EVALUATION OF AQUAPARKS IN IZMIR AND ENVIRONS IN THE CONTEXT OF SPATIAL FEATURES

Emine MALKOÇ YİĞİT
Ege Üniversitesi Ziraat Fakültesi Peyzaj Mimarlığı Bölümü 35100 Bornova-İZMİR

ABSTRACT

Aquaparks, in recent years, have become one of the new remarkable recreational spaces in the touristic settlements. They have been developed as to respond the increasing necessity of recreation and to improve the recreational space alternatives.

This research has been carried out to display the recreation potential of aquaparks by examining their spatial characteristics and by considering their contributions to tourism the development strategies have been figured out.

Within the frame of this purpose, 4 aquaparks which are located into Izmir and its near environs were chosen as case areas. Analyzing the situational and physical structures of the aquaparks, the spatial content was examined. The case areas, in the light of the information taken from the aquapark administrations and the visitors, were evaluated according to the administration – user – designer approach.

As a result of the study; it has been observed that they have not yet completed the spatial development required by the activity areas however they are very important for tourism by both locational and recreational features.

Key Words: Aquapark, Landscape Design.

İZMİR VE YAKIN ÇEVRESİNDEKİ SU PARKLARIN MEKANSAL ÖZELLİKLERİ YÖNÜYLE DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ

ÖZET

Su parkları, özellikle son yıllarda turizm aktivitelerinin yoğun olduğu turistik yerleşimlerde dikkat çeken yeni rekreasyonel mekanlardan bir tanesi durumuna gelmiş, artan rekreasyon ihtiyacının karşılanması ve rekreasyonel mekan alternatiflerin geliştirilmesi gerekliliğinden ortaya çıkmıştır.

Bu araştırma; su parklarının mekansal özelliklerini sorgulayarak rekreasyonel potansiyelini ortaya koymak ve turizme olan katkıları göz önüne alınarak gelişme stratejilerini belirlemek amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Bu amaç çerçevesinde İzmir ve yakın çevresindeki 4 adet su parkı araştırma alanı olarak seçilmiş, seçilen su parklarının konumsal ve fiziksel yapıları analiz edilerek mekansal içeriği sorgulanmış, su parkı işletmecileri ve ziyaretçilerden alınan bilgiler ışığında araştırma alanları işletmeci – kullanıcı – tasarımcı yaklaşımında değerlendirilmiştir.

Araştırma sonucunda; incelenen su parklarının, faaliyet alanlarının gerektirdiği mekansal gelişimi henüz tamamlayamadıkları ancak gerek konumsal gerekse de rekreasyonel özellikleri yönüyle turizm açısından önemli oldukları gözlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Su Parkı, Peyzaj Tasarımı.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is a fully accepted fact that the recreational necessities of today's societies have increased and there has been an alteration seeking in the designs of the recreational areas so as to meet these necessities.

Considering the increasing recreational necessity, countries have embarked on new searches in order to maintain tourism sector active and to find themselves a place in this market and new uses have occurred as a result of these searches (Malkoc et al., 2003). The alteration seeking has speeded up the formation of new uses and areas and the concept of park, regarded as one of the most significant recreational area, has been shaped in time, bringing out new park concepts and areas such as amusement park, theme park and aquapark.

Aquaparks are one of the new recreational areas becoming widespread as a result of this changing understanding (Malkoc and Kucukerbas, 2004).

Being a compound word formed by the words aqua (water) and park (wide open space), aquaparks are active recreational areas which serve for any group or age in a society, designed independently from hotels or similar tourism facilities in very different scales from each other due to their spatial properties, and where the activities concerning water heavily take place.

The first theories and applications of aquaparks are confronted with in the USA at the early 1900s. Especially the Disneyland was the initiator of developing new alternatives to utilize free times in the best way and to use the site functionally. As a result of the success of the Disneyland, aquaparks began to be constructed in many places all around the world in the 1980s and the number of aquaparks increased day by day. Moreover, in Turkey, the economic structure, which changed especially in the 1980s, affected the tourism and recreation sectors in a positive way. As a result, different commercial and recreational types of use and areas began to form in Turkey as well (Nacak, 2000).

