

ASSESSING THE COMFORT OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT AS A FACTOR IN THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF TERRITORY AND INCREASING ITS COMPETITIVENESS IN THE REGIONAL TOURISM SERVICES MARKET

AVALIAÇÃO DO CONFORTO DO AMBIENTE URBANO COMO FATOR DE ATRATIVIDADE DO TERRITÓRIO E AUMENTO DE SUA COMPETITIVIDADE NO MERCADO REGIONAL DE SERVIÇOS TURÍSTICOS

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Abstract

In conditions of rapid urbanization and increasing competition between cities, the formation of a socio-psychological comfortable urban environment is becoming a key factor in sustainable development and territorial attractiveness. It is especially relevant to study the potential of the urban environment from a tourism perspective. The study proposes a multi-criteria model for assessing the comfort of the urban environment with an emphasis on its perception by residents and tourists. The

Resumo

Em um contexto de rápida urbanização e crescente competição entre cidades, a formação de um ambiente urbano sociopsicológico confortável torna-se um fator-chave para o desenvolvimento sustentável e a atratividade territorial. É especialmente relevante estudar o potencial do ambiente urbano sob a perspectiva do turismo. Este estudo propõe um modelo multicritério para avaliar o conforto do ambiente urbano, com ênfase na sua percepção por residentes e turistas. A metodologia baseou-



methodology was based on a theoretical analysis of scientific sources, focused interviews with representatives of municipalities, and an expert survey. In the first stage, general and partial criteria were identified that were significant for assessing tourist attractiveness in terms of comfort. Among the most important factors are visual attractiveness, accessibility and quality of urban infrastructure, availability of recreational areas, and the comfort of the pedestrian environment and social spaces. The paper substantiates the need to consider objective indicators and subjective perceptions of the urban environment. The results enabled the development of a two-level assessment model suitable for diagnosing and informing strategic planning of urban policy. The findings can be helpful to local governments and specialists in urban studies, as well as for the development of tourism strategies.

Keywords: Satisfaction with the Quality of Life. Competitiveness of the City. Perception of the Urban Environment. Urbanization. Attractiveness of Urban Space.

se em uma análise teórica de fontes científicas, entrevistas direcionadas a representantes de municípios e uma pesquisa com especialistas. Na primeira etapa, foram identificados critérios gerais e parciais significativos para avaliar a atratividade turística em termos de conforto. Entre os fatores mais importantes estão a atratividade visual, a acessibilidade e a qualidade da infraestrutura urbana, a disponibilidade de áreas de lazer e o conforto do ambiente para pedestres e dos espaços sociais. O artigo fundamenta a necessidade de considerar indicadores objetivos e percepções subjetivas do ambiente urbano. Os resultados permitiram o desenvolvimento de um modelo de avaliação em dois níveis, adequado para diagnosticar e subsidiar o planejamento estratégico de políticas urbanas. As conclusões podem ser úteis para governos locais e especialistas em estudos urbanos, bem como para o desenvolvimento de estratégias de turismo.

Palavras-chave: Satisfação com a Qualidade de Vida. Competitividade da Cidade. Percepção do Ambiente Urbano. Urbanização. Atratividade do Espaço Urbano.

1 INTRODUCTION

The importance of studying cities as modern, large territorial entities is explained by the changing role they play in ensuring a comfortable living environment and the satisfaction of their inhabitants with the quality of life. Modern trends in innovative urban development, increasing resource availability (including information, technological (Murtazaev et al., 2025), and intellectual resources), the scale of buildings and population density, as well as infrastructural and transport saturation in large urban agglomerations, have an ambiguous influence on the well-being and livelihoods of people.

The ambiguity of cities' influence on the quality and comfort of living is a problem that warrants further study. The nature of the correlation between the level of well-being of city residents and the comfort of living in it is not always unambiguously positive. People often do not feel satisfied with life and its quality in conditions of technology-driven pressure and information saturation, which increase risks and pressures in a particular territory, leading to social and environmental tension and instability

(Kulkayeva et al., 2023). This necessitates assessing the quality of life for city residents and visitors and creating a comfortable urban environment based on this as a key factor in achieving stable improvements in the quality of life for people. The urban environment must meet the existing and emerging needs of residents. Hence, the desire of authorities at various levels, urban planners, architects, and residents to formulate new approaches to urban development in the context of sustainable development, as well as the desire to create a high-quality urban environment (Gasarov, 2024; Tikhonov, 2013). Additionally, providing a comfortable urban environment is becoming a key competitive advantage for cities.

