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# The Accessibility in Shopping Centres: The Cases of Istanbul Profilo and Kozzy Malls

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## Abstract

Shopping centres are public areas which were used by people from every social strata and different age groups for consuming commodities or leisure. The aim of this study is to emphasize not only public areas accessibility of shopping centres but also consider interior space characteristics in terms of accessibility.
The study showed that architectural design and interior design solutions were not sufficient to solve accessibility problem without active audit mechanism.

***Keywords:***
Shopping center, accessibility, interior design, urban design

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## INTRODUCTION

Shopping centres are public places, in which people of every strata and age groups shop or spend their leisure time. For this reason, they must be designed age-friendly and usable by

everybody. “The design should in enable a person to enter, determined their destination, perform a purchase a transaction and depart with as little difficulty as possible” (Levine, 2003: 86). Shopping centres located in the city centre are used intensively every day of the week and the pedestrian access is common. However these public areas are not accessible to everyone.

Istanbul is the city in Turkey with its numerous shopping centres. According to the Turkey Shopping Centre Potential Report (2012-2014), Istanbul has 81 active shopping centres; whereas Ankara has 30 and Izmir 16 (*2014'de Türkiye'deki Toplam AVM Sayısı 347 Olacak*). For this paper, Profilo shopping centre, visited by over 10 million people per year in Şişli, Mecidiyeköy on the European Side in Istanbul and Kozzy shopping centre in Kadıköy, Kozyatağı on the Asian Side were chosen to analyse for accessibility. The main criteria of selection shopping centres determined as situated in central, walkable locations of the city. One of the centre is medium sized shopping centre and the other small sized. Around both centres office buildings, education institutions, housing constructions and hospitals are located. Therefore the selected shopping centres are not only used intensively in the week, but also at weekends. For the people living and working around the shopping centres got a part of their daily life. With the activity of the centres, containing leisure time activities like cinema, theatre and art educations extend the access area and make those areas worth to analyse.



In the research, pedestrian ways, pavements, crosswalks accessing the shopping centre and circulation areas, access to the shops, restroom and other service places and the entrance are analysed. However, activity areas are excluded from the study because of limited time and not working with a big research team.

**ACCESSIBILITY IN SHOPPING CENTRES**

According to Madanipour (1996), public areas are one of the important urban elements, where citizens come together and socialize. In this connection not only streets, parks and squares are public areas should be accessible to everyone, but also fun and free time places like shopping areas, cinema, theatre containing shopping centres.

There are various regulations prepared for the design of those public areas and public constructions. However, these regulations are not related directly with accessibility. The accessibility guide of the Chamber of Architects and the accessibility guide of the United Nations are basic sources helping about this topic for designers. Our country is ‘one of the countries of 120 signing the Contract About the Right of Disabled

People prepared by the United Nations in 2007' (Evcil and Yalçın Usal, 2008: 544). The data related to this contract used more by municipalities for areas like streets, pavements, crosswalks, but in applications for indoor of public areas are lacks.

The accessibility research of shopping centres can be divided into two parts. The first one is the required urban organisations for the access to the centre, the second one is the organisations in the construction. Limitations or lacks in these basic organisations leads substantially into difficulties in the accessibility and hinder the equal use.

As determined by Polat (1998), five basic elements of the place analysis should be investigated for the accessibility. These are:

-Sufficient width
-Sufficient turning area
-Sufficient height and height level
-Sufficient surface features
-Sufficient guide and warning utilities are required organisations.

**THE ANALYSIS OF ACCESSIBILTY IN SELECTED SHOPPING CENTRES**

The analysis of the selected shopping centres for this work done in the following context:

-main pedestrian ways accessing to the centre,
-circulation areas in the centre,
-guiding utilities,
-shops,
-Rest rooms and other service areas.

