



# A Study of the Urban Nightlife of Delhi and its Impact on Safety

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**Funding:** No specific funding was received for this work.

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

## Abstract

Delhi, the capital of India, has many facets as an urban space. It is a city that attracts vast number of people for better job opportunities, for quality education; Delhi has a rich heritage that attracts tourist from all over the world.

Digitalization and current working trends have transformed the concept of working hours in the city. Many MNC's gives provision of flexible working hours to their employees, while in some cases, long working hours are required. This have created an opportunity for the night time economy to grow. But the opportunities provided by the nightlife are counteracted by the various challenges. People's safety is argued to be most compromised in the spaces at the night time.

It is in this context; the paper attempts to represent active nightlife as an approach that acts as a driving force for the city in terms of well-being and safety. It argues that spaces that are vibrant with nightlife establishments are comparatively safer than the spaces which do not account for any such establishments. One of the objectives of the study is to explore how nightlife establishments contribute to the social capital and public life of cities. Another objective is to identify the actors involved in the production of active nightlife spaces.

The study elucidates the argument by reviewing theoretical evidence and case studies. The relationship between nightlife and urban safety is explored, and various reasons for an active nightlife culture are identified through literature

review.

The inferences are then applied on various urban spaces of Delhi. These urban spaces are selected based on the extent of activities happening in the night time. Through fieldwork, the material and immaterial structures of the nightlife establishments are documented and then dismantled to understand the nature of these areas, and how they operate and function among its people. The paper unfolds the potentials of the government regulations in enhancing the nightlife of the city. The paper concludes with specific suggestions for the improvement of nightlife in a public space where required.

**Keywords:** Nightlife, Urban Safety, Working Hours, Diverse Activities, Social Inclusion, Government Regulations.

## 1. Introduction

Every city has a lifestyle prevalent that includes its people, place and creativity, which defines its character. Delhi is a cosmopolitan city where people are open to embracing new ideas and lifestyle. It is a city of professional business careers and foremost of upper and middle class with endless opportunities. The rapid urbanization over the years has led to the demographic changes in Delhi. Apart from the natural increase there has been a large-scale migration. As per the Census of India 2011, the total population of Delhi was 16,787,941 with a percentage decadal growth of 21.21. A paper on Urbanization and Urban Crime in India (Gupta, n.d.) through an empirical investigation established that there is a relationship between the growth in population and crime rate in Delhi. A report released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) stated that Delhi is one of the top four crime affected cities in India. The data revealed that the crime rate increased six times in the last ten years. (Gupta, n.d.). As per NCRB data, Delhi recorded 13,892 cases of crimes against women in 2021. The data showed that on an average, over two girls were raped every day in Delhi in 2021. The national capital also recorded the highest number of kidnapping cases among the 19 metropolitan cities in 2022. Delhi recorded 36% of the robberies during the night time from 8:00 p.m. to midnight. (Singh, 2022) In an industry chamber Assocham survey, a majority of 65 per cent of women in Delhi interviewed said they felt insecure working in night shifts (PTI, 2008). With the rising cases of crime, safety has become an important factor for determining the wellbeing of the people.

According to (Gupta, n.d.), people perceive night as the most suitable time for most types of crimes due to the psychological support of the dark and less patrolling of the police. There exists a pattern in the occurrence of crime with respect to space and time. However, it would be wrong to say that all spaces at night function in a similar manner. The reasons for which people occupy and use the space during the daytime and night time varies depending upon various socio-cultural and economic factors. In Delhi, with the quickening tempo of modern life and prolonged working hours, i.e., with the coming up of BPO's and other job-related activities, there is a development of a nightlife culture that drives the economy of the city and also provides opportunity for leisure to its people. Some of the options available to the public are a number of bars, pubs, discotheques, eateries, and coffee shops.

## 1.2. Aim and Research Argument

Around this discourse where most of the studies have associated night time with anti-social uses and crime, this paper attempts to draw attention to the opportunities that the night time presents to the people of a city. It is argued in this paper that a healthy night time culture could help in improving the well-being of a city. The aim is to provide a theoretical framework for understanding the inter-relationship between the production, regulation and consumption of a safe urban nightlife in a city. The objective of the study is to revisit the concepts of urban safety through the lens of “time” and understand how public spaces are appropriated by various activities during the night time.

Some of the research questions are as follows:

- Who uses the space in the night and for what purpose?
- Do activities in public spaces improve or threaten nightlife?
- Does a sense of territoriality in the night reduce the fear of crime among the people?

The underlying hypothesis is that; a more varied pattern of overlapping activities and attractions involving a more diverse range of participants is likely to be better for public order, for sustaining essential public services and for the long-term viability of the place.

## 1.3. Methodology

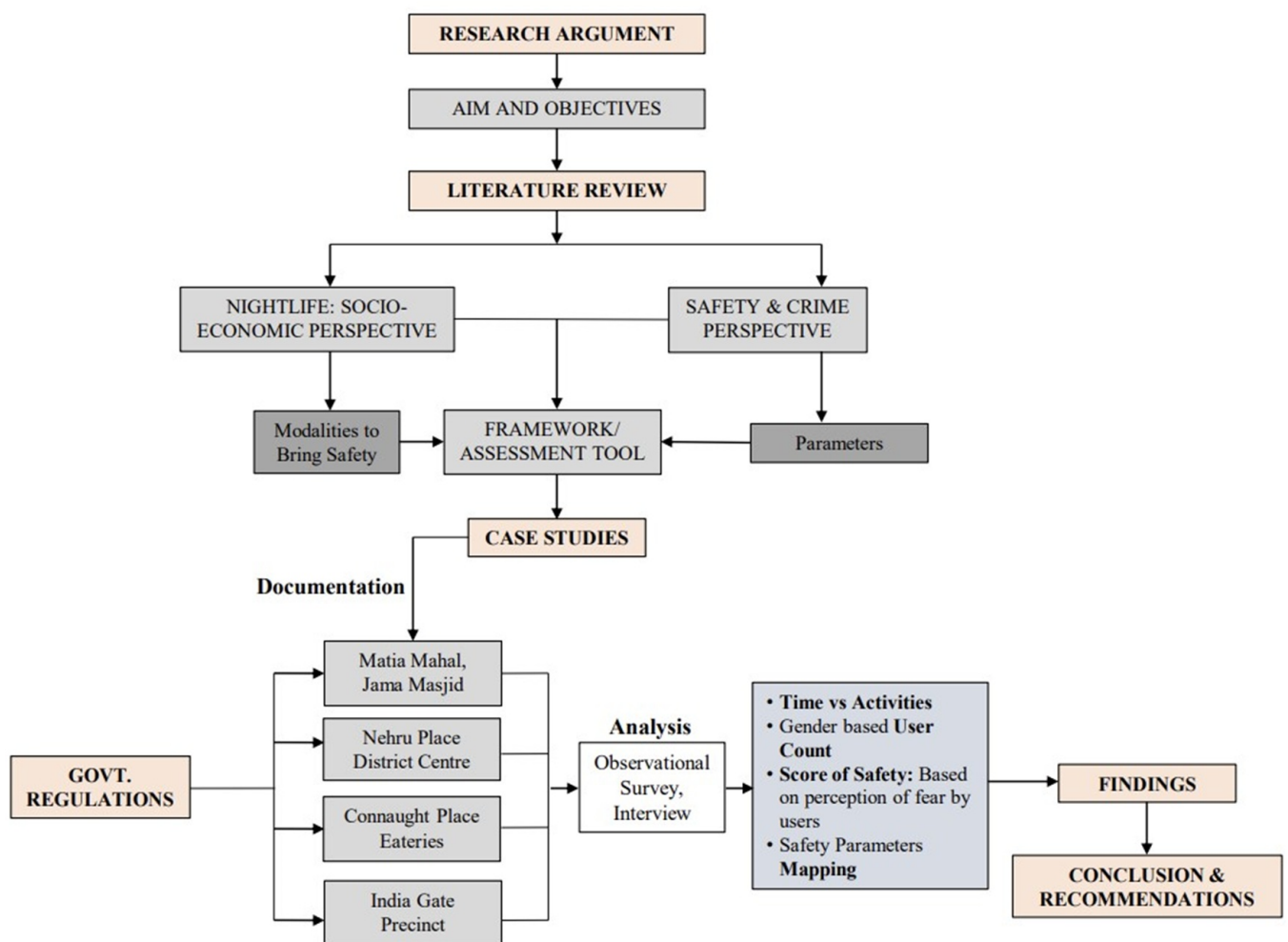
In this paper, a range of literature reviews have been conducted to gather information and understanding from previous research on Urban Nightlife and its relationship with Safety. The literature review is divided into two parts. The first part looks into the theories of Urban Nightlife from socio-economic perspective. It explores the various modalities through which Urban Spaces and Nightlife can be channeled for the well-being of a city and its people. The works of Robert Williams, Jane Jacob and Oscar Newmann serves very well in formulating a framework that is applied on the selected cases of Delhi to measure the level of safety and well-being of a nightlife. The second part attempts to define Safety based on the perception of crime in a given space and time.

