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A Spatial and Experiential Assessment of the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck: Urban Integration and User Perception *

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Abstract

In urban contexts, aesthetic structures increasingly function as multifunctional spaces that contribute to public space production, tourism development, and urban identity. This study evaluates the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck in Isparta through technical, spatial, and user-centered perspectives, aiming to assess its role within the urban landscape and social dynamics. Employing a mixed-methods approach, it analyzes structural systems and spatial configuration using technical data and evaluates user profiles and satisfaction through a survey with 400 participants. As of June 2025, the deck had drawn over one million visitors—twice the city's population—with more than 45% from outside the city, underscoring its broad appeal. The findings indicate that the deck functions beyond a scenic platform, serving as a site of social interaction, regional attraction, and digital visibility. Its inclusive design and experiential accessibility align with sustainable tourism and urban planning goals. Concrete recommendations are proposed to enhance accessibility, support social diversity, and promote smart infrastructure. The study highlights the importance of evaluating such structures not only as engineering feats but as integral elements of contemporary urban development.

Keywords: *Glass Observation Structures, Urban Public Spaces, User Experience, Spatial Analysis, Urban Identity*

*Ethics Committee Approval of this study has been taken from Ethics Committee for Research and Publication in Science and Engineering at Süleyman Demirel University with decision number E.1031644 and dated 20.06.2025.

1. Introduction

Throughout history, humans have sought elevated vantage points for both aesthetic enjoyment and practical functions such as safety and spatial orientation. Both natural high grounds and built structures—like towers and observation decks—have enabled individuals to feel control and security over their surroundings. This behavior is rooted in cognitive mechanisms emphasized by evolutionary psychology. For early humans, high ground provided strategic advantages by facilitating early threat detection and improved visibility for hunting (Orians & Heerwagen, 1992). Thus, viewing from above is not purely aesthetic—it reflects evolutionary behavior tied to survival instincts. This orientation continues to influence environmental preferences. Appleton's (1975) "Prospect-Refuge Theory" suggests that people favor environments with broad visibility (prospect) alongside nearby shelter or concealment (refuge).

The experience of elevation involves not only cognitive but also emotional responses. Keltner & Haidt (2003) describe how expansive landscapes evoke the emotion of "awe," which fosters self-reflection and cognitive expansion while offering psychological benefits such as relaxation and attention restoration (Ulrich et al., 1991).

Elevation also contributes to feelings of control and dominance. Historically, elevated locations were preferred for palaces, castles, and religious sites—symbolizing power (Markus, 1993). This continues today through the desire to view urban spaces from above. Kaplan (1987) argues that environmental preferences are shaped by factors like visual openness and spatial legibility, where a sense of dominance enhances psychological comfort. Accordingly, the rise of glass observation decks reflects modern manifestations of psychological needs for control, safety, and orientation.

Glass observation decks today are more than scenic platforms; they are multifunctional spaces combining thrill, aesthetic pleasure, digital visibility, and urban branding. These structures serve as both visual and social stages where users construct and display identity in digital environments. As digital media shapes destination image, user-generated content has become a key tool in tourism and place branding (Gretzel et al., 2000).

Contemporary glass decks, enabled by engineering advances, feature minimal obstructions, transparent surfaces, and panoramic configurations. They occupy a unique space at the intersection of landscape experience, spatial planning, and sustainable tourism—offering a fertile ground for interdisciplinary research.

Globally, iconic glass decks such as the Zhangjiajie Bridge (China), Grand Canyon Skywalk (USA), The View at The Palm (UAE), Pas dans le Vide (France), Glacier Skywalk (Canada), and First Cliff Walk (Switzerland) integrate visual experience with engineering excellence. In Türkiye, the proliferation of glass decks since the 2010s has transformed them into landmarks that diversify tourism, enhance urban identity, and contribute to local economies (Şekerci et al., 2022). Positioned on cliffs, canyons, castles, and urban hills, they now serve as branding elements and digital attractions (Bağcı et al., 2019; Zeybek et al., 2020). The first of its kind—the Kristal Glass Deck in Karabük-Safranbolu (2012), suspended 80 meters above Tokatlı Canyon—became a major attraction.

As of 2025, Türkiye hosts 26 such decks in varied settings: natural landscapes, heritage sites, and urban recreation areas (Table 1). Their spatial and thematic diversity reflects an emerging typology. Municipal investment and social media have amplified public interest, and more projects are underway.

Research emphasizes their role as visually compelling and multifunctional infrastructures promoting rural development, tourism, and landscape experience (Zeybek et al., 2018; Bağcı et al., 2019; Zeybek et al., 2020; Şekerci et al., 2022). When environmentally integrated, these decks contribute to sustainable tourism. Şekerci et al. (2020), for example, proposed transforming Antalya's historical Kırkmerdiven area into a terraced landscape, showing the potential of elevated platforms for scenic and recreational enhancement. However, most studies focus on structure and tourism, with limited attention to social aspects such as user experience and accessibility. This gap is narrowing. Çatır et al. (2019), studying visitor

experience at the Ulubey Canyon Glass Terrace in Uşak, found cognitive and emotional image components were positively correlated—suggesting these decks influence both perception and emotion. Likewise, Zhang et al. (2024) reported that in Chinese urban forests, VR and on-site visual evaluations produced similar perceptions of beauty and immersion, highlighting the value of visual and multisensory experiences. Public documentation on a planned glass deck in Aksaray's Ihlara Valley similarly stressed recreational and landscape integration goals (Elevator World, 2024), reflecting expanding applications in Türkiye.

Table 1. Glass Observation Decks in Türkiye

No.	Name	Current Province
1	Adnan Menderes Glass Observation Deck	Ankara
2	Ali Kayası Glass Deck	Kahramanmaraş
3	Altınözü Altın Zeytin Glass Observation Deck	Hatay
4	Ayrı Gezegen Glass Deck	Kocaeli
5	Boztepe Observation Deck	Trabzon
6	Çankırı Glass Observation Deck	Çankırı
7	Çatak Canyon Glass Deck	Kastamonu
8	Divriği Glass Observation Deck	Sivas
9	Fiskaya Glass Deck	Diyarbakır
10	Harput Glass Observation Deck	Elazığ
11	Hatila Valley Glass Deck	Artvin
12	Ihlara Valley Glass Observation Deck	Aksaray
13	Kayabaşı Glass Observation Deck	Kayseri
14	*Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck*	*Isparta*
15	Kristal Glass Deck	Karabük
16	Levent Valley Observation Deck	Malatya
17	Pirinkayalar Glass Observation Deck	Erzurum
18	Rumkale Glass Deck	Gaziantep
19	Şahindere Canyon Glass Deck	Balıkesir
20	Tillo Castle Glass Observation Deck	Siirt
21	Torul Castle Glass Deck	Gümüşhane
22	Ulubey Canyon Glass Deck Park	Uşak
23	Uluğbey Glass Observation Deck	Ordu
24	Valla Canyon Glass Deck	Kastamonu
25	Yeşilburç Glass Observation Deck	Niğde
26	Zorkun Plateau Glass Deck	Osmaniye

The Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck in Isparta stands out due to its central location, modern infrastructure, and coherent spatial design. Built on a sloped hillside, it offers panoramic city views and integrates with nearby social amenities. Since its opening, it has attracted both locals and tourists, becoming a regional landmark.

