. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 28(4), 321-334.
- Nijkamp, P., & Baaijens, S. (1999). Time pioneers and travel behavior: An investigation into the viability of Slow motion. *Growth and Change*, 30(2), 237-263.
- Iranmanesh, N. (2008). Pedestrianisation a great necessity in urban designing to create a sustainable city in developing countries. *Paper presented at 44th ISOCARP Congress* Retrieved from http://www.isocarp.net/Data/case_studies/1130.pdf
- Lew, A. (2007). Pedestrian shopping streets in the restructuring of the Chinese city. In T. Coles and A. Church, (Eds.), *Tourism, power and Place*, (pp. 150-170). London: Routledge
- Lumsdon, L. M., & McGrath, P. (2011). Developing a conceptual framework of slow travel using a grounded theory approach. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 19(3), 265-279.
- McManus, P. M. (1998). Preferred pedestrian flow: A tool for designing optimum interpretive conditions and visitor pressure management. *The Journal of Tourism Studies*, 9(1), 40-50.
- Melia, S., Barton, H., & Parkhurst, G. (2010). Carfree, low car - What's the difference? *World Transport Policy & Practice*, 16(2), 24-32.
- Millonig, A., & Schechtner, K. (2005). *Decision Loads and Route Qualities for Pedestrians – Key Requirements for the Design of Pedestrian Navigation Services*. In, N. Waldau, P. Gattermann, H. Knoflacher and M. Schreckenberg (Eds.), *Pedestrian and Evacuation Dynamics* (pp. 109-118). Heidelberg: Springer.
- Oliver, L. N., Schuurman, N., & Hall, A. W. (2007). *International Journal of Health Geographics*, 6, 41-51.
- Onibokun, A. (1975). A comprehensive evaluation of pedestrian malls in the United States. *The Appraisal Journal*, 202-218.
- Ovstedal, L., & Ryeng, E. O. (2002). Understanding pedestrian comfort in European cities: How to improve walking conditions? *Paper presented at the European Transport Conference*, 9-11, Homerton College, Cambridge, UK. Retrieved <http://virtual.vtt.fi/virtual/prompt/ptrc.pdf>
- Pugalis L. (2006). *Wonderful, wonderful Copenhagen*. University of Newcastle.
- Rahaman, K., Lourenço, J., & Viegas, J. (2012). Perceptions of pedestrians and shopkeepers in European medium-sized cities: Study of Guimarães, Portugal. *Journal of Urban Planning and Development*, 138(1), 26-34.
- Robertson, K. A. (1991). Pedestrian streets in Sweden's city centres. *Cities*, 8(4), 301-314.
- Rodriguez, L. (2011, January 3). *Pedestrian only shopping streets make communities more livable*. Retrieved September 21, 2013, from <http://www.planetizen.com/node/47517>
- Rubenstein, H. M. (1992). *Pedestrian malls, streetscapes and urban spaces*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Salvo, P. D., Mogollon, J. M. H., & Clemente, E. D. (2013). "Repellent" tourists versus "Slow tourists. *European Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Recreation*, 4(2), 131-148.
- Shimla (n.d). Retrieved August 13, 2013, from http://hp-shimla.nic.in/sml_hist.htm.
- Thompson, K. (2004). *Tourist's use of public transport information: what they need and what they get*. Paper presented at European Transport Conference 2004, Strasbourg, France
- Van Kooten, G. C. (1993). *Land resource economics and sustainable development: Economic policies and the common good*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Wachowicz, M., Rebecca O., Chiara R., & Mirco N. (2011). Finding moving flock patterns among pedestrians

- through collective coherence. *International Journal of Geographical Information Science*, 25(11), 1849–1864.
- Wallar, M., (2007). How to create a pedestrian mall, culture change. Retrieved September 12, 2013, from www.culturechange.org/issue14/pedestrianmall.html
- Wooller, L., Badland, H. M., & Schofield, G. M. (2012). Pedestrianisation: Are we reading from the same page? Perspectives from key stakeholders in Takapuna, Auckland. *Graduate Journal of Sport, Exercise & Physical Education Research*, 1, 16-30
- Yuen, B., & Chor, C. H. (1998). Pedestrian streets in Singapore. *Transportation*, 25, 225-242.
- Zanlungo, F., Ikeda T., & Kanda, T. (2012). A microscopic “Social Norm” model to obtain realistic macroscopic velocity and density pedestrian distributions. *PLoS ONE*, 7(12): e50720. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0050720.