According to the information from the results of the research carried out, Wonderland, located on Istanbul Maltepe Coast Road in 1992, is the oldest aquapark constructed in Turkey. Although the facility, operated by Sporting Eğlence Kompleksi ve Turizm Ltd. Şti., did not meet the concept of aquapark in real terms, it is conspicuous that it was the first step taken towards this aim. It goes without saying that it constitutes a big step for Turkey since it is the first example in terms of application (Malkoc, 2002). During the following years, many investors, who saw that this sector was quite profitable, directed their capitals to these uses and many aquapark facilities were constructed in different capacities and scales in various places in Turkey.

The study has been carried out so as to interrogate the spatial properties of aquaparks, to specify their problems by putting forward the recreational potentials and to make recommendations to support their development. Within the frame of this purpose, 4 aquaparks in Turkey were evaluated as research areas. During the field studies, the situational and the physical structures of the selected aquaparks were analysed, their situational contents were investigated, and selection criteria of the locations, venue requirements and designing criteria were determined by closely investigating the examples in the light of the information gathered both from the managers and the visitors of aquaparks.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Material

The research materials are composed of the aquaparks in İzmir and its environs, various literary sources, brochures, internet information and photographs taken from the research areas in order to put forward the spatial properties of the areas and the observation forms which have been constituted originally for this research.

The case areas are composed of 4 aquaparks located in and around Izmir namely, Aquacity (Balcova Thermal Hotel – Izmir), Adaland Aquapark (Camlilimanı – Kusadasi – Aydın), Aquafantasy Aquapark & Resort Hotel

(Pamucak – Selcuk – Izmir) and Long Beach Aqua Center Aquapark & Resort Hotel (Sahil Siteleri / Ilica – Kusadası – Aydin) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Location of study area

Generally, the case areas;

- have quite a long sunbathing period of 7 months between May and November owing to their geographical location,
- are open aquaparks which were designed to use only during summer seasons,
- are located in touristical settlements standing out with their tourism potentials That's why, the fact that they are close to various tourism facilities which have accommodation services and to second-class residences have a positive effect on accessibility. Moreover, transportation opportunities to these areas by air / land / sea increase their opportunity to be preferred and
- The fact that the society is susceptible to water and activities concerning water due to their geographical location are an advantage for the facilities.

2.1. Methods

The method composed of 5 main phases, namely, the literature study, determination of the evaluation criteria, constitution of the observation forms, collection of the data, evaluation and conclusion.

Phase I: Literature Review

Following a general literature review concerning aquaparks, the websites on the internet concerning the aquaparks selected as the research areas have been searched thoroughly and catalogues, brochures with visual contents and photographs have been provided.

Phase II: Determination of the Evaluation Criteria

As a result of the literature review concerning aquaparks, the evaluation criteria are categorized under various titles:

General Information: The case areas have been examined in terms of size in the group, foundation year, location, season they are used, number of personnel and capacity of users.

Program Elements: The case areas have been examined in terms of the existence of program elements, which are obligatory / necessary, such as entrance and security unit, parking lot, management unit, health unit, dressing rooms, shower cubicles, wc, catering unit, shopping unit, amusement unit, slides, pools, rivers and etc. Each program element, according to its availibility; graded with '1' if available and '0' if not and the grade taken has been multiplied by the researcher by the coefficient assigned to each program element and the resulting value has been reached.

The program elements, which are obligatory / necessary at an aquapark, have been grouped by the researchers considering their functions and coefficients have been assigned to each program element considering their contributions to the area.