In the case of Kirazlıdere, the observation deck does not stand apart from the city in an isolated natural setting; rather, it is physically embedded within Isparta's urban fabric—interacting directly with surrounding residential areas, transportation networks, and public amenities. Its presence contributes to spatial continuity, enhances urban identity, and supports diverse user engagement—thereby exemplifying a high level of urban integration both functionally and symbolically.

This research investigates the Kirazlıdere Glass Deck from technical, spatial, and user-centered perspectives, exploring its multifunctional roles in visual connectivity, recreation, social interaction, tourism, and urban identity.

2. Materials and Methods

In this section, information is given about description of study area, methodological approach and data collection process, data analysis and evaluation method.

2.1. Description of the Study Area

Located in Türkiye's Mediterranean Region, Isparta is a key center within the Lakes District, bordered by the Taurus Mountains in the south and the Sultan and Söğüt ranges in the north. It lies near Lake Burdur and Lake Eğirdir and sits at an elevation of approximately 1,050 meters. The city experiences a climate at the intersection of continental and Mediterranean zones, with hot, dry summers; cold, snowy winters; and mild transitional seasons. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK, 2024), Isparta's population is 446,409, with 272,797 residing in the urban center. The city is known for rose and lavender cultivation, traditional carpet weaving, and its potential for alternative tourism rooted in cultural and natural assets.

The study focuses on the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck, located in the Dere Neighborhood in the city's southwest (Figure 1). Situated 2.5 to 3 km from the center, it is accessible by private vehicle in 7–10 minutes, with a parking area for around 100 vehicles near the entrance. Though reachable on foot and by public transport, no direct municipal bus serves the site; access is limited to nearby bus stops. Walking takes 30–40 minutes and may be difficult for certain users due to the sloped terrain. On weekends and holidays, direct shuttle services are provided, improving accessibility during peak periods. Group visits during holiday seasons increase visitor density, indicating a need for more inclusive transport options.

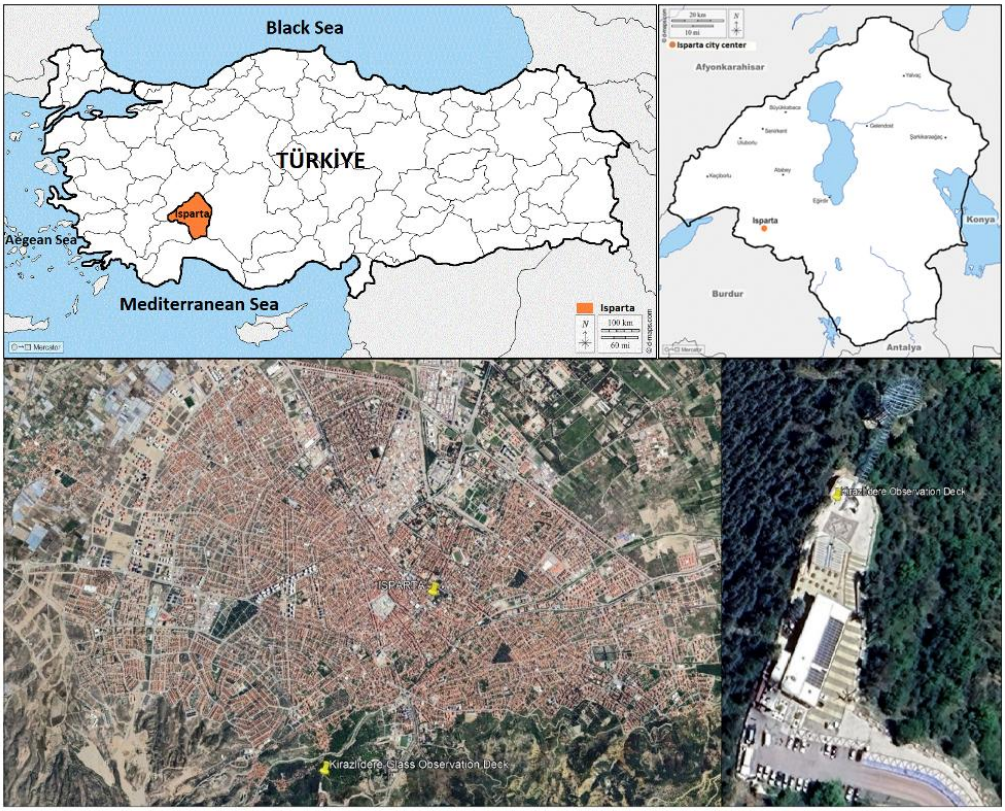

Figure 1. Geographical location of the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck within Türkiye, Isparta Province, and the city center of Isparta

Positioned at a visually prominent location, the platform offers panoramic views of Isparta, aligning with Lynch's (1960) concept of a "visual focal point," which aids user orientation within the urban landscape. From this point, city morphology, surrounding settlements, and nearby mountains are clearly visible.

Before its development, the area was largely underutilized. The site was repurposed with minimal ecological disruption, maintaining the natural topography and slope, and limiting impervious surface use. As a result, the deck has been integrated into the city's open space system while preserving its vegetation.

2.2. Methodological Approach and Data Collection Process

This study adopts a multidimensional approach to examine the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck, with a focus on its structural attributes, spatial context, and user experiences. A mixed-method strategy was employed, combining qualitative and quantitative data within a descriptive analytical framework. This

descriptive analytical framework was structured by combining spatial and technical observations with survey-based user data, allowing a comprehensive understanding of visitor experiences within the site's physical context.

Accordingly, the physical and technical components of the structure were evaluated through direct on-site observations, while user perceptions were gathered using a structured questionnaire.

The data collection process was informed by four primary sources:

2.2.1. Geographical Location Data

The geographical position of the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck—within Türkiye, the province of Isparta, and the urban context—was identified using open-source mapping platforms such as Google Earth Pro (v7.3.6) and www.d-maps.com. Visual materials obtained from these sources were subsequently edited using Microsoft Paint, and graphical elements were added to highlight specific spatial features on the maps.