The next section of the paper explores the city dynamics. The night time usage has been analyzed for the four study areas of Delhi namely Matia Mahal, Jama Masjid, Nehru Place Complex, Connaught Place and India Gate Precinct. The case study selection is based on the level of activities present during the night time in these public spaces. The intent of choosing the public spaces is to explore the multiple variables responsible for an active nightlife in a city. The area of study is limited to public hangouts, street eateries and open restaurants. Pubs, discotheques and 24x7 retail shops are not included in the study as they function in a closed and controlled environment.

All the cases are documented and analyzed through an exploratory and observational method. A gender-based user count is conducted to understand how many people use the place at a given time in the night. Perception of fear is analyzed in detail through a manual interview method for a sample size of 20 users for each case study. The role of Government with respect to nightlife has also been analyzed by studying the government regulations and

recommendations of Delhi Master Plan 2041. To further enhance the investigation, the parameters drawn from the literature reviews are linked with the three modalities proposed by Robert Williams. This helped in developing a structured framework to study the safety conditions of the selected cases. These parameters are territoriality, inclusivity of genders, visibility, diverse activities and surveillance.

Based on the analysis, the paper identifies the potential and possible gaps in each case study. The case studies are compared to measure the perception of fear and the results are drawn with suggestions to improve the nightlife for the well-being and safety of the people.



**Chart 1.** Methodology Diagram

Source: Author

## 2. Reading The Urban Nightlife

The night is a part of us and influences our social, cultural and economic life. From the early 1990s onwards the evening and night time economy and, more broadly, the 24-hour city started to develop with many metropolitan cities including the nightlife sector in their regeneration plans in various countries. Just like the daytime economy, the night time economy has

become vital for the regeneration of cities. Active night spaces are amongst the city's urban cultures that possess a rich source of everyday life. This can be regarded to be an important part in establishing a city's cultural identity and improving the wellbeing of the city.

As a result, nightlife districts with a variety of restaurants and clubs have started to develop in various larger cities providing jobs and attracting tourists and visitors. There is, however, a pervasive culture of fear surrounding nightlife districts which makes the nightlife different from the day. People who go out at night are usually seen as problematic in discourses that involve negative cultural signifiers such as drinking, making noise and hanging out in groups. (Ilse van Liempt et al., 2014)

Urban environments are created by a complex range of “*social, cultural, legal, spatial and temporal dimensions*” and characterized by particular “*physical infrastructure of buildings, roads, transit systems, land uses, design and architecture*”. In studying the urban night time spaces, it is imperative to understand the complexities of these dimensions.

In an attempt to understand the concept of nightlife, in this section several scholarly researches have been discussed. In ‘The Production of Spaces’ Henri Lefebvre distinguishes various types of spaces. He proposes the division of space into designated (signified, specialized) areas and into areas that are prohibited, spaces of work and spaces for leisure, and into daytime and night time spaces. He further explains how certain activities came to be permitted in particular areas at night that are prohibited during the day. (Lefebvre, 1991)

(Williams, 2008) builds on the works of Henri Lefebvre in reference to “night time spaces”. He refers to night spaces to be socially mediated. He states that these spaces do not exist prior to, or apart from, human practices and the social relationships that seek to appropriate the darkness in its numerous human uses and meanings. Williams argues that night time is a vital dimension of daily activities and needs to be distinguished from the day to better interpret spatial practices after dark. He suggests theorizing night's implications for societal order and disorder by spatializing time and temporalizing space. His work is very useful in understanding the social construction of the night. Williams in his work, provides strategies to affect the reordering of the space at night. He delineates three modalities namely: channeling, marginalization and exclusion. The intention of these modalities is to bring safety by asserting social order at night. The modality of channeling directs activities into the socially appropriate places. As a reterritorializing modality, Channeling involves strategies of surveillance, illumination and other discourses that stipulates the appropriate places to be at night. The second modality of marginalization spatially segregates people from other parts of the city by categorizing them as socially inferior and dangerous. A common form of marginalization is informal social code and zoning regulations. The third modality of exclusion is a type of spatial segregation by erecting barriers to create a protected space. It uses the technology of access control. Defensible spaces are one such example where people lock themselves away by using the technologies of surveillance and by installing lights.

**These three modalities have been applied on the selected case studies as a framework to identify the factors that bring safety in the night spaces.**

Other than Lefebvre and Williams, there are other scholars who have theorized the spatial aspect of the night.(Bretthauer,

1999) stated that the night spaces of a city change the social practice and meanings of the physical landscape which otherwise contains the same features throughout the 24-hour cycle. (Cresswell, 1996) examined the officially permitted and unofficially appropriated discourses in a city at night. To make the city run efficiently and safely, businesses order night by depicting it in commercial terms for consumption of their products. Businesses and governments often work together. **This proposition has been explored in this paper by selecting night spaces that are mostly commercial in nature and by examining the role of government in regulating these spaces at night.**

## 2.1. Theorizing Urban Nightlife, Crime and Safety

Having explored the social theories on nightlife production in the aforementioned section, in this section, the paper deliberates on the co-relation between nightlife and crime. The paper critically examines the theory on perception of fear with night time. Later in this section, the concept of Urban Safety is reviewed to identify ways in which nightlife could be appropriated by safe public uses.

A study on Understanding and Preventing Violence, examines the current state of evidence on public perceptions and reactions to violent offending and violent victimization. It examines the cues to danger that individuals confront in everyday life. It is evident that people perceive crime in geographic terms as dangerous or safe zones. It was observed from the study that known places were perceived as safer than the unknown places due to cognitive consistency. This means that territoriality plays an important role in instilling a sense of fear or safety in the people. Another cue to danger is darkness. Fear of crime is generally higher at night, and usually people avoid going out at night due to fear. The second cue as per the study is the presence of bystanders or companions; the presence of others normally acts to reduce or alleviate the fear that individuals would feel if alone (Warr, 1994).

This brings us to look at the work of Jane Jacobs in her book 'The Death and Life of Great American Cities' where she introduces the concept of "eyes on the street". She has argued that people on the street provide an informal surveillance leading to a safe urban environment. The study by (Jacob, 1992) and (Warr, 1994) provides a first reference point to classify a space as safe or unsafe. This concept can be applied to nightlife spaces as well.

At this point, it is much needed to look into the meanings of safety with respect to the urban environment as discussed by various scholars to formulate an assessment tool that can be applied to nightlife spaces.

O.A. Rastyapina and N.V. Korosteleva, in their research article titled 'Urban Safety Development Methods', defines Urban Safety as a built environment which ensures safe life of the population on the basis of a combination of factors. These factors forming local urban safety are divided into groups: natural, architectural, social, environmental, techno-genic, infrastructural, and urban. They argue that an analysis on urban safety factor allows one to assess the level of livability and safety of an inhabited area.(Rastyapina O.A, Korosteleva N.V, 2016)

Making cities safe is one of the aspirations reflected in Goal 11 of the agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda. The United Nations guidelines on Safer Cities and Settlements provides a conceptual framework on safety and security. There are two aspects of safety and security mentioned: actual and perceived. The perceived component describes how people



see insecurity via the prism of fear and anxiety, while the actual dimension pertains to the possibility of being a victim.

*...The concept starts with the observation that inadequate urban development and local governance, along with patterns of social and territorial exclusion, can result in crime and violence. Given this perspective, ensuring urban safety and security requires a citywide and participatory process to address the multiple causes and risk factors for crime, violence and insecurity in cities and human settlements and to put in place the factors that protect against those causes and risks...(UN-Habitat, 2012)*

In the above statement, local governance and social and spatial inclusion are identified as the essential components of maintaining the safety and security in cities.