The comfort of the urban environment affects the psychological state of residents, the level of stress and fatigue, as well as physical health. For example, air pollution, noise, poor water quality, and poor condition of roads and sidewalks negatively affect health, causing problems with the respiratory system and cardiovascular diseases, as well as increasing fatigue and stress. On the contrary, the presence of green areas and public spaces, clean streets, and squares, as well as high-quality infrastructure for hiking and cycling contributes to an active lifestyle and health promotion. Additionally, the high quality of the urban environment attracts new residents and tourists, which contributes to the city's economic growth and the creation of employment opportunities.

2 APPROACHES AND COMFORT INDICATORS

Na understanding of the importance of the factors that form a comfortable urban environment and their assessment of a sustainable, favorable habitat for the population is based on rethinking the scale of urbanization and global trends in this issue. In other words, when determining the 3ifer and strategies for creating a comfortable urban environment, it is 3iferente3 to be guided by several indicators and assessment systems that are most widespread in the world. Thus, as 3iferen this approach, one can use a single integral indicator, such as the Global Liveability Ranking. The advantage of this approach is that the rating encompasses a comprehensive 3iferen cities submitted for comparative analysis based on the system of indicators involved. A significant disadvantage of this approach is that such ratings are based on the subjective opinions of experts rather than on measurable, quantitative indicators (Kondrateva et al., 2020).

The second approach is based on using a single indicator selected from a system of generalized indicators as an evaluation criterion. For example, one can choose as a generalizing indicator the external attractiveness and uniqueness of a city, which includes several indicators: the number of public relations events, the presence of a standardized outdoor advertising policy, the number of attractions, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) sites; positive/negative semantics of posts on social networks; the popularity of the main attractions in Internet resources. The last two indicators are closely related to the digitalization of cities. These indicators are assessed using population surveys, allowing for the evaluation of the urban environment from the standpoint of its attractiveness to city residents and visitors (Turanin & Posokhova, 2023). The disadvantage of this approach is the dependence on the survey methodology and the active participation of potential residents in it (Vaitens & Shubenkov, 2020).

The third approach is based on a detailed assessment of a large set of quantitative indicators. This technique not only helps measure the comfort of the urban environment but also allows one to identify its attractiveness to the satisfaction with the quality of life of city residents. For example, the comfort parameters of an urban environment can include quantitative indicators of the infrastructure available in a megalopolis (total length of parks, length of walking routes, etc.). The assessment of the level of attractiveness is measured based on the evaluation of demand for this infrastructure. The assessment obtained enables one to determine how effectively investment resources in the improvement of the metropolis are converted into positive perceptions and changes in citizen behavior. The efficiency of such conversion reflects the demand for and quality of urban infrastructure. This approach to assessment is applicable both in general and in a more detailed comparison of the comfort of urban environments in different cities, including at the level of individual indicators (Zazulya, 2020).

However, in our opinion, all the considered approaches assess the quality of the urban environment based on its components (for example, the assessment of the ecological and urban planning subsystem, the ecological and economic components, and the socio-ecological subsystem).

It is worth noting that various methods exist for assessing the comfort criteria of the urban environment (Engelhardt et al., 2018), which can be broadly categorized as follows.

1. The Arcadis Sustainable Cities Index identifies three fundamental criteria: environmental factors such as energy consumption and emissions (Degtyarev et al., 2024); social indicators, including quality of life (Antonova & Putimtseva, 2024; Bratash & Emelyanenko, 2024); and business environment and economic indicators.
2. The rating of the Economist Intelligence Unit magazine (The World's Most Liveable Cities) evaluates living conditions based on more than 30 factors grouped into five categories: stability, health, culture and environment, education, and infrastructure.