Coefficients assigned to the program elements:

Management Unit: 1
Entrance + Security Unit: 2
Shopping Unit: 2
Parking Lot: 3
Health Unit: 3
Amusement Unit: 3
Catering Unit: 3
Changing Rooms + Shower + Wc: 4
Water Elements: 4

Visual Evaluation: The aquaparks have been graded with points between 0 and 4 (0 for very bad and 4 for very good) in terms of harmony of the area with its environs, quality of the plant material, quality of structural material and perceiving the area from its environs and they have been evaluated according to the results obtained.

Equipment Elements: Equipment elements such as pavement material, lightening element, seating unit, trash unit, signboards, boundary element, shader, phone boothes, clock and plant pots have been graded with points between 0 and 4 (0 for very bad and 4 for very good) in terms of material choice suitable for the function, appropriate locating within the area and meeting the capacity of the users and they have been evaluated according to the results obtained.

Plant Material: The aquaparks have been graded with points between 0 and 4 (0 for very bad and 4 for very good) in terms of the general distribution of plant material throughout the area, plant material's supporting the design and selection of plant species and they have been evaluated according to the results obtained.

Accessibility Status: The areas have been graded with points between 0 and 4 (0 for very bad and 4 for very good) in terms of availability of parking lot for cars and for bicycles, availability of safe entrance / exit, accession to the area by public transportation, use of the area by the physically handicapped user, signboards and symbolic elements and they have been evaluated according to the results obtained.

Phase III: Constitution of the Observation Forms

The observation forms to be used in the evaluation of the case areas have been constituted.

Phase IV: Collection of Data

Findings concerning the 4 case areas were obtained from the observation forms that were applied to the areas by the method of observation at the place.

In the phase of the application of the evaluation criteria to the areas, each evaluation criteria has been graded in the above-mentioned way and their achievement percentages have been calculated according to the results obtained by using "Ratio Method".

Phase V: Evaluation and Conclusion

The areas have been evaluated one by one in terms of the evaluation criteria and they have been compared in accordance with the achievement percentages available. Using these comparisons, results have been achieved and recommendations supporting the development of the aquaparks have been made (Figure 2).

