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Streets that bind

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IISc study finds ability to spend quality time with loved ones and have fun were major pull factors on pedestrianised streets

A study has revealed what factors must be taken into consideration while designing pedestrianised streets. Researchers from Indian Institute of Science (IISc) studied Church Street, which was the city's first pedestrianised street, to understand the correlation between motivation and satisfaction factors that are key to the success of such streets. They also observed that commuters used more metro trains during timings coinciding with streets being pedestrianised.

Researchers observed that various push and pull factors are key to its use and repetitive use. And key among the pull factors, it was found was the ability to spend quality time with friends, family.

The study was motivated by the fact that though pedestrianised streets are promoted as a long-term solution for urban problems, its adoption into the city landscape has been slow. The study aimed to develop a replicative model to be implemented at other pedestrianised streets.

The findings for the study were published in a paper titled 'Measuring Motivation and Satisfaction Level of Visitors of a Pedestrianized Urban Street in India for an Improved Quality of Life' written by Gayathri Harihara Subramanian, Meghna Verma and Ashish Verma.

The data for the study was collected during the Church Street First initiative that was held from November 7, 2020 to February 28, 2021. Being one of the busiest streets in the city, it is estimated that Rs 1,611.4 was saved every day by the prevention of accidents and pollution.

The study found that the visitors were motivated to come to Church Street primarily to spend quality time with their friends and family, with enjoyment, a sense of fulfilment, and placemaking (the process through

which we work together to shape our public spaces) as the pull factors. Dominant push factors are the availability of a wide variety of entertainment activities, and the freedom to do activities on the street.

The study found that such pull factors influenced the satisfaction levels of visitors more than the push factors. Revisits and advocacy of the pedestrianised street project were also due to the pull factors. According to the study, 90 per cent of respondents said that they would recommend Church Street to others.

The study also saw that more passengers were using the metro during the pedestrianised street initiative, thus making the advocacy for pedestrianising streets around metro stations.

One of the researchers Dr Ashish Verma told BM, “The purpose of the study was to ascertain the motivational factors for the Church Street First project. We observed that metro ridership for MG metro station increased more than 100 per cent during the period. Our goal was to start looking at pedestrianising projects from beyond transport policies and traffic conditions and look at quality of life. Emotional and mental well-being is equally important.”