In the Russian Federation, the assessment of the quality of the urban environment is carried out according to the “Guidelines for determining priority areas for the development of the urban environment using the urban environment quality index” (Rukovodstvo po opredeleniyu, n.d.), in which the quality of the urban environment is primarily related to the ability to meet the broadest possible range of needs of a citizen. Therefore, the assessment criteria were the basic needs of city residents, such as:

- security (allows one to determine the existing level of security of the considered spaces and identify potential threats to human life and health) (Kiryushin et al., 2024; Mokhov et al., 2023),
- identity and diversity (allows one to assess the uniqueness and recognizability of the city's appearance, its functional diversity, flexibility, adaptability, and variability of the architectural planning and spatial solutions used),
- comfort (allows one to evaluate the convenience and accessibility of urban spaces for all user groups, including those with limited mobility),
- modernity and relevance of the environment (allows one to evaluate the city in terms of the opportunities it provides to residents, as well as determine how urban spaces comply with international principles of urban environment formation),
- environmental friendliness and health (allows one to assess the current state of the environment in the city, as well as determine to what extent the use of urban infrastructure meets the objectives of preserving, maintaining, and, if necessary, restoring the environment),

- management efficiency (allows one to evaluate the work of municipal authorities in creating the conditions necessary for the formation of a high-quality urban environment).

3 RESEARCH REVIEW

The study of the interaction between urban space and society is the subject of attention for researchers from various disciplines, primarily architects, urbanists, and sociologists. Urban research holds purely practical importance, contributing to the development of the city and creating a comfortable environment for its citizens (Bokov, 2019; Lyubova, 2019).

A large number of studies focus on assessing a comfortable urban environment (Bakaeva & Chernyaeva, 2016; Karimov, 2013; Lyubova, 2018). Thus, according to the urban prosperity index developed by the McKinsey Global Institute, a comfortable urban environment is characterized and assessed using indicators of population density, the intensity of public transport use, and the degree of landscaping in public spaces (Starikov, 2017). Another comprehensive indicator containing an assessment of the comfort of the urban environment is the City Development Index (CDI), formed based on indicators of gross city product production, the quality of the healthcare and education system (Shichkin et al., 2024), the state of infrastructure and the amount of solid household waste generated (Bizin, 2024; Kalinin, 2024; Lagodina, 2013).

Thus, assessing the comfort of the urban environment is a key area for identifying opportunities to enhance the urban environment, increase the efficiency of natural resource utilization, and develop long-term sustainable development strategies (Beleshev, 2021).

According to the conducted research, when determining the comfort of an urban environment, it is necessary to quantify such elements as a set of characteristics of the quality of apartments and houses (Smagulova, 2020), social services (medical care, lifestyle, transport, spirituality, etc.) (Bovsunovskaya, 2020), and the quality (safety) of the environment (ecological (Vlasova et al., 2020), criminogenic (Ganchenko & Tarzanova, 2019; Kiseleva, 2024)). Even indicators such as temperature comfort (Kirilina et al., 2021), the risk of natural disasters (Petrina & Stadolin, 2018), the level of

bureaucratization (Generalov & Generalova, 2015), and the presence of dangerous animals and insects, among others, are often used for measurement and evaluation (Razomasova & Romanova, 2018).

According to the results of various studies, the following parameters are also important:

- residential development territories, which occupy the largest percentage of the city, differ in density and type of development, standard of housing, and social status, as well as other characteristics (Poddaeva, 2025; Stepanova, 2019);
- territories of service facilities, the location of which is affected by the frequency of their use (hierarchy of services). They create an important component of the public space of cities (Russova et al., 2020);
- communication territories, which in today's cities are distinguished as separate zones of external transport (railways, airports), as well as territories of the inner-city transport network (Kiselev et al., 2021);
- recreational areas (parks, squares, gardens), as well as sacred places, places of student campuses and educational institutions (Petrov, 2016).