The methods of the work has determined as observation, taking measures at required places and collecting data and analysing the suitability. The shopping centres' collected data from indoor are compared with the determined values of the Accessibility for the Disabled, a Design for a Barrier Free Environment guide, prepared by the United Nations, to see whether it is suitable for accessibility.

**PROFILO SHOPPING CENTRE**

Profilo shopping centre is in the centre parts in Istanbul, in Şişli/Mecidiyeköy. The centre was not build as a shopping centre, the existing Profilo factory building was renovated into a place, fulfilling shopping and leisure time requirements. Despite the construction is not on the main street, it is used intensively because of its central location. It was opened in the year 1998 with the area of 75.000 meter square (today 117.000 $m^2$).

**Main pedestrian ways accessing through the shopping centre:** In the main pedestrian ways, there is not an approach including everyone. It includes different dangers for also almost healthy individuals; the problems are like hinders, holes, unstabile pavement (Figure 1). Therefore there are almost limited tactile paving for blind person and ramps for wheelchair users and baby carriages. The pedestrian access to the Profilo Shopping Centre from the Büyükdere Main Street to Cemal Sair Street is a commonly used way because of traffic lights. Despite the renewed kerb ramps, audible instructions on traffic signals and guiding strips on the Büyükdere main street in 2012, there was no renovation on the pedestrian ways to Profilo Shopping Centre. Problems of the streets accessing main entrance of the centre are similar to the streets accessing entrance door on the side. Further, access to the side door is stepped because of the angled pavement.

**Figure 1.** Pavement on Cemal Sair Street (Photograph: Selhan Usal, 2013).

**Figure 1.**



**Circulation areas in the shopping centre:** Circulation areas of Profilo shopping centre are in a complex structure, since it was transformed later into a shopping centre. However, this complexness seems to be eased by escalators in front of the entrance. But, there is no tactile paving application for blind people to find the escalator. Tactile paving application is also missing in front of the elevator and on the way to them. The detection of the elevators is for healthy individual also difficult. But for wheelchairs, there is enough turning area and width. The width of the elevator door is 80 cm. The inner width of the elevator is 109 cm and the depth is 140 cm. Although the depth measure is probable, there is 200 cm width need for wheelchair moving. However the wheelchair accesses the elevator, there is not enough turning place and therefore the wheelchair user

needs help of another people to reach the console panel, to issue a command and exit the elevator. There is no holding bar in the elevator. The ground clearance of the console-display panel of the elevator is from the outside 124 cm, from the inside 120 cm. That the measure shaft is 110-120 cm high from the ground is probable. There is no auditory announce in the elevator, but on the console panel there is Braille alphabet.

In the shopping centre there are unexpected elevation differences between the floors. The elevation differences based on the transformation of the building to a shopping centre, the differences were solved by ramps and elevators with platforms.

**Guiding tools:** It was observed that healthy people coming the first time or coming rarely to the centre are confronting difficulties, in the aspect of guiding tools. The relation, exit signboards between the floors, especially the rest room and elevator guiding signs are not detectible from their shape and localization. The guiding signboards (guiding like exit, elevator) are close to the roof, in other words they are too high, and writings are illegible over bright plates (acrylic sign). Bright plates are not recommended approaches. In addition, it is also not recommended that the light source is to close, but here was used lights over the guiding signboards. The writings are in contrast to how it should be, with very small letters.



**Shops:** In the design of the shops, we are confronted with two important problems. The first of them are problems about the entrance area, the other one are problems about accessibility to designed shelves and cash counters. At the first one, determined door width was not changed, but accessibility was limited through worries about appealing in the usage and design. If we analyse them,

- Especially small shops' entrance areas are filled with display products (putting display shelves or directly some products),
- In some shops, immediately at the entrance of the door, there is free standing board for announcement, publicity etc.,
- In medium sized shops there are placed exhibiting shelves in front of the door, which limit the moving area; are problem that we are confronted with.