2.2.2. Structural and Technical Information

Technical specifications of the observation deck, including its height, span, glass floor thickness, structural system, and visitor capacity, were compiled from project documentation and engineering reports provided by the Municipality of Isparta. Additionally, the layout and characteristics of adjacent social facilities were assessed through on-site observations conducted during the spring of 2025. Environmental conditions were documented using visual recordings and field notes to ensure accurate representation of the site's physical context.

2.2.3. Visitor Statistics

To evaluate the intensity of site usage, official visitor statistics recorded by the Municipality of Isparta for the years 2023 to 2025 were utilized. These data were compiled on an annual basis and did not include monthly or seasonal breakdowns.

2.2.4. Questionnaire Application

To assess the demographic characteristics, experiential perceptions, and satisfaction levels of visitors, a structured questionnaire comprising three sections was developed. The first section included demographic variables such as gender, age, education level, occupation, and place of residence. The second section focused on visit-related factors, including mode of transportation, purpose of visit, source of information, group composition, and intent for future visits. The third section presented 16 evaluative statements related to users' experiences at the glass observation deck, which were rated using a five-point Likert scale.

The questionnaire was administered in June 2025 through face-to-face interviews, each lasting approximately 10 minutes. To ensure a representative user profile, data collection was conducted at different times across both weekdays and weekends. A total of 400 valid responses were obtained. Participants were informed about the study objectives, and participation was based on voluntary consent. Confidentiality of personal data was strictly maintained throughout the process. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Süleyman Demirel University (Approval date: [20.06.2025], Protocol number: [E.1031644]).

2.3. Data Analysis and Evaluation Method

In this section, information is given about evaluation of qualitative and technical data and analysis of survey data.

2.3.1. Evaluation of Qualitative and Technical Data

Geographical data were interpreted within a spatial planning framework. Maps were edited to improve readability, including labeled borders, highlighted regions, and custom legends. Satellite imagery from Google Earth was used to indicate the deck's location.

Technical and structural data—such as dimensions, system type, and nearby amenities—were verified through site visits and supported by photographs and field notes. These materials complemented textual descriptions and schematics.

Visitor statistics, though limited in temporal detail, provided baseline insights into user volume and site visibility over the 2023–2025 period.

2.3.2. Analysis of Survey Data

Survey data were analyzed using an integrative approach that combined qualitative and quantitative analytical techniques. Numerical data were processed using IBM SPSS Statistics (v26), and descriptive statistical methods—such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation—were primarily employed. The aim of the analysis was to uncover and interpret user visit patterns, spatial preferences, and experiential perceptions associated with the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck. In this context, inferential statistical tests (e.g., t-tests, ANOVA, Chi-square) were not applied, as the study did not seek to determine statistically significant differences between groups but rather to explore content-based patterns and observed trends.

Demographic variables from the first section of the questionnaire and visit-related variables from the second section were analyzed individually. These data were presented using frequency and percentage distributions. Additionally, cross-tabulations were conducted between selected variables that demonstrated salient patterns and contextual relevance—for instance, relationships between age group and accommodation type, or between gender and social media sharing behavior.

The 16 satisfaction statements in the third section of the questionnaire were evaluated using a five-point Likert scale, with mean scores and standard deviations calculated for each item. Interpretation focused on identifying both highly rated aspects and relatively weaker dimensions, based on comparative averages. In addition, a reliability analysis was conducted for the 16-item satisfaction scale, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.87, which indicates high internal consistency.

Findings were visualized in tabular format. However, the analysis was not limited to numerical results; it also incorporated interpretations based on on-site observations and spatial context. Through this multidimensional framework, user experience at the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck was assessed in both quantitative and contextual terms.

3. Findings

In this section, information is given about technical and spatial features of the structure; visitor experience, spatial configuration, and social amenities; visitor profile and travel characteristics; visitor experience and satisfaction level; interrelations between visitor characteristics and experience patterns.

3.1. Technical and Spatial Features of the Structure

The construction of the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck was guided by a planning approach that balanced aesthetic considerations with structural integrity while maintaining sensitivity to the site's natural topography. Prior to development, the area—characterized by steep slopes and dense vegetation—was largely underutilized. It was evaluated through geological surveys, soil bearing capacity analyses, and topographic modeling. The structure was strategically positioned to align with the natural terrain, preserving the existing tree cover and minimizing ecological disturbance.

During the design phase, architectural, landscape, and engineering decisions were coordinated through an integrated design approach. Consequently, the built environment was harmonized with the natural landscape, reducing environmental impact and ensuring spatial continuity. In the initial stage of site development, a leveled surface enclosed by stone retaining walls was constructed to serve as an entrance terrace and a public gathering space. This area functions as a transitional zone that defines the main approach to the observation deck (Figure 2).

The overall process exemplifies principles of ecological sensitivity and sustainable design. This commitment to environmental and spatial integrity was consistently maintained throughout the subsequent technical phases of construction.

Figure 2. Construction of the Entrance Terrace and Social Facilities of the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck (Isparta Municipality, Directorate of Survey and Project, 2023)

As a continuation of this integrated planning approach, the stone retaining wall located at an elevation of approximately 1,253 meters was designed to serve as the entrance terrace. Construction of the steel-framed structural system, positioned at this level, commenced in the summer of 2022. Extending from the entrance terrace along the slope, the structure includes a linear pedestrian axis that leads to the main viewing platform. This platform is configured as a regular thirty-six-sided polygon, creating the visual effect of a circular form. The structural framework was completed by the autumn of the same year (Figure 3a).

In the summer of 2023, glass floor panels and railing elements were installed on the upper surface of the support system (Figure 3b). This phase of construction was reinforced with engineering solutions aimed at ensuring both structural stability and user safety.

Figure 3. a. Construction Process of the Steel Support Frame of the Glass Platform, b. Assembly Phase of the Completed Walking Axis and Glass Surfaces (Isparta Municipality, Directorate of Survey and Project, 2023)

The steel support system of the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck was constructed with a structural configuration measuring 24.6 m in height and 50.85 m in length. The main load-bearing structure consists of an epoxy-coated steel frame incorporating approximately 75.9 tons of steel. The viewing platform, designed as a regular thirty-six-sided polygon with a diameter of approximately 15.8 m and visually approaching a circular form, offers a seamless 180° panoramic view of the city. Access to the platform is provided by a linear pedestrian walkway measuring 35.05 m in length and 2.14 m in width. The top and side views of the structure are presented in Figure 4.