Oscar Newmann's literary work "Defensible Space" is based on the research conducted by him to investigate the reasons for crime and social isolation in housing areas. In this research a set of parameters were identified that are linked with crime and disorder, making the place "unsafe". He outlined; five factors that would need to be present to make a space safe. (HRF, n.d.)

1. **Territory** - There must be a sense of belonging with the space.
2. **Surveillance** - The physical characteristics of a space must offer a person with an ability to know what is happening around them.
3. **Image** - The space must be structured in such a way that it can provide a sense of security, when it is being used.
4. **Milieu** - Features of the space must provide a sense of security, such as its proximity to a police station, or a busy commercial area near a police station.
5. **Safe Areas** - There must be a secure adjacent area that offers higher-level services in the other four important points that can be accessed if the primary space is occupied.

Most of the scholarship on nightlife discussed above puts night time under the pervasive notion of fear and crime. However, safety is also attributed to the spatiality of time and temporality of space. Another significant work by (Zaki & Ngesan, 2012) has been reviewed as it discussed the opportunities that the nightlife offers. The study proposed the concept of 'Night City' which was based on the agglomeration of night activities that creates momentum and creates different attractions to attract the people. The research argued that nocturnal life improves the quality of city environment at night time as it increases the economic value of the place. As an outcome of this study, a town of Alor Gajah was redesigned to attract local and foreign visitors.

These theories help to draw certain parameters that can be used to identify the safety condition of the place. These parameters are **active surveillance, social inclusion, territoriality, diverse activity, image, visibility and public presence**.

### 3. Situating The Urban Nightlife in Indian Context

The growth of night time activities over the past few decades drove the entertainment economy around the world. In recent years many governments across the world have crystallized around the vision to create the ‘24-hour city’. Such initiatives focus upon extending the working hours of the day and integrating it with the night time economy, thereby stretching the ‘vitality and viability’ of urban areas across a longer time-span. (Hadfield, 2011)

Although the concept of nightlife culture is not new to Indian society, the pattern of nightlife utility is changing in light of the contemporary environment due to changes in working culture and an increase in the availability of disposable income and leisure time. This section looks at the current status of nightlife culture in Delhi with respect to safety of the people.

For the purpose of this study, four urban areas of concentrated socio-economic activities are investigated for their nightlife culture. All the cases hold a strong potential to attract people at varying times of the day and night. The activity pattern of these spaces has been studied with respect to the services, time of use, connectivity, participant profiling and government regulations. Urban spaces with inactive nightlife are also analyzed to draw a comparison between the active and inactive spaces. The first area of study is the street of Matia Mahal in Jama Masjid, which has a mix of activities during the night time. The second study area is Nehru Place which is a commercial and financial district centre of Delhi. The third area is Connaught Place and the fourth area is India Gate Precinct. It is an urban public space which attracts tourists and is a site for picnics and weekend hangouts.

### 3.1. Times of Use

To identify the night time activity pattern, various time slots were identified during which the activity of the space usually changes. The time period ranges from 06:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. Each case study area was analyzed on the basis of the dominant practices.

### 3.2. Dominant Practices

The spatial distribution of dominant practices

- Where is it happening
- What is happening
- Participant profiling: who is involved
- Governance and regulation: signage and zones of illegality, visible police, and private security practices

A user count was conducted to measure the volume of men and women in the selected cases. A 20-minutes time-slot at two consecutive time frames was chosen based on the presence of maximum activity on those time slots.

## 4. Case Studies

Delhi is fast developing into a huge nightlife hub. The major nightlife venues in the city are either in the central or the southern part of Delhi. The major activities happening in these venues are related to entertainment, leisure or food.



#### 4.1. Matia Mahal, Jama Masjid

Old Delhi, popularly known as “purani dilli”, has few streets which are wide awake during the night time. Matia Mahal is one such area exactly opposite Gate No. 1 of Jama Masjid. The place gets its name from an actual palace that once existed in the area. Today, the area has a presence of many restaurants and hotels that function beyond midnight. It is a high-density area and encounters huge footfalls throughout the day. The visitors are both locals and tourists.



**Figure 1.** Map showing Matia Mahal and its neighborhood

Source: Author

##### 4.1.1. Factors influencing the nightlife

- Matia Mahal street is famous for its late-night makeshift eateries and restaurants. The street has a mixed-use typology with shops and eateries on the ground floor and residential space on the upper floors. There are few guest houses and hotels along the street. It is observed that most of the eateries closes their shops post-midnight.
- The road abutting Jama Masjid is known as Urdu Bazaar. This road has a presence of publishers and calligraphers and many eateries. Other than eateries, most of the shops shut by evening. It is the informal hawkers that continue their

business till late night. The activity pattern shows that loading and unloading of goods also keeps the place quite active during the night.

- **Connectivity:** The street is well connected with the main road. As far as public transportation is concerned, Metro provides an affordable and convenient mode of travel.
- **Policing and Crime:** Since this area is in close proximity to a monument, it attracts tourists. There are many constables posted in the area. CCTV cameras are installed at multiple locations. There are ample street lights in the area.

**Table 1.** Time of Use versus Activities & Participant Profiling – Matia Mahal, Jama Masjid

Time of Use	Activities	Participant Profiling
06:00 p.m. – 08:00 p.m.	Shopping	Men, Women, Children
08:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.	Shopping, Eating, Loading and Unloading of Goods	Men, Women
11:00 p.m. – 12:00 a.m.	Eating, Loading and Unloading of Goods	Men

Source: Author

**Table 2.** User Count at the entry of the Street from Jama Masjid Gate Number 1 on a weekday

Timing	Men	Women	Ratio of Women to Men
10:40 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.	102	32	1:3.2
11:00 p.m. – 11:20 p.m.	90	18	1:5

Source: Author



**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**

**Figure 2.** Late-night activities on Urdu Bazaar Road

**Figure 3.** Vibrant Street of Matia Mahal at midnight

Source: Author

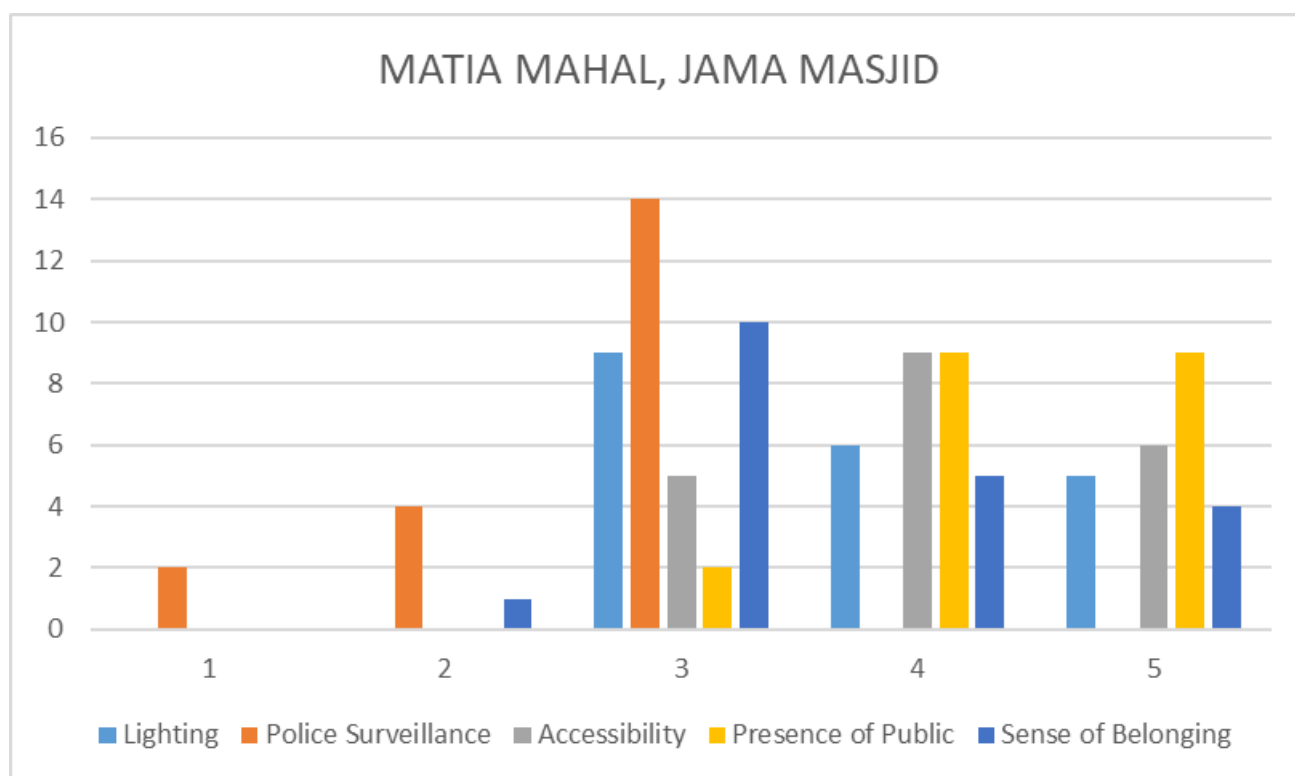
## 4.1.2. Safety Analysis

Likert scale method is used to analyze the user perception of safety for each case study. This is done by interviewing a random sample size of 20 people. The safety component is measured on five parameters and scores are given using Measurable Indicator Scoring Technique as used by (Ngesan & Karim, 2011). Indicator 5 being the highest and 1 being the lowest.

