



Use of Skywalks in Mumbai City

Dr Jehangir Bharucha

Associate Professor and Head, Post Graduate Studies,
H R College, Mumbai, India.

Email: jehangir.bharucha@hrcollege.edu

Date of revised paper submission: 21th June 2016; Date of acceptance: 23th June 2016

Date of publication: 25th June 2016; Impact Factor: 3.598; Quality Factor: 4.39

*First/ Corresponding Author; Paper ID: D16206

Abstract:

Numerous skywalks have been constructed in the city and suburbs of Mumbai. This study was carried out between October 2014 and March 2015 to assess the usefulness of these skywalks to the pedestrians in the city and to observe the usage patterns of the skywalks. The study concludes that to increase the Satisfaction Index, there are four important points to be considered: comfort, security, lighting and cleanliness.

Keywords: Skywalks, Usage, Safety, Maintenance.

1. Introduction:

Of late, numerous skywalks have been constructed in the city and suburbs of Mumbai. The purpose is to take walkers from the crowded and busy railway stations, which are occupied by the pedestrians, autos, rickshaws and other modes of public transport, and connect them to targeted destinations like residential areas, offices, markets, taxi stands, bus stations, etc.

Till date, Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority has built 36 skyways that stretch for about 17 kilometres in total in the city of Mumbai as well as its outskirts. But, unfortunately only 2, 50,000 people use the skyways (according to a study by the MMRDA in 2013), which is a tiny fraction of Mumbai's population of about 12 million [1].

2. Objectives of the study:

This study was carried out between October 2014 and March 2015 with the following objectives in mind:

- To assess the usefulness of these skywalks to the pedestrians in the city
- To evaluate the attitude of people towards these skywalks
- To observe the usage patterns of the skywalks and arrive at some observations
- To examine the convenience and safety of using the skywalks
- To understand whether more skywalks need to be constructed

3. Methodology:

The study is based entirely on primary research. Data collection was done through a detailed questionnaire orally administered to about 184 people who actually use the Skywalks. The usable responses turned out to be 150 the remaining could not be used due to incomplete and inaccurate answers. For more in-depth understanding a few personal interviews were also conducted. The responses from the questionnaire and the personal interviews were obtained, compiled, processed and analysed to arrive at the opinions on different issues.

4. Interpretation and Results of the study:

TABLE-1: Opinion of the respondents on the single most important purpose behind the construction of the skyways

<u>Purpose</u>	<u>No. of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of response</u>
Public safety	48	32%
Reduce traffic congestion	63	42%
Reduce vehicular air pollution	27	18%
Separation of people from vehicular noise	12	8%

The residents in the city have cited reduction in traffic congestion as the main purpose of building these skyways with 42% of the respondents citing this as the main reason. In a city like Mumbai, where the traffic jams are a common sight, skyways came up as a very clear alternative to various modes of transport that were being used in order to cover short distances. The next major reason appears to be public safety, which was cited by 32% of the people surveyed. . This is an important point especially for small children, elderly people and women who shall be safe from the hustle and bustle of vehicles on the road which are always in a rush. The other reasons did not fetch much favour with the respondents which are including reduction in vehicular air pollution and separation of people from vehicular noise.

TABLE-II: Opinion of the respondents whether skyways have contributed to the safety and convenience of the pedestrians

<u>Opinions</u>	<u>No. of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of responses</u>
Yes	63	42%
No	84	56%
Can't say	3	2%

According to the responses collected from this question, we see that a majority people, i.e. 56% of the people surveyed do not really feel that skyways have contributed much in the safety and convenience of the pedestrians in the city. While doing this survey, the researcher found various reasons behind people's dissatisfaction with the level and safety of the skyways. Heart patients and those with joint pain find it difficult to climb the numerous steps. The Grant Road skyway, being the costliest skyway in the city turned useless only two days after its inauguration, due to its dysfunctional escalators. The escalators are functional only between 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

On the other hand, 42% of the respondents are quite satisfied with the level of safety and convenience of the skyways.

TABLE- III: Perception of the respondents whether skyways turn out to be a revenue generating model from the advertisements

<u>Opinions</u>	<u>No. of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of response</u>
Yes	102	68%
No	48	32%

The responses given to this question clearly indicate that maximum number of people feel that skyways simply turned out to be revenue generating model for the MMRDA. The MMRDA, which is constructing skyways across the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, has floated tender inviting agencies to display advertisements on its selected skyways for a period of five years.

TABLE-IV: Public consultation over construction of skyways

<u>Reasons</u>	<u>No. of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of response</u>
Opposition due to trimming of trees	27	18%
Huge expenditure involved	36	24%
Invades privacy of neighbourhood houses	87	58%

The citizens of Mumbai feel that it is most important to seek public opinion over the construction of the skyways. It invades upon the privacy of the residents. Around 58% of the respondents feel that since it invaded the privacy of neighbours it definitely was necessary to involve public opinion. Another two reasons were that it involved a huge expenditure of around 600 crores and also many organisations opposed its construction as it involved trimming of trees.