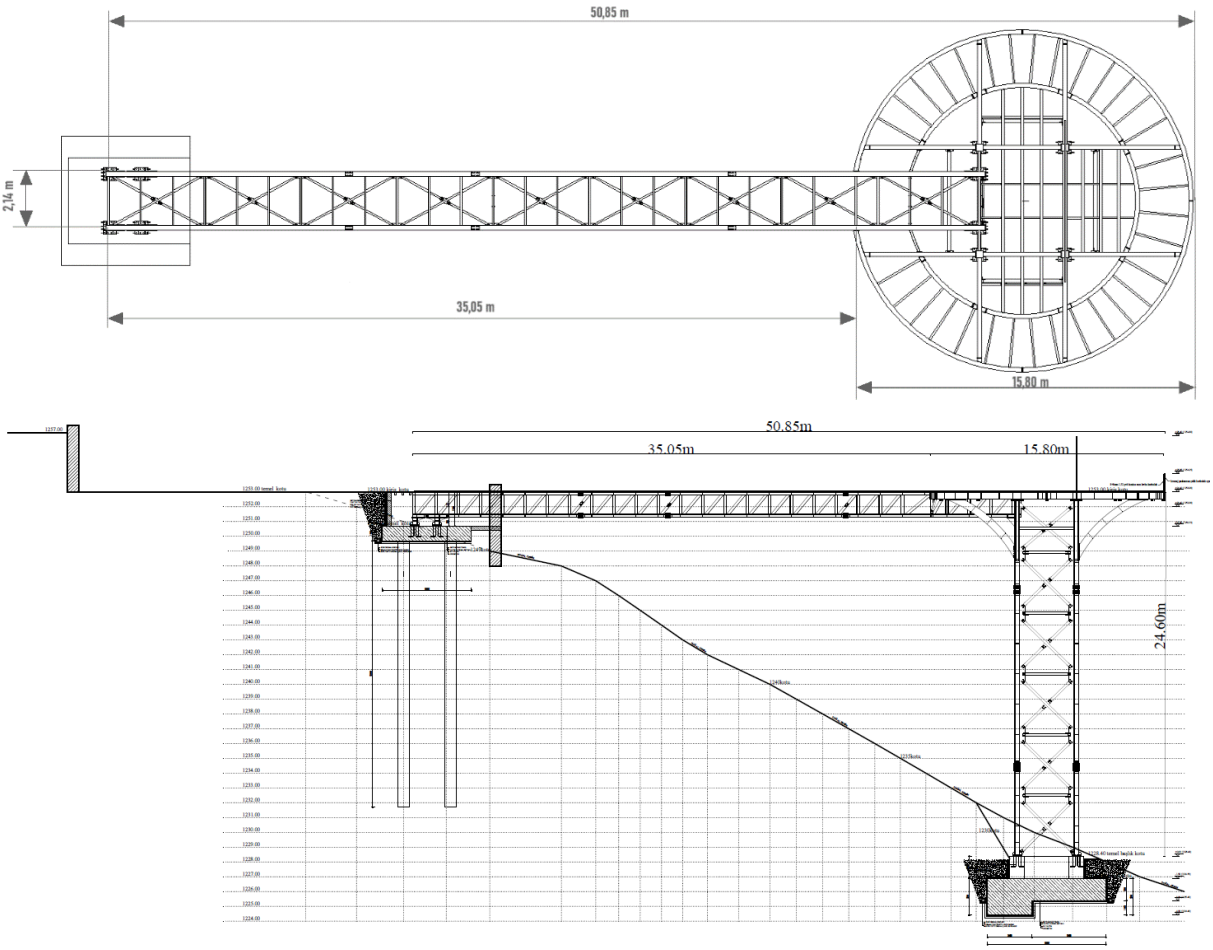

Figure 4. Top and Side Elevation Views of the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck (Isparta Municipality, Directorate of Survey and Project, 2023)

The glass panels used on the walkway surface are composed of 10+10+10 mm PVB-laminated, tempered, and edge-polished glass, covering a total surface area of approximately 270 m². The railing system consists of 8+8 mm PVB-laminated glass panels, enclosing an area of 141 m². Mechanical fasteners and insulating profiles were employed across all glass components to increase resistance to vibration and thermal expansion. This technical configuration enhances user safety while maximizing visual transparency, thus enriching the panoramic observation experience.

Following the installation of the glass and railing systems, comprehensive safety tests were conducted, and the lighting infrastructure was activated. This system includes a 410-meter DMX-controlled LED strip, 555 point light units, 10 ring-shaped spotlights, 16 units of 22 W and 6 units of 80 W projectors, and 6 moving-head lighting fixtures. All lighting components are centrally controlled via six electrical panels. This infrastructure improves night-time visibility while supporting both functional safety and aesthetic coherence, transforming the deck into a usable and attractive public space at various times of the day.

The technical design of the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck reflects a holistic strategy that integrates visual permeability, structural safety, and user comfort. The expansive views offered by the glass surfaces, in combination with the structural integrity of the framework and the dynamic lighting design, provide both aesthetic and psychological reassurance for users. Overall, the project demonstrates a balanced integration of architectural and landscape principles, emphasizing urban aesthetics, functionality, and environmental responsiveness.

3.2. Visitor Experience, Spatial Configuration, and Social Amenities

Beyond its technical specifications, the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck was designed as a multifunctional public space, integrating spatial planning and social amenities that prioritize user experience. Officially inaugurated on October 28, 2023, in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the

Republic (Figure 5), the structure attracted approximately 75,000 visitors within the first ten days and nearly 450,000 visitors in its first ten months. As of June 2025, the total number of visitors reached 1,037,000—more than double the population of Isparta. This ratio demonstrates that the observation deck has emerged as a prominent urban landmark, serving both local residents and the broader region. Its role in facilitating cultural recreation and encouraging short-term tourism mobility contributes significantly to the diversification of Isparta's tourism infrastructure and visitor economy.

Figure 5. Photographs from the Opening Ceremony of the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck on October 28, 2023 (Isparta Municipality, Directorate of Survey and Project, 2023)

The Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck admits a maximum of 50 visitors at a time in accordance with structural safety regulations. During peak hours, entry is monitored under the supervision of on-site security personnel. As admission is entirely free of charge, the structure remains accessible to all user groups and serves the public interest. This inclusive policy significantly increases demand—especially on weekends, public holidays, and at sunset—resulting in long queues and extended waiting times. Despite the high visitor numbers, the practice of allowing limited and controlled access is considered a sustainable solution that ensures both user comfort and structural integrity. For hygiene and safety, all visitors are required to wear disposable shoe covers provided at no cost. The facility is subject to regular year-round maintenance, including routine inspections of glass panels, railings, and steel structures, to ensure long-term functionality and aesthetic preservation.