	Safety Indicators (1-5)					Mean	Score (1-5)				
Parameters	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Lighting	0	0	9	6	5	3.8					
Police Surveillance	2	4	14	0	0	2.6					
Accessibility	0	0	5	9	6	4.05					
Presence of Public	0	0	2	9	9	4.35					
Sense of Belonging	0	1	10	5	4	3.6					
Score							0	0	1	3	1
Percentage Score							-	-	20	60	20

**Table 3.** User Perception Safety Score for Matia Mahal, Jama Masjid

Source: Author



**Chart 2.** Chart showing the User Perception on Safety

Source: Author

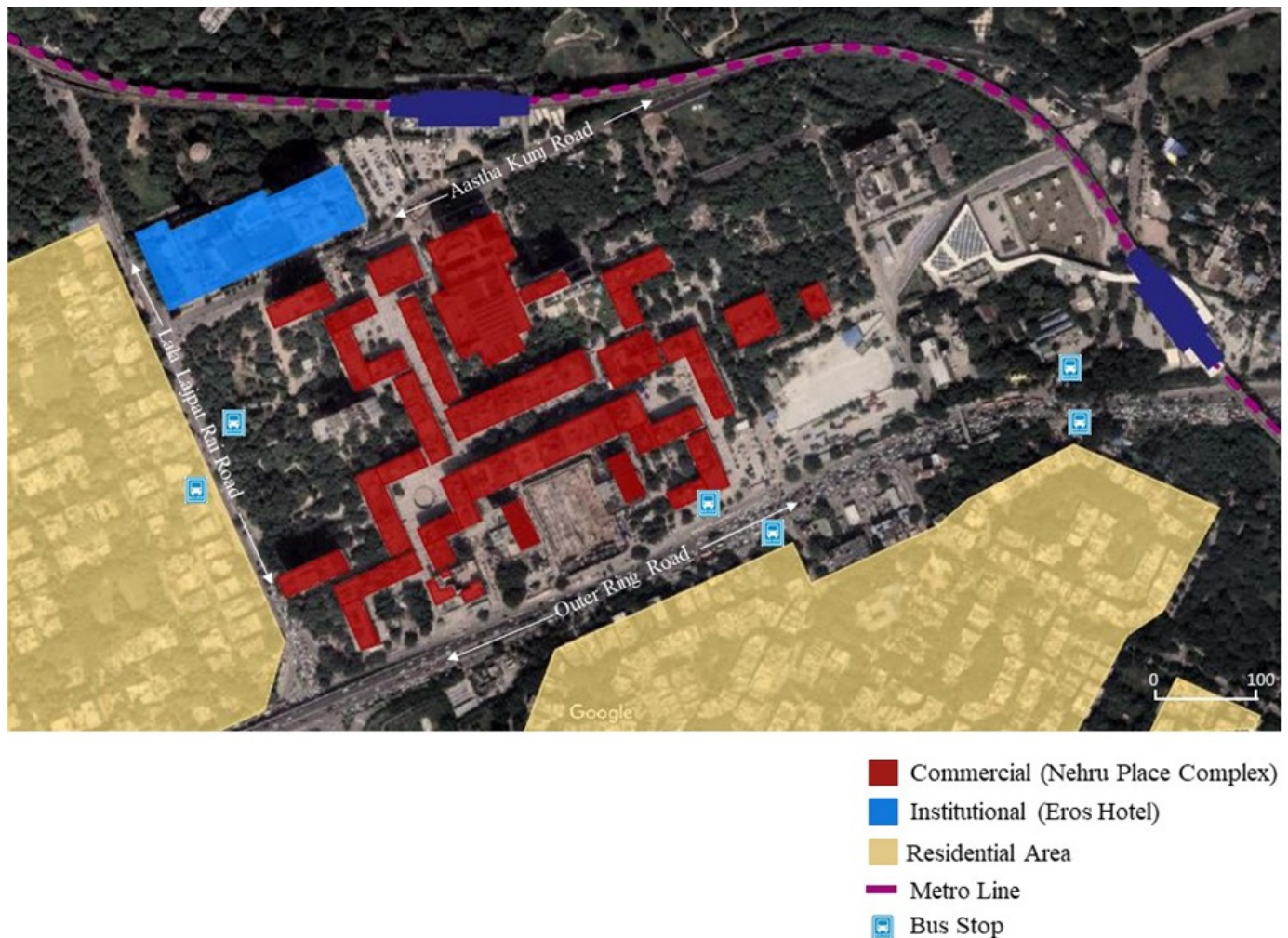
#### 4.1.3. Findings

It is observed that the area experiences a mix of footfall owing to a diverse range of activities. Both men and women use the space. However, in the night time the women to men percentage decreases gradually from a ratio of 1: 3.2 to 1:5. This is due to the closing of shops and loading and unloading activities. The user perception on safety is average-above average as people rated the area between 4-5 (scores) on all the parameters.

#### 4.2. Nehru Place District Centre

Nehru Place is an important commercial, financial and business centre in Delhi. It was planned in the 1960s by Delhi Development Authority as a local community centre and was originally called Kalkaji Complex. By the 1980s, it was renamed as Nehru Place. Over the years, it has started functioning as a Regional Commercial Centre and now is widely considered to be a major information technology hub of South Asia. It is a confluence of the informal and formal sector, with a footfall of nearly 1,30,000 people daily from all corners of Delhi. However, only 7% of visitors come from a 2 km radius. The main complex is 4-storey with many offices, computer retailers, printing shops and eateries and hundreds of informal hawkers occupy the open spaces of the complex.(Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation, 2017)





**Figure 4.** Map showing Nehru Place District Centre and its neighborhood

Source: Author

#### 4.2.1. Factors influencing the nightlife

- Nehru Place complex shuts down at 08:00 p.m. after which the area becomes completely inactive. There are no regulated night time activities in the complex making the place extremely isolated and secluded.
- There are several entry and exit points to the complex. But they are inconspicuous and unwelcoming. There is no clear physical axis for visual connectivity. In the night, there is not enough street lighting which again creates a sense of fear, making it a dull space during late evenings.
- The northern edge of the complex facing the Astha Kunj Road attracts few visitors in the late evenings due to the presence of Inox Insignia. Both men and women can be seen using this public space.
- The arterial and sub-arterial roads offsets the complex in such a way that it creates a non-physical boundary between the complex and the residential colonies in the close proximity.
- **Connectivity:** Nehru Place is well connected with the other parts of the city through Outer Ring Road. It is easily accessible through metro and buses; however, the operating time of these public transport services is only before midnight.

- **Policing and Crime:** There are many negative/inactive spaces in the complex that invite illegal activities and increase the risk of crime, especially in the night. From the past decade various cases of robbery and a case of terrorist attack in December 28, 2005 have been noted in Nehru Place area. A rape case was reported in April 27, 2012 and another terror attack happened in September 25, 2009.

