

Sri Lankan Identity in Architecture: Perceptions of Lay People on Designed Sri Lankan House

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Abstract

Architects often face the challenge of understanding and meeting the preferences of their clients, ensuring that their designs align with the client's expectations. One key preference commonly expressed by Sri Lankan clients is the desire for a "Sri Lankan identity" or a distinct architectural style that reflects their culture. However, there is uncertainty regarding whether these clients have a clear understanding of their own requirements or can effectively communicate their ideas to the architect. This study aims to explore the perceptions of lay people regarding the concept of "Sri Lankan identity" in architecture, specifically in the context of designing Sri Lankan houses aiming to shed light on the complexities of translating cultural identity into architectural design. Qualitative data were collected using researcher made structured interviews conducted among selected 82 people from 22 districts in Sri Lanka, as well as Sri Lankans living abroad who have experiences in house design. Purposive sampling method was used to select the above sample. The interviews consisted of structured questions divided into three parts: demographic data, identification of general ideas on Sri Lankan identity and perceptions on designed Sri Lankan house. The data were analysed qualitatively as a thematic analysis. This study suggests that there is no universally agreed-upon definition for a house with Sri Lankan identity. Further, this research contributes to the understanding of the complex nature of Sri Lankan architectural identity and context sensitivity in architectural design practices.

Keywords: *Perceptions of Lay People, Residential Architecture, Sri Lankan Identity, Sri Lankan context*