The deck operates between 10:00 AM and 8:00 PM in summer, and between 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM in winter. Sunset and weekends represent peak visitation times, when visitors are attracted by both the panoramic daytime scenery and the visual effects created by the LED lighting system. On certain occasions, lighting is extended beyond standard hours to allow limited nighttime access. The integrated lighting infrastructure ensures adequate visibility after dark while simultaneously improving perceived safety and spatial legibility. These qualities help promote nighttime use and extend the site's attractiveness beyond daylight hours.

The spatial organization of the site is structured to enhance wayfinding and visual engagement through a sequential arrangement of experiential layers. Upon arrival, visitors first encounter the Kirazlıdere Café, situated on a 4,500 m² footprint and designed as a two-story structure accommodating up to 450 individuals simultaneously. The café includes amenities such as children's playrooms, a prayer area, and an adjacent open parking lot with a capacity of 100 vehicles. The restaurant façade directly faces the observation deck, guiding visitor flow and supporting site orientation. These features transform the observation deck from a static viewing structure into a dynamic social destination.

Immediately preceding the entrance area, visitors encounter a sequence of tiered stone steps and a centrally positioned cascading ornamental pool. This arrangement serves as both a visual focal point and a transitional zone that regulates visitor movement. Within landscape architecture, water features are often recognized for their capacity to enhance sensory experience and promote psychological calmness (Whalley, 1988). Accordingly, the cascading pool contributes to both visual and acoustic tranquility, thereby enriching the overall spatial experience. The ascending progression of stone steps coupled with the flowing water creates a gradual and perceptible spatial transition that guides visitors toward the glass

observation platform. In addition to accessing the observation deck via the café's main entrance, visitors may also use a gently sloped pathway located beside the café building, providing a direct and unobstructed route from the parking area to the glass observation deck. This barrier-free pathway is particularly suitable for wheelchair users and families with strollers, ensuring inclusive access.

Beyond this, the entrance area features a large-scale decorative pavement inspired by traditional Anatolian carpet motifs and composed of colored stones (Figure 6). Measuring 12 × 8 meters (96 m²), the pavement comprises 9,801 stones in five distinct colors, each stone measuring 121 × 81 mm. Functioning as both a visual threshold and a symbolic surface, the mosaic initiates visitors' terrace experience with an aesthetic and cultural resonance. The geometric motifs embedded in the design are interpreted as harmonious expressions of Anatolian carpet symbolism. Given Isparta's strong cultural identity linked to its carpet weaving heritage, this mosaic transcends decorative purposes to add a significant symbolic layer to the site. Acting as a transitional element bridging traditional and contemporary design, it constitutes a key landscape feature through which visitors engage with the city's cultural memory.

Immediately following the carpet-patterned paving, visitors traverse a semi-transparent tunnel structure characterized by clean, modern lines (Figure 6). This tunnel serves dual functions: as a guiding architectural element and as a device for spatial narration. Its distinctive form establishes a visual focal point while providing visitors with a threshold experience upon entry.

Clad in a semi-transparent material that admits natural light, the tunnel facilitates a guided transition through variations in both illumination and spatial volume. Beyond its physical role as a connector, the tunnel operates as a spatial mediator, preparing visitors emotionally and shaping their spatial perception. Located just prior to the glass observation deck, this semi-enclosed tunnel contributes to a fluid and intentional transition from the outdoor environment to a panoramic urban vista, thereby constructing the visitor's visual experience in layered spatial sequences.

To support a holistic understanding of the spatial configuration described above, a top-down view of the site is provided in Figure 6. This aerial image clearly illustrates the sequential spatial arrangement—from the parking lot and café building to the ornamental pool, patterned paving, tunnel structure, and the glass observation platform—revealing how the site guides visitor flow through layered experiential zones.

Figure 6. Top View of the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck, Including the Café, Parking Lot, Terraced Approach, Patterned Stone Paving, Tunnel Structure, and Viewing Platform (Authors' Own Drone Capture, 2025)

A series of oblique aerial photographs captured from different angles further elucidates the site's spatial integration with its surrounding topography and vegetation (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Oblique Aerial Views of the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck from Multiple Angles, Showing the Glass Platform, Steel Support Tower, Tunnel Structure, Landscaped Approach, and Café Building in Relation to the Forested Hillside and Urban Fabric (Authors' Own Drone Capture, 2025)

In conclusion, the spatial organization of the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck transcends mere physical arrangement, encompassing user guidance strategies, cultural identity references, social amenities, and seamless integration with the natural environment. Together, these elements create a holistic public space that is simultaneously aesthetic, functional, and symbolic within the urban fabric. This case exemplifies how thoughtful spatial design can enhance urban landscapes by fostering meaningful social experiences while respecting cultural and environmental contexts.

3.3. Visitor Profile and Travel Characteristics

The demographic characteristics and travel preferences of the 400 survey participants—including gender, age, education level, occupation, place of residence, mode of transportation, purpose of visit, duration of stay, source of information, and social media use—are detailed in Table 2.

Of the respondents, 52.5% were female and 47.5% male, indicating a balanced gender distribution and suggesting equal appeal of the site across genders. Studies indicate that women tend to prefer areas perceived as safer, more enclosed, and socially oriented, whereas men often occupy open or exposed

spaces more readily (Day, 2001; Whitzman, 2007). The majority of users were young to middle-aged adults, highlighting the site's particular popularity among these age groups.

Regarding education, bachelor's degree holders represented the largest group (29.75%), followed by high school, master's, and associate degree graduates. This distribution reflects a predominantly moderate to high educational attainment among users. Previous studies associate higher education levels with increased environmental awareness and selective use of public open spaces (Alam & Zakaria, 2021).

Occupationally, students constituted the largest group (24.25%), followed by private sector and public employees, indicating accessibility to diverse socioeconomic groups. The prominence of students and working individuals also suggests that the site is especially favored for weekend and leisure activities.

Geographically, 45.25% of visitors were from outside Isparta, while 40.75% were local residents, demonstrating the deck's appeal both locally and regionally. This expanded visitor base indicates that the site functions as a regional tourism and recreation hub. Tyrväinen et al. (2014) emphasize that short-term visits to urban natural areas can reduce stress more effectively than built environments, with even 15-minute nature exposure positively influencing mood and relaxation. In this regard, accessible, visually engaging spaces like the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck provide significant psychological and recreational benefits for both residents and day-trippers.

Only 5.25% of respondents indicated that their visit was specifically planned for the deck, while 53% reported visiting as part of a broader trip to Isparta. This suggests that the deck currently functions primarily as a secondary attraction within established travel routes rather than as a primary destination. However, emotional attachment to a place is shaped more by personal experience and mental associations than by intentional targeting (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015). Thus, despite its secondary status, the deck may still hold considerable symbolic meaning within visitors' broader urban experiences.