Table 4. Time of Use versus Activities & Participant Profiling – Nehru Place District Centre		
Time of Use	Activities	Participant Profiling
06:00 p.m. – 08:00 p.m.	Office Crowd, Shopping (Electronic goods), Eating	Men, Women
08:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.	Inactive	Mostly Men
11:00 p.m. – 12:00 a.m.	Inactive	Men

Source: Author

Table 5. User Count at Entry Point A on a weekday			
Timing	Men	Women	Ratio of Women to Men
09:00 p.m. – 09:20 p.m.	40	2	1:20
09:20 p.m. – 09:40 p.m.	19	0	0:19

Source: Author

Table 6. User Count at Entry Point B on a weekday			
	Men	Women	Ratio of Women to Men
09:00 p.m. – 09:20 p.m.	60	19	1:3.1
09:20 p.m. – 09:40 p.m.	31	7	1:4.4

Source: Author





Figure 6



Figure7

**Figure 6.** Activities in front of the Entry Point A

**Figure 7.** Open Plaza at 8:00 p.m. (Space-2)

Source: Author

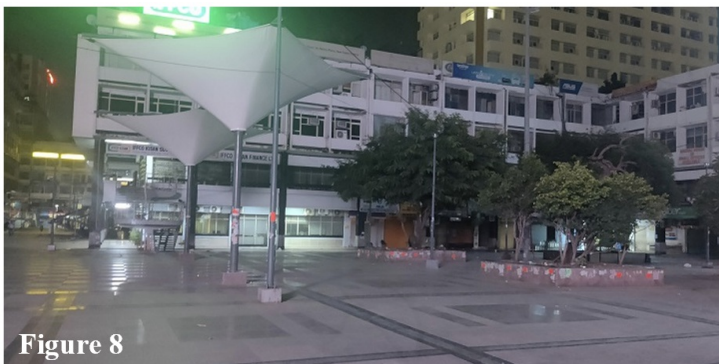


Figure 8

**Figure 8.** Open Plaza at 11:00 p.m. (Space-3)



Figure 9

**Figure 9.** Entry Point B from the Aastha Kunj Road

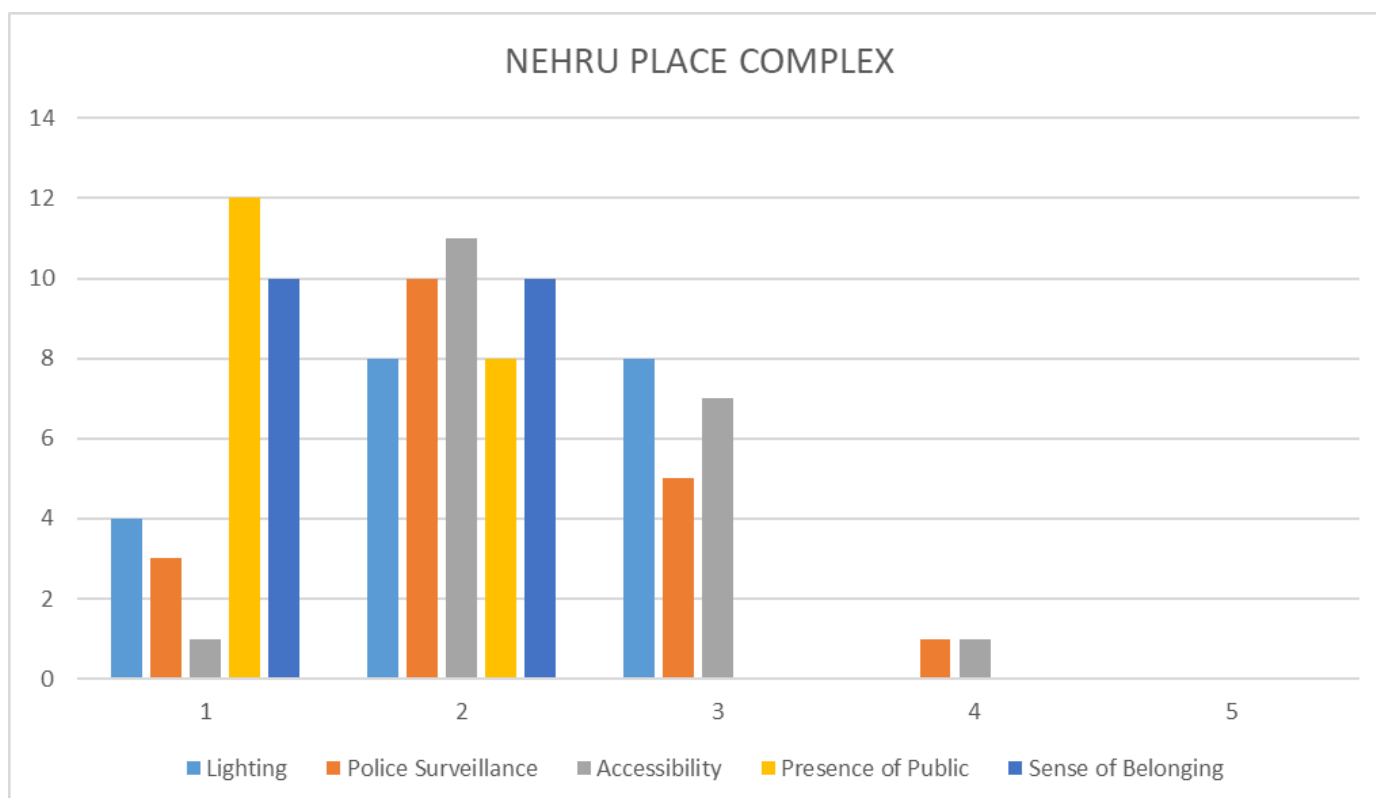
Source: Author

#### 4.2.2. Safety Analysis

	Safety Indicators (1-5)					Mean	Score (1-5)				
Parameters	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Lighting	4	8	8	0	0	2.2					
Police Surveillance	3	10	5	1	0	2.1					
Accessibility	1	11	7	1	0	2.4					
Presence of Public	12	8	0	0	0	1.4					
Sense of Belonging	10	10	0	0	0	1.5					
Score							0	4	1	0	0
Percentage Score							-	80	20	-	-

**Table 7.** User Perception Safety Score for Nehru Place District Centre

Source: Author



**Chart 3.** Chart showing the User Perception on Safety for Nehru Place District Centre

Source: Author

### 4.2.3. Findings

A user count was conducted at two main entry and exit points. It is observed that at entry point A, the presence of women is negligible with a ratio of 1 woman per 20 men. This is apparent due to

an inactive edge with minimal activities. The other entry/ exit point B close to INOX showed comparatively a better ratio of 1: 4 due to the presence of a cinema hall and small eateries. Based on the survey Nehru Place scored very low on safety.

### 4.3. Connaught Place

Connaught Place, 'CP' is one of the largest financial, commercial and business centre in Delhi. It is a vibrant recreational and institutional space that attracts local, regional and international visitors throughout the year.



**Figure 10.** Map showing Connaught Place

Source: Author

#### 4.3.1. Factor influencing the nightlife

- The closing time of most of the formal establishments at CP is 09:00 p.m. Being a low-density area with low residential profile, this area mostly remains inactive during night time. The only active places are the bars and pubs and few eateries and street dhaba's.<sup>1</sup> P and L-Block of the outer circle continues to operate till 11:00 p.m. – 12:00 a.m. Urban Space-1 marked in Figure 10 represents an active night space due to the presence of an eatery (Jain Chawal Vale) and Urban Space-2 in the same figure represents an entire edge of L-Block lined by eateries.
- There is enough street lighting and CCTV surveillance, still the activities are concentrated only in and around a few



eateries and restaurants. These spots are identified as potential nodes which can be further redesigned to make the area vibrant and safe during the night.