The second problem in the shops is related to interior design. The high of the shelves and stand designs that give no opportunities to come closer with the wheelchair and the highness of the cash counter, which have no lower part or not leaving enough moving place in especially small shops, are problems of the accessibility.

Book and CD shops that are analysed as examples in the work, have a big are, which do not make any problems about the entrance, but it is determined that the reaching to the books and CDs are a problem. The high of the book shelves, the products that are placed in the middle are reachable for wheelchair users only at the edge, the highness of the places where browse computers are standing to find a book in the shop, make the accessibility to the books difficult and for wheelchair users impossible.

In the analysed shops, for the wheelchair user it is only possible to reach the CD shelves by turning the chairs to the side (Figure 2). The 50 cm high and 50 cm deep CD product shelf's top shelf is 130 cm high. This highness is provide the stretching out length of wheelchair user's arm. Additionally the highness of the cash counter of the same shop, and the non-available low part of the cash counter is a problem of the wheelchair user's accessibility and communication.

**Figure 2.** Shelves in the Book and CD store (Photograph: Selhan Usal, 2013).

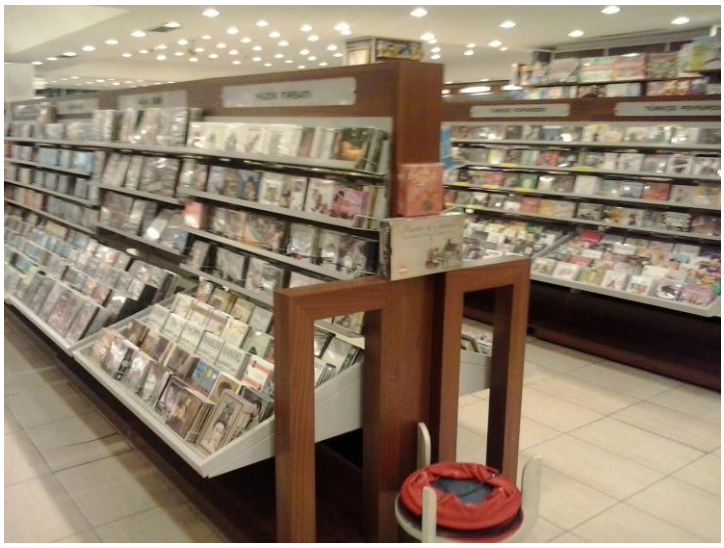

**Figure 2.**



**Rest rooms and other service areas:**

**Rest room:** Toilet cabin, designed for the wheelchair user, are placed in the area for common use. In this area, there are a closet, parted in a different cabin with proper width and door width and a holding bar in a 45 cm distance. The measure has to be 45 cm from the closet's centre line. Additionally the place of the toilet paper is unreachable for healthy individuals, too. There is no sink in the cabin available. The sink is determined as 80 cm for the common use. But there is a plumbing hiding counter front that is hindering the nearing of wheelchair.

**Information counter:** The information counter's different heights help to access for everyone. In this regard the communication of the personal working at the information counter and the wheelchair user asking for information is possible. But because a computer is placed on the lower desk, the communication is limited. Whereas the location of the information counter is close to the entrance in almost every shopping centres, in other words placed in a perceptible location, the accessibility of a sight-disabled people is troubled. That the counter signboard is not illuminated, the position of it is close to the ground and that the lighting tools are not separated with the ground are hindering the detection.

**KOZZY SHOPPING CENTRE**

The Kozzy Shopping Centre is in the Kadıköy municipality and it is possible to access it by walking from the Kozyatağı, Suadiye, Sahrayıcedid and 19 Mayıs neighbourhoods. It is a small sized shopping centre with the surrounding of mostly housings and workplaces and schools. It was opened in 2010 with a 38.859 meter square area.