In (Belyaeva & Strelets, 2023), the following main approaches to the elements of assessing a comfortable urban environment are highlighted:

- 1) elements related to the territory and place of residence of people (housing and communal services);
- 2) elements that determine the movement of people from one point to another, ensuring and maintaining their safety during movement (pedestrian infrastructure and security level);
- 3) elements characterizing those objects of the territory where people spend their time outside the house (the external attractiveness and uniqueness of the city; landscaping of public spaces; leisure, sports, entertainment (Kharkovskaya et al., 2023)).

The study (Khramtsov, 2021) identifies three groups of criteria for the comfort of the urban environment: 1) environmental conditions, 2) living conditions related to the house and/or apartment, and 3) socio-economic conditions and relations. The environmental characteristics of urban comfort include accessibility and supply of social infrastructure facilities (the structure of urban services (Fialkovskaya, 2024)), the ability

to meet recreational needs, developed urban communications (accessibility of public transport), the availability of pedestrian and bike paths; the ability to store cars (availability and distance to the garage or parking lot/parking space; aesthetics and diversity of the landscape; a sense of security of living; isolation from sources of noise and pollution.

O.A. Savinova and N.V. Isakova (2017) primarily focus on the comfort of the visual environment of the city, which significantly depends on the structural organization of the architectural form of its objects.

The purpose of this paper is to develop proposals for creating a multi-criteria system to assess the socio-psychological comfort of the urban environment, with a focus on opportunities to attract tourists based on existing approaches.

4 METHODS

In this study, an attempt was made to analyze the possibilities of a multi-criteria assessment of the comfort level in urban environments to attract tourists. The study is based on the following general scientific methods:

- a) theoretical: analysis of scientific sources on the research problem for the study of literature in the field of assessment of the state of the urban environment;
- b) empirical: an expert survey by email;
- c) mathematical and statistical methods of data analysis.

The search for literary sources was carried out using databases. The collected material was subjected to qualitative analysis to determine the existing systems for assessing the comfort level of the urban environment.

In the first stage of the empirical study, a focused online conference interview was conducted. The focused interview involved 29 individuals, employees of city administrations responsible for urban improvement and promoting tourism options, who were asked the following research question: What criteria are used to assess the comfort of the urban environment, with a focus on opportunities to attract tourists? The duration of the focus group discussion, recorded on audio, was 1 hour and 20 minutes. As a result, preferred criteria for assessing the comfort of the urban environment were identified, with a focus on opportunities to attract tourists.

At the final stage, after processing the results from the focus group, an expert survey was conducted via email. The selection criteria for the experts were the availability of scientific publications on urban improvement to popularize tourism options (a minimum of three). Emails were sent to 41 experts, who were asked to rank the most preferred criteria for assessing the comfort of the urban environment, focused on the opportunities for attracting tourists, determined during a focused interview.

The consistency of expert opinions during the expert ranking was assessed using Kendall's concordance coefficient (W), which was calculated with the SPSS software. Furthermore, the information obtained during the expert ranking was analyzed to determine the weights of the expert opinions.

5 RESULTS

As a result of the analysis of the focused interview, a two-level multi-criteria system for assessing the comfort of the urban environment was obtained, focusing on the possibilities for attracting tourists, the first level of which included general (objective and subjective) assessment criteria (Table 1), and the second level included the partial evaluation criteria (Table 2).

Table 1

General criteria for assessing the comfort level of the urban environment to attract tourists

No.	General assessment criteria		Rank	Weight
1	Objective criteria	Accessibility (number of objects) of the urban environment	1	0.31
2		Quality of the urban environment	2	0.26
3	Subjective criteria	Perception of the urban environment by citizens and tourists	3	0.24
4		Interaction of citizens and tourists with the urban environment	4	0.19

Table 2

Partial criteria for assessing the comfort level of the urban environment to attract tourists

No.	Partial assessment criteria		Rank	Weight
1	Places of residence	Housing and adjacent spaces	5-6	0.09
2		Housing and public utility services	5-6	0.09
3	Transit spaces	Pedestrian infrastructure	7	0.06
4		Road transport infrastructure	8	0.04
5	Places of attraction	Visual appeal and uniqueness of urban objects	1	0.24

6	Convenience of public places	4	0.12
7	Social and leisure infrastructure	3	0.17
8	Recreational spaces (green areas and water areas)	2	0.19

6 DISCUSSION

From the point of view of general criteria for assessing the comfort level of the urban environment to attract tourists, the characteristics of the urban environment can be evaluated in terms of accessibility (for example, the length of pedestrian zones) and quality (for example, the suitability of streets for walking), as well as the degree of influence on urban residents, based on their perception (for example, content analysis of online posts, or the semantics of citizens' statements about activities related to pedestrian infrastructure).