- **Connectivity:** This area is the heart of Delhi and is easily accessible from every part of the city. There are many modes of public transportations available for the people. Apart from auto-rickshaws, cab and bus services, metro provides an affordable transport facility.
- **Policing and Crime:** The majority of the reported robberies and assaults in and around Connaught Place are purportedly carried out by vagrants and addicts who squat on the pavements of CP. Most of the victims are women and party crowd who frequent late-night clubs and eateries. In 2012, a notorious gang targeted and robbed customers who were using ATMs after hours. After a Sashastra Seema Bal jawan was fatally stabbed in 2015, it sparked worry from the Ministry of Home Affairs, who claimed that the rag picker was to blame (Sharma, 2016)



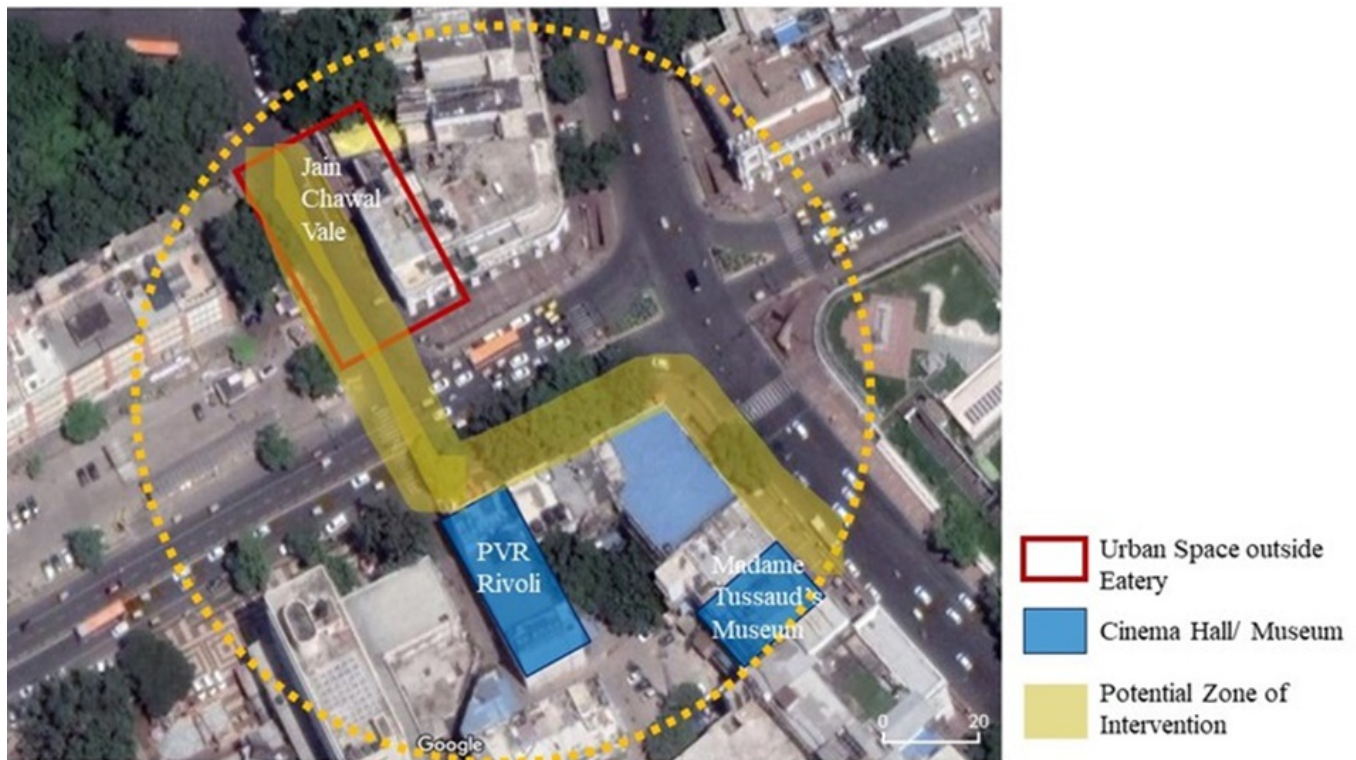
**Figure 11.** Connaught Place Market at 11:00 p.m.

Source: Author

**Table 8.** Time of Use versus Activities & Participant Profiling – Connaught Place

Time of Use	Activities	Participant Profiling
06:00 p.m. – 08:00 p.m.	Shopping	Men, Women, Children
08:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.	Mostly Inactive (Eateries only at a few locations)	Men, Women
11:00 p.m. – 12:00 a.m.	Mostly Inactive (Eateries only at a few locations)	Men, Women

Source: Author



**Figure 12.** Map showing Urban Space-1 at CP

Source: Author



**Figure 13**

**Figure 13.** Active space outside an eatery in P-Block, CP



**Figure 14**

**Figure 14.** Area close to the active space in P-Block with a cinema hall across the road

Source: Author

**Table 9.** User Count at the Urban Space-1 on a weekday

Source: Author

Timing	Men	Women	Ratio of Women to Men
10:40 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.	95	45	1:2
11:00 p.m. – 11:20 p.m.	90	38	1:2.4





**Figure 15.** Map showing Urban Space-2 at CP

Source: Author



**Figure 16**

**Figure 16.** Active space outside eateries in L-Block, CP.



**Figure 17**

**Figure 17.** Restaurants and cafes in front of the eateries across the road

Source: Author

**Table 10.** User Count at the Urban Space-2 on a weekday

Timing	Men	Women	Ratio of Women to Men
10:40 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.	24	10	1:2.4
11:00 p.m. – 11:20 p.m.	23	10	1:2.3



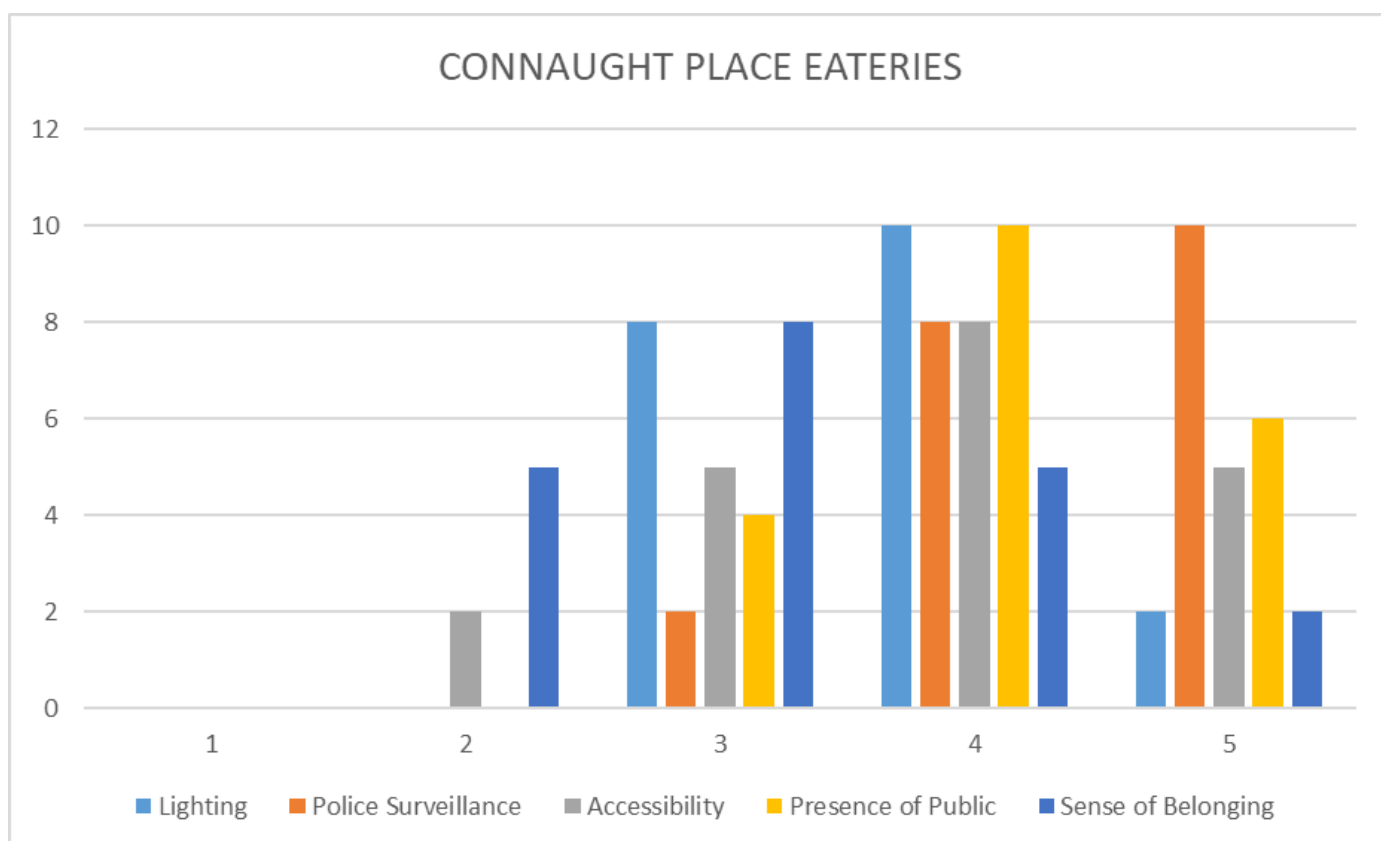
Source: Author

#### 4.3.2. Safety Analysis

	Safety Indicators (1-5)					Mean	Score (1-5)				
Parameters	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Lighting	0	0	8	10	2	3.7					
Police Surveillance	0	0	2	8	10	4.4					
Accessibility	0	2	5	8	5	3.8					
Presence of Public	0	0	4	10	6	4.1					
Sense of Belonging	0	5	8	5	2	3.2					
Score							0	0	1	4	0
Percentage Score							-	-	20	80	-