Regarding transportation, private vehicles were the predominant mode (64%), while public transport, walking, and taxis accounted for 5%, 12.75%, and smaller percentages, respectively. The hillside location restricts pedestrian access and limits alternative transit options, effectively necessitating private vehicle use for most visitors. Giles-Corti and Donovan (2002) highlight that effective public space utilization depends on both physical presence and accessibility; therefore, the deck's reachability is somewhat undermined by the lack of inclusive transportation options.

Social media plays a significant role in promoting the deck, with 35.75% of respondents reporting learning about it through digital platforms. Munar (2011) notes that social media users actively contribute to destination image construction, and visually striking sites like Kirazlıdere become "photogenic places" that circulate widely online, attracting new visitor segments.

Group visitation was common: 45.5% came with family, 28.75% with friends, 12% with tour groups, and 13.75% visited alone, reflecting the site's suitability for social and community-oriented experiences. Most visitors (71.25%) were first-timers, understandable given the site's recent opening. Tourism research underscores the importance of first-visit satisfaction in promoting return visits (Jang & Feng, 2007). Positive initial experiences at Kirazlıdere are thus critical to fostering long-term user loyalty and reinforcing the site's role as a symbolic urban landmark and alternative tourism route.

Digital engagement is high: 56.25% of participants shared content from their visit on social media, 20.25% captured photos or videos without sharing, 12.75% did not engage in sharing, and 10.75% lacked social media accounts. This underscores that user experience now encompasses both physical presence and digital mediation. The tendency to share content correlates strongly with visual appeal, novelty, and perceived quality (Munar, 2011).

In summary, the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck primarily attracts young, educated, urban users who are actively engaged with digital media. This profile confirms that the site meets contemporary aesthetic and social expectations effectively.

Table 2. Distribution of Participants by Demographic Characteristics and Travel Characteristics

Section	Variable	Option	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Section 1: Participant Profile (Demographic Information)	Gender	Female	210	52.50
		Male	190	47.50
	Age Group	25-34	108	27.00
		18-24	86	21.50
		35-44	81	20.25
		45-54	51	12.75
		55-64	46	11.50
		65+	28	7.00
	Education Level	Bachelor's degree	119	29.75
		High school	78	19.50
		Master's degree	61	15.25
		Associate degree	56	14.00
		Middle school	36	9.00
		Doctorate	26	6.50
		Primary school	24	6.00
	Occupation	Student	97	24.25
		Private sector employee	82	20.50
		Public employee	81	20.25
		Retired	46	11.50
		Housewife	42	10.50
		Tradesperson	33	8.25
		Unemployed	19	4.75
	Place of Residence	Other city	181	45.25
		Isparta city center	163	40.75
		Isparta district/village	47	11.75
		Abroad	9	2.25
Section 2: Visit Information and Travel Characteristics	Accommodation Status	Day-trip visitor	159	39.75
		I live in Isparta	144	36.00
		2+ nights	49	12.25
		1 night	48	12.00
	Purpose of Visit	Visiting for another reason + the glass deck	212	53.00
		Family visit	110	27.50
		Cultural/nature tourism	57	14.25
		Visiting only the glass deck	21	5.25
	Mode of Transportation	Private vehicle	256	64.00
		Tour bus	59	14.75
		On foot	51	12.75
		Public transportation	20	5.00
		Taxi	14	3.50
	Source of Awareness	Social media	143	35.75
		Friends/relatives	107	26.75
		Internet	71	17.75
		Tour agency	43	10.75
		Noticed it on the way	36	9.00
	Visiting Companions	With family	182	45.50
		With friends	115	28.75
		Alone	55	13.75
		With a tour group	48	12.00
	Previous Visit	No	285	71.25
		Yes	115	28.75
	Social Media Sharing Behavior	I shared my content	225	56.25
		I took photo/video but didn't share	81	20.25
		I did not share	51	12.75
		I don't have a social media account	43	10.75

3.4. Visitor Experience and Satisfaction Level

Participants' experiences at the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck were assessed using a 16-item, five-point Likert scale, with mean scores and standard deviations presented in Table 3.

The items "ease of access" and "directional signage" received high mean scores of 4.3 and 4.6, respectively. This high level of user orientation can be attributed to the site's sequential spatial arrangement, which includes design features such as the cascading ornamental pool, traditional stone-patterned paving, and the semi-transparent tunnel. These elements provide a gradual spatial transition from the arrival area to the observation deck, facilitating intuitive navigation and enhancing spatial perception. The low standard deviation (0.3) for directional signage indicates a strong consensus regarding user satisfaction in this domain. These results align with Lynch's (1960) theory of visual focal points and wayfinding, supporting Arthur & Passini's (1992) assertion that effective directional elements enhance spatial experience. Similarly, Giles-Corti & Donovan (2002) highlight the critical role of physical accessibility in the utilization of public open spaces.

Regarding spatial experience, average scores for features such as seating and walking areas, views, sense of safety, aesthetic components, photography zones, and nighttime scenery all exceeded 4.0. The elevated positioning of the platform and the frameless glass railings directly contribute to the quality of landscape views and photo opportunities. In addition, the presence of continuous handrails and well-distributed seating nodes supports user comfort during peak times. This indicates that the deck provides an aesthetically pleasing, functional, and safe environment. Visual features—landscape aesthetics and photo opportunities—garnered particularly high scores. Lynch (1960) emphasizes that visually stimulating environments tend to be more memorable. The sense of safety on the glass platform (mean=4.2) and adequacy of seating and walking areas (mean=4.1) further reflect overall user comfort. Steinfeld & Maisel (2012) advocate for spatial planning principles based on inclusive and universal design to ensure safety and accessibility for all users. The relatively lower score for night use (mean=4.0) suggests room for improvement in this aspect. Although the technical lighting infrastructure is functional, incorporating ambient lighting near seating areas or providing accent illumination along approach paths may enhance the site's aesthetic character and user safety during night-time use. Lynch (1960) also stresses the importance of visual cues and lighting for wayfinding and spatial continuity, especially during nighttime.

Cleanliness, hygiene, and maintenance are vital for fostering safety perception and encouraging repeat visitation. Participants rated environmental cleanliness and landscape maintenance positively, with average scores of 4.0. However, the policy requiring disposable shoe covers received a comparatively lower mean score of 3.8 and a higher standard deviation of 0.7, indicating diverse opinions. Some users perceived shoe covers as inconvenient or unnecessary, although these measures are essential for protecting the glass surface and maintaining hygiene. Steinfeld & Maisel (2012) underline the importance of designing physical environments to accommodate diverse users in line with universal design principles. Providing clearer information regarding the shoe cover policy and improving its ergonomic design may enhance user satisfaction and long-term structural preservation. While some users viewed the shoe cover requirement as unnecessary, this response may be shaped by the lack of on-site educational signage explaining its purpose. Integrating user-friendly dispensers and brief visual instructions near the entry could increase acceptance while preserving the clarity and cleanliness of the transparent floor.