**Main pedestrian ways accessing the shopping centre:** On the Şemsettin Günaltay Main Street, which has an intense pedestrian and vehicle traffic to the access of the centre, there is a ramp arranged at the street crossing from the traffic lights. Nevertheless the pavements width accessing the centre on Oral Street and Hilmi Paşa Main Street, and the existing of constructions related to the urban transformation cause problems to the accessibility. Beside this, although there are ramps placed on the pass to the centre from the Paşa Main Street and Taş Street (by the parking lot), there are elevation difference at the ramp application, which cause difficulties in passing of wheelchairs.



There is a ramp application accessing the shopping centre from the Kozyatağı area, but the hinder in front of the ramp at the crossing from the street across (from Buket Street) the shopping centre and that there is no ramp in front of the centre, is creating difficulties (Figure 3). There are ramps placed in front of the main entrance of the shopping centre and pavements beside (entrance part from Şakacı Street to Buket Street). But the pavement is because of its surface properties not smooth and has started to form partly roughness and greatly holes. The surface material is risky for elderly, children, blind people and wheelchair users. There is also no proper guiding floor cover applications for blind people on the both pedestrian ways to the mall.

**Figure 3.** Pavement situated on entrance area (Photograph: Selhan Usal, 2013).


**Figure 3.**

**Circulation areas in the shopping centre:** Since the shopping centre is small sized, the circulation areas are easy to detect. However, there are no guiding strip on the floor covers (Figure 4). The accessibility to the elevator in the food court can be difficult because of the tables placed around the gallery and the service circulation. The entrance door is a revolving door and has the proper width for the passing of wheelchair users or crutches users. However, there is an obligatory door wing at the side, the usage of it was never observed.



There is an auditory notice in the elevator. The 160 cm width corridor in front of the elevator is creating enough turning place for wheelchairs. Beside this, the 160 cm width and 205 cm depth of the elevator is enough. The holding bar's 3,5 cm size and 100 cm height is easing the grasp. The holding bar in the elevator is placed at the deep, however it's position at the side part is necesary for the safety. The height axis of the display and console panel is at the interior 110 cm and at the outside 122 cm high from the ground.

**Figure 4.** Circulation area without guiding strip application (Photograph: Selhan Usal, 2013).

**Figure 4.**



**Guiding tools:** Although the high of the guiding tools are proper, the readability of the signboards can be difficult. There is no contrast application for sight-disabled and elder people. The writings of guiding signs like exit and elevator are small. Even the elevator signboard has contrast surface-writing applications, letters should be preferred to be on a 10 cm high position, if the high of the sign and the size of the place is considered.

**Shops:** Similar problems faced in the Profilo Shopping Centre are observed here, too. Since it is a small sized shopping centre, the products and display furniture stacked in front of shops with low meter squares are making problems for healthy people, too.

**Restrooms and other service areas:**

**Restroom:** Because the handicapped toilet door was locked, there could not be done any analysis.

**Information counter:** Although the information counter is directly in front of the entrance and has the proper high (115 cm), it confronts wheelchair users, children and other short people with communication problems. If one part of the counter would be 95 cm high, it would be a more inclusive approach. The illuminated writing over the information counter is increasing the detection by blind people. Since there is no information

signboard or a special designed element that states the term 'information', is a problem.

In summary, according to the analysis, these shopping centers need reorganizing and redesigning to provide accessibility standards (Table 1).