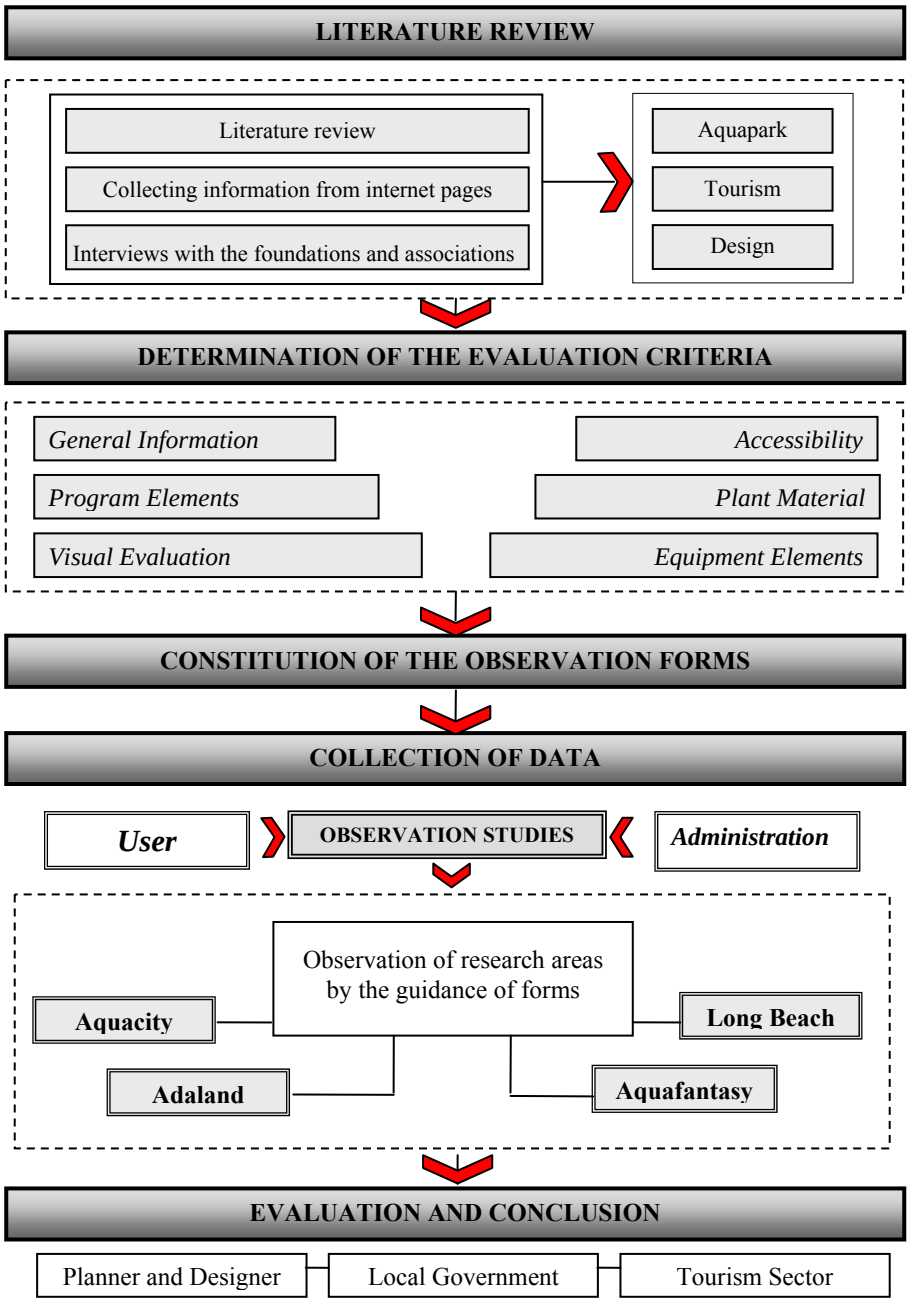

Figure 2. Processes of the Study

3. RESULTS

The point values, obtained from the the application of the method to the selected aquaparks, through observation on the spot, are shown comparatively and the total point values given to each case area are calculated in Table 1.

Table 1. The findings obtained from the observations of the land.

		Aquacity	Adaland	Aquafantasy	Long Beach
General Information	Area	40.00 m^2	276.00 m^2	48.568 m^2	46.000 m^2
	Construction's year	2005	1999	2000	2000
	Location	Balcova	Camlimani	Pamucak	Ilica
	Usage Season	May - September	May - October	May - October	May - September
	Personnel's number	100	200	100	77
	User capacity	4.000	5.000	5.000	3.000
Program Elements	Entrance + Security unit	2	2	2	2
	Parking lot	3	3	3	3
	Management unit	1	1	1	1
	Health unit	3	3	3	3
	Changing room + Shower + Wc	4	4	4	4
	Catering unit	3	3	3	3
	Shopping unit	2	2	2	-
	Amusement unit	-	3	3	3
	Water elements	4	4	4	4
Visual Evaluation	Harmony with its environs	2	4	2	3
	Quality of the plant material	2	4	4	2
	Quality of structural material	3	4	4	3
	Perceiving from its environs	3	4	4	3
Equipment Elements	Pavement material	3	4	4	3
	Lightening element	2	3	2	3
	Seating unit	4	3	4	3
	Trash unit	4	2	2	3
	Signboards	3	2	4	2
	Boundary element	3	2	3	2
	Shader	4	3	4	3
	Phone boothes	-	-	-	-
	Clock	-	-	-	-
	Plant pots	-	1	2	3
Plant Material	General distribution	3	4	4	3
	Supporting the design	3	4	4	2
	Selection of plant species	3	4	4	2
Accessibility Status	Parking lot for car	3	4	2	2
	Parking lot for bicycles	3	-	-	-
	Safe entrance / exit	4	4	4	4
	Accession to by public transport	4	4	4	4
	Using by handicapped	3	0	1	1
	Signboards	2	3	3	2
	Symbolic elements	1	3	1	3
	Total Point	**84**	**91**	**91**	**79**