**Table 11.** User Perception Safety Score for Connaught Place Eateries in P and L Block

Source: Author



**Chart 4.** Chart showing the User Perception on Safety for Connaught Place Eateries at P and L Block

Source: Author

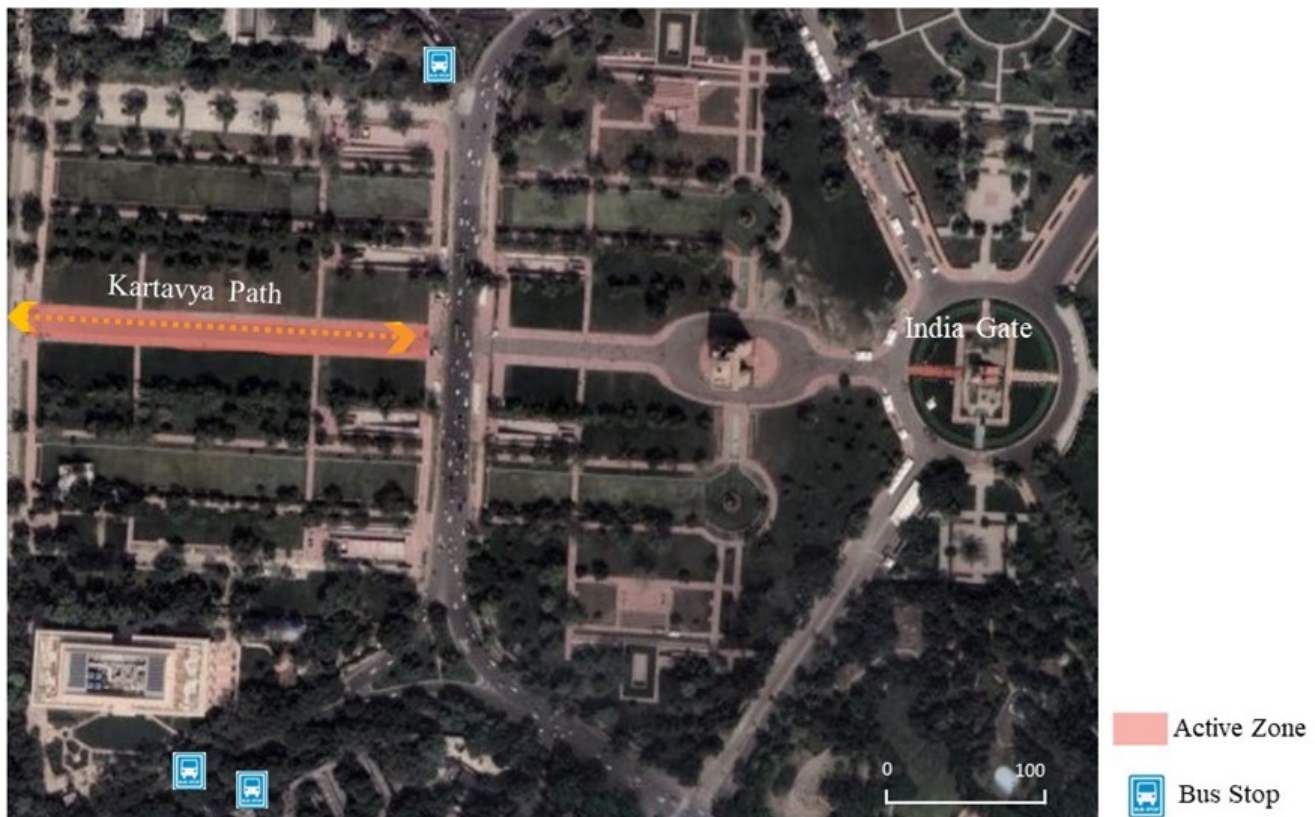
#### 4.3.3. Findings

The eateries at Connaught Place attracts young crowd, both men and women. The women to men ratio in this case is 1:2. As per the survey, people rated the area on the higher side of the scoring scale. 80% of the score was given to rating 4.

#### 4.4. India Gate

India Gate was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens in 1931. It is situated in the heart of New Delhi, is a prominent landmark and commemorates the 90,000 soldiers of the Indian Army.

India Gate is a part of Central Vista, a 3.2 km stretch which houses Rashtrapati Bhawan, India Gate, Parliament House, North and South Block among others. It is the monument that celebrates India and its achievements and is a venue for the mass celebrations. In 2019, the Central Government announced the redevelopment of the Central Vista to give a new identity to the place. After three years, on September 08, 2022, the area was inaugurated by the P.M. and was thrown open to the public. The revamping consisted of the reorganization of public spaces and strengthening of recreational facilities. For better connectivity a pedestrian underpass has been developed to manage public footfall and smooth transit of the public. There are defined parking spaces for visitors and tourists and for surveillance 300 CCTV cameras have been installed.

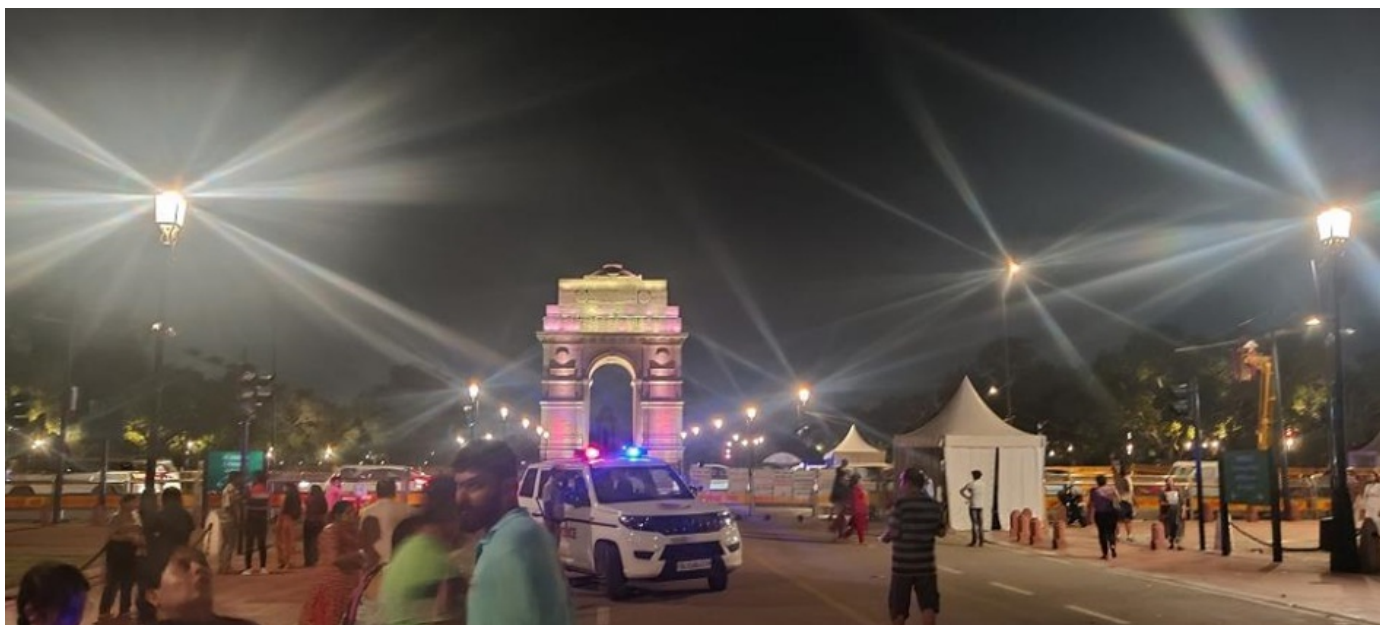


**Figure 18.** Map showing India Gate Precinct

Source: Author

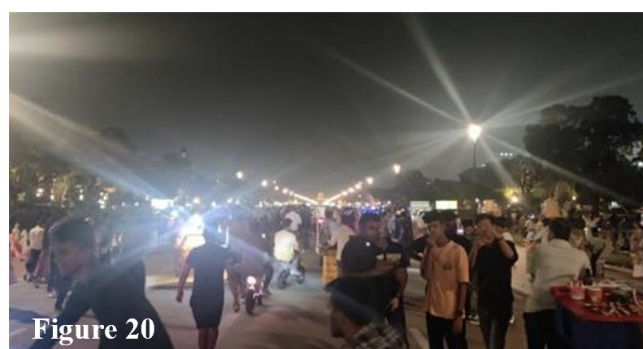
#### 4.4.1. Factor influencing the nightlife