The highest value of accessibility (number of objects) of the urban environment obtained as a general assessment criterion is confirmed by the results (Belyaeva & Strelets, 2023), according to which tourists prefer to give higher estimates of the comfort of living conditions in the city center as the most diverse and culturally saturated space in terms of accessibility, highlighting the following partial criteria: saturated infrastructure and diverse services; the most profitable communication links with other parts of the city; the densest concentration of facilities and historical complexes.

According to researchers, the urban environment cannot be successfully studied and modeled without considering subjective criteria, i.e., the attitude towards it that exists in the minds of ordinary inhabitants of this environment. According to K.S. Petrov, their subjective opinions, sympathies, and assessments are no less important environmental factors than objective factors (Petrov, 2016).

An analysis of partial criteria for assessing the comfort level of the urban environment for attracting tourists shows that the most significant criterion for tourists is the visual attractiveness and historical uniqueness of urban objects (Eflova et al., 2025a, b). Researchers (Lavrova & Slobozhanina, 2017) note that a visual environment that brings a sense of visual comfort to a person is perceived as comfortable, for example, an environment featuring planar surfaces with vertical landscaping, colorful graffiti, and architectural details characterized by smooth lines. Researchers believe that an uncomfortable environment is caused primarily by the following factors: reduction of

green spaces, lack of targeted work on the restoration of facades of existing buildings on the central streets and squares of the city, resulting in an anti-aesthetic effect; spontaneous arrangement of small architectural forms on sidewalks, unsystematic installation, and sometimes the aggressiveness of advertising posters and billboards, the low level of illumination of the facades of architectural monuments and new compositional architectural structures (Golubnichiy, 2012).

The assessment of comfort criteria should involve the participation of experts from various fields, as well as the public, which has a direct interest in creating a comfortable urban environment. It is also important to consider the needs of different population groups and ensure that the urban environment is accessible to all residents.

Summing up the discussion, the following measures can be identified to improve the comfort of the urban environment:

- allocation of subsidies to support urban environment formation programs (Golubtsova et al., 2025; Prishchepa et al., 2024);
- involvement of residents in decision-making on issues of urban environment development (Begishev et al., 2024; Goncharov, 2024);
- identification of potential centers of attraction and comprehensive landscaping, adaptation of the ground floors of existing buildings to accommodate public and business infrastructure;
- development of plans to create comfortable pedestrian zones, redevelopment of streets and squares to create safe and convenient pedestrian zones, arrangement of pedestrian zones with various elements of urban furniture, organization of green areas and other facilities;
- expansion of the public transport network, increasing the capacity of the road network, and renovating road surfaces;
- development of green areas and parks, including the creation of new green areas and parks, as well as the modernization of existing areas.

When designing an urban environment, it is also necessary to consider the possibility of its adaptation to changing conditions, including climatic and demographic ones. This is the only way to ensure the long-term sustainability of the urban environment and comfort for its residents.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Constant assessment and monitoring of public opinion regarding the satisfaction of residents and visitors with the urban environment are essential aspects of modern city management. To prevent mistakes in the stable development of cities, it is necessary to broaden the understanding of the socio-psychological comfort of the urban environment and not only the impact of municipal authorities on it, but also the conscious involvement of residents in this process. This will help avoid strategic mistakes in building attractiveness potential when selecting strategic areas of activity for management structures. The development of a system of evaluation criteria for a socio-psychologically comfortable urban environment contributes to improving the efficiency of utilizing the city's investment resources. An assessment of the current comfort level of the urban environment will enable us to form a holistic understanding of the city's trajectory and adjust the priorities for future changes and improvements to enhance its attractiveness.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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