ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the relationship between visual quality of the built environment and commercial signage in historic city centres. It identifies the physical aspects of commercial signs and buildings that should be taken into account in the development of a general approach to control commercial signs in historic city centres of different urban contexts. This study suggests that while some visual preferences are influenced by users’ urban contexts, others can be universal and applied to define general urban design principles. This study explores whether user perception and evaluation of the number of commercial signs and the percentage of building facade coverage by these media has some influence on (i) user satisfaction with commercial street facades, (ii) user perception and evaluation of order, colour variation and complexity, and (iii) user feeling of pleasure and interest in relation to the appearance of commercial streetscapes in historic city centres. The findings (i) show that there are common visual preferences among users from different countries, and (ii) suggest that these can be applied to develop a general approach to control commercial signs in historic city centres.

Keyword: Visual quality; commercial signage; historic city centre; user perception and evaluation.