Perceptions of crowding yielded the lowest average satisfaction score (3.2), with a relatively high standard deviation (0.8), suggesting varied user experiences. Crowding may result from platform density and entrance queue times, as entry is regulated to maintain structural load limits, particularly during peak periods such as weekends and holidays. Temporary congestion at popular photo spots may also contribute. Nevertheless, controlled access ensures safety and comfort. Whyte (1980) observes that moderate crowding can promote social interaction, whereas excessive density induces discomfort and stress. From this perspective, Kirazlıdere's regulated entry system represents an effective balance between structural safety and visitor comfort. The absence of shaded queue areas or real-time signage for wait

times may further intensify this discomfort. Spatial enhancements such as pergolas, queue guidance signage, or designated pre-waiting areas could significantly improve visitor flow and comfort without exceeding structural limits.

Cost perceptions also influence public space usage. The high mean score of 4.6 for free admission reflects strong user approval. Conversely, the item "I would visit even if there was an entrance fee" scored lower (mean=3.5), indicating that fees could deter some visitors. More & Stevens (2000) report that lower-income groups are less likely to visit fee-based sites, and Schwartz & Lin (2006) confirm that entrance fees reduce visit frequency.

Overall satisfaction averaged 4.4, suggesting that the site largely meets visitor expectations. This positive evaluation likely results from factors such as ease of access, aesthetic appeal, safety, social media suitability, and free admission. Shafer et al. (2000) argue that satisfaction in open spaces is influenced by spatial quality and perceived quality of life improvements. Lynch (1960) notes that perceptual coherence and positive experiences strengthen attachment to public spaces. Thus, Kirazlıdere's holistic experience effectively fosters user satisfaction and justifies public investment.

The intention to revisit received a high mean score of 4.3, indicating that physical comfort and visual richness contribute to sustainable user loyalty (Shafer et al., 2000). The site's contribution to urban identity also scored highly (mean=4.2), highlighting its symbolic significance. Rapoport (1990) asserts that distinctive and culturally meaningful urban features contribute to identity, while Relph (1976) emphasizes emotional attachment in place identity formation. Accordingly, the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck supports city branding and fosters a sense of belonging within the community.

Table 3. Visitor Satisfaction Levels

No.	Statement	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
1	Ease of access	4.3	0.6
2	Directional signage	4.6	0.3
3	Seating/resting areas	4.1	0.5
4	Landscape view experience	4.5	0.4
5	Sense of safety	4.2	0.5
6	Landscaping/cleanliness	4.0	0.6
7	Aesthetic elements	4.3	0.5
8	Hygiene via shoe covers	3.8	0.7
9	Photo-taking spots	4.4	0.4
10	Perception of crowding	3.2	0.8
11	Lighting/night view	4.0	0.6
12	Free of charge	4.6	0.3
13	I would visit even if it required a fee	3.5	0.9
14	Overall satisfaction	4.4	0.4
15	Intention to revisit	4.3	0.5
16	Contribution to urban identity	4.2	0.6

3.5. Interrelations Between Visitor Characteristics and Experience Patterns

This section presents a qualitative analysis of significant patterns identified through the survey findings, focusing on thematic relationships between demographic variables (e.g., age, gender, place of residence, education) and visit-related behaviors (e.g., transportation preferences, social media sharing, purpose of visit).

Younger visitors tended to evaluate the site primarily as a space for visual and social experiences. This aligns with existing literature indicating that young individuals are often motivated by aesthetic scenery and opportunities for peer interaction (Richards & Wilson, 2004). Furthermore, in the context of the digital era, the potential for social media sharing of visually appealing environments is a decisive factor influencing young users' preferences (Chavez et al., 2020).

Gender differences were apparent in visitation patterns. Female participants predominantly visited with family or friends, whereas males were more likely to visit alone. This suggests that women perceive public spaces as safe, communal environments, while men may approach them as settings for solitary retreat or social observation (Krenichyn, 2006).

A strong correlation was found between age and social media usage; younger visitors were more active in generating digital content and sharing their experiences online. This reflects both technological affinity and the influence of digital representation in shaping spatial experience. Munar (2011) highlights that tourists actively contribute to the digital image construction of visited destinations.

Differences in access modes were observed relative to participants' place of residence. Central Isparta residents were more likely to reach the site by foot or private vehicle, while visitors from outside the city frequently used tour buses, private vehicles, or, less commonly, public transport. This underscores the importance of private vehicle ownership and intercity transportation infrastructure in enabling access to urban public spaces.

Visit purpose was meaningfully associated with social media sharing behavior. Those visiting for visually rich and socially interactive experiences demonstrated higher tendencies to share content online. According to Munar (2011), aesthetically significant spaces enhance users' motivation to engage on digital platforms. Consequently, the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck functions as both a physical destination and a visual experience platform within digital media.

A further notable relationship was identified between visitation frequency and sharing habits; first-time visitors were significantly more likely to share their experiences on social media compared to repeat visitors. This supports the "first-time experience effect," whereby initial visits leave stronger impressions influencing sharing behavior (Jang & Feng, 2007).

Collectively, these patterns suggest that the relationship between users and the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck should be understood within a multilayered framework shaped by socio-demographic factors. The interplay between demographics—such as age, gender, residence, and occupation—and behavioral preferences—including transportation modes, visit purposes, and social media use—illustrates how everyday practices influence public space experiences. Young users' motivations for visual content creation, women's preference for socially networked recreation, and varying access choices collectively reflect the complex nature of contemporary urban tourism.

In this regard, the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck transcends its role as a mere scenic viewpoint to emerge as a multifunctional public space shaped by social interaction, psychological engagement, and digital representation.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Beyond its physical design and scenic appeal, the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck stands as a contemporary example of a multifunctional public space within Isparta's urban fabric. Unlike many glass decks in Türkiye, typically situated in natural environments, Kirazlıdere distinguishes itself by offering an urban panorama. Its proximity to the city center, accessibility, and integrated amenities elevate it beyond a simple viewpoint, positioning it as a spatial expression of urban identity.

The deck exemplifies urban integration through physical continuity with the city, its role in daily and recreational routines, and layered spatial elements combining traditional and modern cues. Its rapid growth in visitor numbers and high user satisfaction demonstrate its evolution into a regional tourism destination and symbolic urban landmark. As Sökmen & Yener (2022) note, successful public spaces rely on accessibility, visual continuity, and integrated planning to enhance user satisfaction—principles embodied by Kirazlıdere.