Among the aquaparks, considered as the case areas, Aquacity is the newest aquapark according to the foundation year and it is the closest one to the center of the city it is located in. Aquapark was planned as a section of Balçova Thermal Hotel and the aquapark facility was joined with the outdoor and indoor pools having existed previously and it was turned into a more complex structure. Although it has been constructed recently, the existence of the thermal hotel for years has been an advantage for the aquapark and the fact that the soil characteristics of the area of the aquapark are quite convenient for growing plant materials shows a strong spatial character. Moreover, Aquacity has attracted attention as the only aquapark having a slide for the handicapped among the research areas. It is found out that there isn't any amusement unit in the area. However, it is learned that it is considered to construct amusement places within the existing facility in the following years. Nevertheless, the fact that the users of the aquapark are obliged to pay an additional toll so as to benefit from the parking lot located in the entrance attracts the attentions as a negativity.

It is found out that Adaland Aquapark has been endeavouring to develop continuously since its foundation and it is observed that it has maintained the potential of its users because of its rich and qualified spatial characteristics although it is independent from any hotels or similar accommodation facilities. Moreover, it has been determined that it displays a unique structure in terms of both plant and structural characteristics and that it constitutes an important source of income in terms of foreign tourism.

It has been determined that a theme was focused on during the design of Aquafantasy Aquapark, the third case area, and that it is described as a thematic park. It is observed that the amusement activities of the facility are restricted by the resort hotel having the same name and that the area of the aquapark does not provide opportunity for activities such as amusement and etc. It is found out that the opportunity of the guests, coming from outside to the aquapark, for benefiting from the area in the evening hours decreases due to this reason and that the qualified spatial characteristics are restricted with use in the daytime.

Being the last of the aquaparks, Long Beach Aqua Center is again a section of the resort hotel having the same name and has been designed to serve for both the customers coming from outside to the aquapark and the customers of the hotel. The spatial organization of the area, which generally displays a smooth topography, is quite simple and this has prevented any surprises within the facility. Moreover, the fact that the shopping unit located at the entrance of the aquapark is also open for the use of the residents of the hotel and the residents of the nearby settlements has prevented this section from being considered as a program element of the aquapark.

When these areas are evaluated in terms of the program elements, it has been found out that Long Beach Aqua Center does not include any shopping units and Aquacity does not include any amusement units while the other two aquaparks are found out to include all the program elements necessary / obligatory to have. When the aquaparks are evaluated in visual aspect, it has been found out that Adaland has been grated with 4 full points in terms of each evaluation criteria and that it is the most successful one among the aquaparks it is compared with. When the areas are examined in terms of equipment elements, it is observed that none of the aquaparks have clocks and phone boothes. However, when the point, the communication technology has reached today, is considered, it is concluded that the lack of these two equipment elements can not be a factor of negative effect on the quality of the facility.

During the evaluations in terms of plant material, Adaland and Aquafantasy have been grated with 4 full points in terms of each sub-criterion and have been considered as the most successful two aquaparks among the research areas.

As a result of the examinations carried out, it has been found out that only Adaland Aquapark has a quite qualified and sufficient parking lot for meeting the requirements; however, the parking lots of the other aquaparks are required to be developed in these aspects. It is observed that all the aquaparks have opportunities of public transportation and safe entrance-and-exit; however, it is found out that most aquaparks do not have any parking lots for bicycles. Furthermore, the fact that alternatives of designs for the physically handicapped have not been developed at the aquaparks except for Aquacity is quite thought-provoking.