**Table 1.** *Accessibility analysis of selected shopping centres.*

| | **Profilo**<br><br>**Shopping Center** | **Kozzy**<br><br>**Shopping Center** |
|---|---|---|
| *Pedestrian ways* | *Main entrance of building doesn't include tactile paving applicaton and any aural warning.<br><br>*Pavements have various hinders such as pole and holes and include unsuitable ramps. | *Entrance of building doesn't include tactile paving applicaton and any aural warning.<br><br>*Pavements have unsuitable width and ramps. |
| *Circulation areas* | *Circulation areas don't include tactile paving application.<br><br>*Elevators don't have enough turning place for wheelchair users.<br><br>*Elevators don't have auditory announce. | *Circulation areas don't include tactile paving application.<br><br>* The side holding bar in the elevator is adequite. |
| *Guiding utilities* | *Guiding signs are not readable because of their shape, localization, height and bright surface with light. | *Sideboards are not adequitely readable because of lacking contrast applications.<br><br>*Guiding signs have low letter's height. |
| *Shops* | *Inadequite width and turning area for wheelchair users in especially small shop's entrance.<br><br>*Improper heights of shelves and cash counters. | *Inadequite width and turning area for wheelchair users in especially small shop's entrance.<br><br>*Improper heights of shelves and cash counters. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | *Insufficient accessing area to counters and shelves for wheelchair users.<br><br>*Lacking tactile paving applicaton. | *Insufficient accessing area to counters and shelves for wheelchair users.<br><br>*Lacking tactile paving applicaton. |
| *Rest room and other service areas* | *Improper grab bar distance for closet in WC for disabled people.<br><br>*Accessing problems to sink counter for wheelchair users. | *WC for disabled people could not be examined.<br><br>*Information counter's design improper for accessing wheelchair users. |

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Today, shopping centres are not only consumption places, they are also intensive public areas where leisure time activities are carried out. In this circumstance, the accessibility of everyone is confronting us as an important right.

Both selected shopping centres have almost accessible places in the view of architectural properties, like circulation, toilets and shop entrances. Since the details are analysed, it is observed that a blind people are confronting problems in both shopping centres because of the lack of guiding floor properties, improper guiding signboards and interior problems. Although there are tools like ramps and elevators with platform in the analysed medium sized shopping centre, there is no possibility of using the elevator. With this kind of circulation problems, there are high shelves that causes the need of help because of the shop design, problematical door entrances, high cash counters. In both shopping centres the guiding signboards should be renewed. Some design alterations (e.g. presence of wider aisles, non-slid floors, brighter lighting, lower shelf heights, readible labels and price tag) will enchance shopping experiences not only for elderly people, but also the rest of the society, too. (Petermans and Cleempoel, 2010).

By the accessibility analysis in urban areas, whereas in some parts of pedestrian roads with kerb ramp application to both of shopping centres are available, it is still inefficient. Along with the interrupted ramps at the medium sized shopping centre, the hinder on the pedestrian ways are creating significant problems. It is important to inspect the urban accessibility of both shopping centres. Pedestrian ways should be organised with ramps, hinders should be eliminated and guiding signs,

writings, auditory guiding and floor cover applications should be organised for blind people. The 5378 numbered law about the Changing of Handicapped and Some Law and Delegated Legislations *(Özürlüler ve Bazı Kanun ve Kanun Hükmünde Kararnamelerde Değişiklik Yapılması Hakkındaki Kanun)* came into force in 2005 in Turkey. According to this law, the equality and accessibility in public areas and benefit from public service should be provided. If it is evaluated from this view, it is observed that the small sized shopping centre was not completely successful in solving the accessibility problems despite it was opened in 2010.

As a result, this study shows that the architectural and interior architectural solutions are not adequitely accessible and usable without the organisation and supervisions of local administrations, thus the accessibility problem will not be solved. Even, in the USA's shopping centers where ADA was phased in by 1992, ''no mall was fully compliant in any area'' (McClain, 2010: 178). For solving accessibility problems the architectural, interior architectural and urban design curriculums should be renewed, education after the graduation and certificates about the topic should urge professionals to provide accessibility and usability. But even the design problems solved, the non-supervision of the application will cause the continuity of the problem. Beside the 20/07/2013 dated and 28713 numbered Accessibility Observation and Supervision Regulation *(Erişilebilirlik İzleme ve Denetleme Yönetmeliği),* published in the Official Gazette, is pleasing, but the application and the entry into force of the sanctions are important.



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**RESUME**

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