The site's spatial organization—featuring Anatolian carpet-inspired paving, semi-transparent tunnels, landscape elements, and social facilities—offers a multisensory experience aligned with Lefebvre's (1991) concept of the production of spatial meaning. Rather than a passive viewpoint, the deck engages users physically, socially, and emotionally.

However, the site's popularity brings operational challenges. With a safety limit of 50 visitors at once, peak periods result in long queues and reduced comfort. A lack of shaded waiting areas and real-time signage exacerbates this issue. Implementing smart queue systems and crowd information technologies could significantly improve visitor flow and satisfaction.

As the site surpassed one million visitors by mid-2025, its future development requires integration into broader urban and tourism planning. Strategies should address seasonal crowding, environmental preservation, and equitable access. The Kirazlıdere deck illustrates how small-scale interventions can produce substantial social and economic impact in mid-sized cities.

Currently, most visitors arrive by private vehicle, limiting accessibility for non-driving and disadvantaged groups. The absence of integrated public transport is a key barrier. As Giles-Corti & Donovan (2002) emphasize, physical access alone is insufficient—true accessibility involves inclusive mobility solutions. Expanding shuttle services, establishing bicycle-sharing systems, and improving pedestrian routes would enhance social equity and sustainability.

Findings of this study reveal strong alignment between theoretical frameworks and user experiences. High satisfaction with spatial orientation and aesthetic coherence reflects Lynch's (1960) concept of spatial legibility and Appleton's (1975) prospect-refuge theory. The elevated, open-view platform supports Ulrich's (1991) theory of restorative environments. Visitors' emotional attachment and intention to revisit reflect Relph's (1976) notion of place identity. The platform's role as a "visual focal point," per Lynch (1960), enhances both orientation and symbolic identity within the urban landscape.

Survey results show high satisfaction with scenic quality (4.5), aesthetics (4.3), and safety (4.2), while hygiene (3.8) and crowding (3.2) received lower scores. The top-rated aspect was directional signage (4.6), underscoring the effectiveness of spatial organization. Free admission strengthens social inclusivity, particularly for low-income users (More & Stevens, 2000; Schwartz & Lin, 2006).

The deck's strong digital visibility reflects its transformation into a visual icon. High rates of social media sharing, particularly among first-time visitors, align with Munar (2011) and Gretzel et al. (2000), who highlight the importance of user-generated content in destination branding. To enhance this potential, digital campaigns and QR-based experiences could further support online engagement. As Jang & Feng (2007) observed, first impressions shape long-term loyalty—suggesting the importance of maximizing initial visitor satisfaction.

Emotionally, the deck contributes to collective memory and urban belonging. As emphasized by Rapoport (1990) and Relph (1976), the formation of identity is shaped through a combination of spatial form and human experience. Kirazlıdere's imagery, frequently reproduced and shared online, reinforces its symbolic role, especially among digitally active youth.

In sum, the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck functions as an integrated public space that connects cultural, social, and economic dimensions. Beyond visual and recreational value, it contributes to Isparta's brand identity and alternative tourism development.

The strategic recommendations developed in the context of this study are summarized below:

1. One of the key priorities in improving the accessibility of the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck involves addressing its current dependence on private vehicles. Revising existing public transportation routes to include the site, or introducing dedicated new lines, may offer a viable solution—especially during weekends and holidays, when municipal shuttle services could provide more equitable access. While a bicycle path currently leads to the deck, the steep gradient

limits its usability. The integration of electric-assisted bicycles or e-scooter systems could enhance its functionality, particularly for users with physical limitations. Likewise, implementing a shared bicycle scheme in the city center (e.g., ISBİS) would support those without access to private transportation. To ensure that all user groups can benefit from the deck, inclusive design measures should be incorporated—such as barrier-free walkways, tactile surfaces, auditory guidance systems, sign language accessibility, and tactile signage for individuals with visual, hearing, or cognitive impairments.

2. Encouraging digital engagement is another area with strong potential. The introduction of themed hashtags—such as #MyIsparta, #ViewFromKirazlıdere, or #GlassDeckPanorama—could invite users to share their experiences online. Highlighting creative submissions on municipal platforms may strengthen the deck's visibility across digital networks. Supplementing these efforts with QR codes placed at strategic viewpoints and encouraging user interaction through gamified prompts or photography challenges could further increase participation. Incentives such as souvenirs or symbolic rewards may contribute to sustained user interest.
3. Visitor experience during high-density periods could benefit from thoughtful crowd management strategies. The introduction of queue management systems—whether physical or app-based—along with real-time wait-time displays may help streamline visitor flow and reduce perceived inconvenience. Complementing these systems with shaded waiting areas, informational signage, and seating can enhance user comfort and promote orderly access to the platform.
4. In order to deepen the visual interaction with the landscape, the site could be enhanced through the installation of fixed binocular viewers and designated photo stations. These elements would allow visitors to engage more meaningfully with the panoramic scenery and generate personalized souvenir images for digital or printed use, simultaneously increasing the site's online presence.
5. Even though the existing lighting system supports nighttime use, further improvements could enrich both safety and atmosphere. Additional elements such as in-ground LED guidance lights, accent lighting around walkways and viewing points, and ambient features around seating areas could elevate the overall aesthetic.
6. Extending opening hours during summer months and special occasions, combined with thematic light shows, laser effects, or musical lighting displays, may offer symbolic and immersive night-time experiences, reinforcing the deck's relevance as a round-the-clock public destination.
7. As a highly visible and symbolic landmark, the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck carries significant branding potential for the city. Strengthening its presence in promotional materials and tourism campaigns at both local and national levels would contribute to Isparta's brand identity. Incorporating interpretive storyboards, landscape symbols, or culturally inspired design features into the site may foster a deeper connection between visitors and the city's heritage, allowing the deck to function simultaneously as a visual icon and a cultural touchstone.

The strategic recommendations proposed in this study offer concrete opportunities to enhance the functionality, accessibility, and experiential quality of the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck. However, their implementation should be guided by considerations of cost-efficiency, technical feasibility, and municipal capacity. For a mid-sized city like Isparta, a phased strategy appears to be the most pragmatic approach. Lightweight interventions—such as QR-based digital campaigns or the installation of fixed binoculars—may be implemented in the short term, while infrastructural improvements like shuttle services or thematic lighting systems could be developed gradually in alignment with budget planning and interdepartmental coordination.

Ensuring long-term sustainability will require continuous maintenance, the active involvement of stakeholders, and integration with broader urban development policies. Regular monitoring and user feedback mechanisms would support adaptive improvements and ensure the site remains functional and relevant over time.

Overall, the Kirazlıdere Glass Observation Deck presents a compelling example of how small-scale, well-integrated public space interventions can generate broader urban, social, and cultural benefits—offering valuable insights for future planning practices in similar urban contexts.

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