4. DISCUSSION

Designed to situmulate the imaginative power of the people the aquaparks direct people to games and arouse interest and excitement since they involve different characteristics of designs, colors, structures and forms. Such facilities, which are designed using the technological developments, make positive contributions in terms of tourism since they involve many interesting properties in proportion to the classical holiday and amusement opportunities and designs (Uzun, 1997).

Described also as facilities where people of any age group gather and spend their time with amusement and which involve various aquatic activities (Oruckaptan, 2002), aquaparks have been adopted easily in our country just like in the whole world and their numbers have begun to increase day by day.

The most important reason of the fact that the aquaparks were adopted easily and they have the characteristics of a joint facility for carrying out various recreational activities is that any activities carried out at the aquaparks are related to water.

Water has been an indispensable element of life, continuity, settlements and nature throughout life (Ay, 2000), and has appeared before us in various forms at any moment of life.

The recreational potential of water has been highlighted at the aquaparks as well and the susceptibility of people to the recreational activities based on water is benefited from in various forms.

Aquaparks are mentioned only as a type of use / facility in the concerned laws and regulations in Turkey, the country of sun, and it is found out that besides there isn't any restricting and directing standard, there isn't any institution supervising the aquaparks neither in the phase of foundation nor in the phase of operating. Development of this legal legislation urgently for the settlement of the problem of supervision is required for the aquaparks to have a structure of better quality in terms of spatial characteristics.

Unique approaches should be aimed at in their designs and facilities of good quality should be created and the endeavour of the aquaparks of forming an alternative for the tourism sector should be supported.

When the convenient conditions of Turkey are considered, such uses should be supported also by the politicians and their promotion should be attached importance.

Moreover, providing the required specialization by dealing with the aquaparks by the sciences related to the subject and the development of tourism in a positive way by reflecting the scientific developments to the sectoral life will be quite useful for the economy of the country.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank to do users, employeers and managers of all the aquaparks which were observed in this study.

REFERENCES

- Ay, N. 2000 An Analysis on Aqua-Architecture and its Internal Dynamics (Master Thesis), Izmir Institute of Technology Architecture Department January 2000 218 p.
- Malkoc, E. 2002 Aquaparklarin (Su Parklarinin) Planlama ve Tasarim Ilkeleri Uzerine Bir Arastirma (Master Thesis), Ege Universitesi Fen Bilimleri Enstitusu Peyzaj Mimarligi Anabilim Dali 245 p.

- Malkoc Yigit, E., Kucukerbas, E. and Ozkan B. 2003 "Onemli Turizm Yorelerimizde Hizla Gelisen Bir Rekreasyonel Mekan; Aquaparklar". Cografi Cevre Koruma ve Turizm Sempozyumu 16-18 Nisan 2003 Ege Universitesi Edebiyat Fakultesi Yayini pp: 78-82 ISBN: 975-483-599-3 Bornova Izmir.
- Malkoc, E. and Kucukerbas, E. V. 2004 Aquaparklarin (Su Parklarinin) Planlama ve Tasarim Ilkeleri Uzerine Bir Arastirma, Ege Universitesi Ziraat Fakultesi Dergisi 41(3), ISSN 1018-8551 pp: 197-208.
- Nacak, H. 2000 Aquaparks Location Requirements and Design Criteria (Master Thesis), Izmir Institute of Technology City and Regional Planning Department January 2000 126 p.
- Oruckaptan, A. I. 2002 Su Parki Planlama Kriterlerinin Saptanmasi ve Ankara Susuz Golet'i Orneginde Degerlendirilmesi Uzerine Bir Arastirma (PhD Thesis), Ankara Universitesi Fen Bilimleri Enstitusu Peyzaj Mimarligi Ana Bilim Dali 375 p.
- Uzun, G. 1997 Cevre Tasariminda Su Kullanimi, Cukurova Universitesi Ziraat Fakultesi Genel Yayin No: 179 Yardimci Ders Kitaplari Yayin No: 17 Adana, pp: 178-218.