Table- IV: Whether the escalators proved to be useful

<u>Opinion</u>	<u>No. of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of responses</u>
Yes	33	22%
No	105	70%
Can't say	12	8%

A majority of the people surveyed (70%) feel that escalators do not serve their purpose, whereas only 22% feel that the escalators are useful.

The reason behind this is that although escalators are a very useful feature, these escalators are not always in a working state so it leads to a lot of problems. In such cases, the train commuters have to climb several bridges and skyways. Also, at many places, there is no space to provide for the escalators.

TABLE VI: Opinion of the respondents whether skyways are safe for women especially during non peak hours)

<u>Opinion</u>	<u>No. of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of response</u>
Yes	24	24%
No	84	56%
Not much	30	20%

Very few people feel that skyways are a safe alternative for women in the city. The rest opined that it is not at all safe or not much safe for women. An answer to this problem could be strict policing on the skyways to avoid eve-teasing or other such cases. Also, women police can be present as well to help the women pedestrians in case of any problems.

TABLE- VII: The single most major failures of the skywalks

<u>Reasons</u>	<u>No. of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of response</u>
Encroachment of roads	84	56%
Garbage all over	24	16%
No shortcuts provided	42	28%

There are a lot of failures of the skywalks that have been built in the city, from encroachment of roads, or garbage spilled all around, or no shortcuts being provided etc. Around 56% people believed that due to skyways, there has been a lot of encroachment of roads. Another 28% of the people surveyed, feel that due to absence of shortcuts, the skyways have failed to be convenient enough. Whereas, 16% people feel that due to a lot of garbage around the place, it is not very hygienic to use the skywalks.

TABLE-VIII: Views of the respondents on the alternate uses of a skywalk

<u>Uses</u>	<u>No. of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of responses</u>
-------------	-------------------------	--------------------------------

Walking/ jogging	51	34%
Social awareness programmes	42	28%
Hangouts	24	16%
Hawking	33	22%

A lot of alternate uses of a skywalk have come into picture. Around 34% people feel that skyways can be used for the purpose of walking or jogging. 28% people feel that it can be used as a spot for social awareness programmes. It can also be used as a spot for social hangouts or hawking purposes.

TABLE-IX: Opinion of the respondents whether skyways have sufficient signboards for first time users

<u>Opinion</u>	<u>No. of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of responses</u>
Yes	84	56%
No	66	44%

The survey reveals that not many people feel that there are proper signboards put up across the skyways. 56% people responded saying that there is a lack of signboards for the first time users. But, another 44% believe that there are enough signboards for the first timers.

The organisations that have been involved in the maintenance should ensure that they put up enough signboards that shall display the routes, shortcuts, ways for the general public and keeping in mind the first timers too.

There are several skyways in the city and it is very much possible that people get confused or they forget the way while they take up a particular skyway. So, it should be ensured that they take up a proper route so that they do not end up at the wrong destinations which will instead make their journey longer. And through the response collected, it is evident that there is a lack of proper signboards and that somewhere concerns the general public of the city, hence there is a need to take care of this aspect by either the MMRDA or the organisations involved in the upkeep of the skyways.

TABLE-X: Opinion of the respondents whether more skywalks are needed in the city

<u>Opinion</u>	<u>No. of responses</u>	<u>Percentage of responses</u>
Yes	93	62%
No	57	38%

A majority of people would prefer more skyways in the city. 62% people responded in favour of it. 38% people did not want any more skyways in the city.

According to the research done so far, it was realised that maximum number of skyways were built only near the stations. That means people who did not go towards the station could not use the skyways. So, people wanted skyways to be built in the major localities of the city so that not only the stations, but also other places stayed connected to each other.

On the other hand, few people opposed this idea because the skyways that are already built were not being so actively used, hence investing so much money to build another set of skyways did not sound good. Also, the skyways that are presently there had a lot of issues from maintenance to security, etc. that there was no guarantee if the ones that will be built in future would be good enough.

5. Recommendations and the way ahead:

Skyways are a new and fresh concept for the people in Mumbai. They have helped the local people connect to their destinations quite easily and quickly. People are quite satisfied with this concept. However the use of these skyways has been less than optimal.

Also, after constructing a structure, one cannot altogether ignore the responsibility of its maintenance. This is one of the most major criticism regarding skyways.

Mumbaikars feel that given the lack of open space and garden in the city, skyways do provide breathing space for people even for just taking a stroll above the hustle bustle of the city. However some of the skyways emit a foul smell and have an unhygienic environment. Especially in the areas of Vile Parle, Bandra, Goregaon and Kandivli. In order to increase the Satisfaction Index, there are four important points to be considered comfort, security lighting and cleanliness.

References

[1]. <http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/nov/27/mumbai>.