- India Gate is a public space that caters to all age groups. India Gate is one of the most visited public spaces of Delhi at night. It is a place for social interactions, casual meetings and family picnics. The informal vendors occupy the space, selling go-to snacks; and toys for the children.
- The activity pattern of the area shows high public footfall during the day till 11:00 p.m. in the night. Earlier, the space was less regulated and the India Gate precinct was open for public till late night. However, after the revamping, the space gets closed at 11:00 p.m. and heavy police surveillance is seen in and around the area. Once a vibrant space, this regulatory move has reduced it into an inactive and dull space post 11:00 p.m.
- **Connectivity:** India Gate is accessible through Metro, Buses and Private Vehicles. However, the nearest metro stations and bus stops are 7-10 minutes walking distance from India Gate. The last bus service is at 09:00 p.m. which is again a 10-minute walk from the area.
- **Policing and Crime:** There is an ample surveillance in and around the area making the space less prone to crime. Yet, due to heavy regulations, the inactivity post 11:00 p.m. makes the space extremely dull and beyond the reach of people.



**Figure 19.** India Gate at 11:00 p.m.

Source: Author



**Figure 20**



**Figure 21**

**Figure 20 and 21.** Active public spaces at India Gate at 10:30 p.m.

Source: Author

**Table 12.** Time of Use versus Activities & Participant Profiling – India Gate

Time of Use	Activities	Public Profiling
06:00 p.m. – 08:00 p.m.	Active Public Space	Men, Women, Children
08:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.	Active Public Space	Men, Women, Children
11:00 p.m. – 12:00 a.m.	Inactive	Men, Women, Children

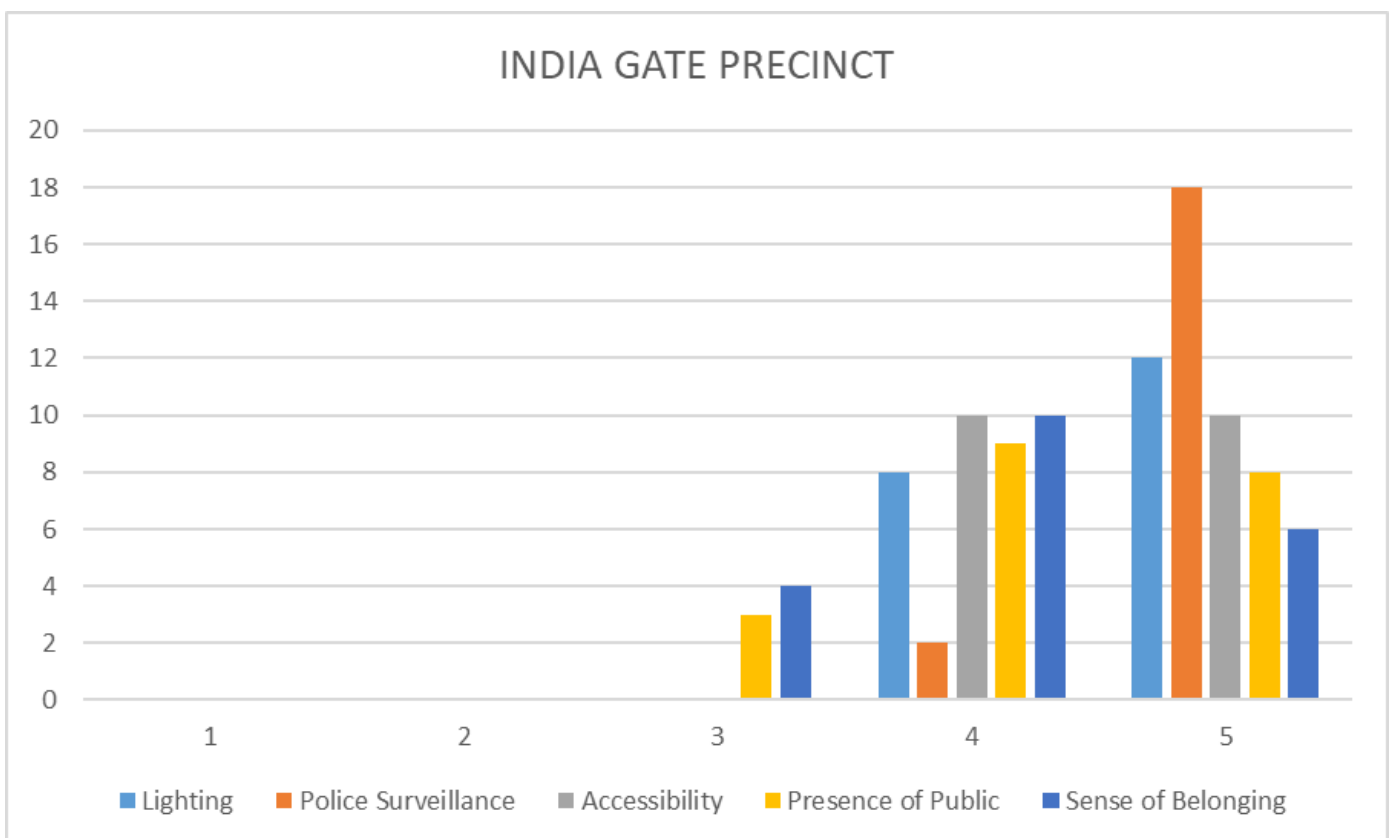
Source: Author

#### 4.4.2. Safety Analysis

	Safety Indicators (1-5)					Mean	Score (1-5)				
Parameters	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Lighting	0	0	0	8	12	4.6					
Police Surveillance	0	0	0	2	18	4.9					
Accessibility	0	0	0	10	10	4.5					
Presence of Public	0	0	3	9	8	4.25					
Sense of Belonging	0	0	4	10	6	4.1					
Score							0	0	0	2	3
Percentage Score							-	-	-	40	60

**Table 13.** User Perception Safety Score for India Gate Precinct

Source: Author



**Chart 5.** Chart showing the User Perception on Safety for India Gate Precinct

Source: Author

#### 4.4.3. Findings

In this case instead of the User Count Survey, manually the men to women ratio was calculated through observation. User count was not conducted due to the multiple entry and exit points to the area. It was observed that per 100 men there were 70 women present at the place, making the ratio as 1:1.4 (women: men). India Gate is a public space and scored the highest on safety parameters. 60% people rated the area with a score of 5 and 40% rated the area with a score of 4.

#### 4.5. Modality Analysis on Case Studies

In all the four case studies, the spaces are appropriated for night time activities. The paper applies Robert Williams modality model on the case studies to investigate the nightlife structure and its safety components. It is found that Channeling as a strategy dominates all the study areas. Marginalization is seen to work in the form of official zoning regulations in all the cases and Exclusion could be seen in the case of India Gate where physical barriers and manual policing limits the people to use the space after 11:00 p.m. Hence, the paper further investigates the strategy of channeling by sub-categorizing it into the five parameters from the literature review. This analysis is based on the presence or absence of the five parameters as observed by the author.

	<b>Active Surveillance</b>		<b>Social Inclusion</b>				<b>Diverse Activity</b>	<b>Permeability &amp; Visibility</b>	<b>Territoriality/ Sense of Belonging</b>
	CCTV	Police	Male	Female	Elderly	Children			
<b>Matia Mahal</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y
<b>Nehru Place</b>	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
<b>CP (eateries)</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	Y	N	-	N
<b>India Gate</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

**Table 14.** Safety Parameter Matrix for the Study Areas at Night (Observational)

Source: Author

## 5. Regulations On Nightlife In Delhi



The Government of Delhi governs the working hours and hence the closing time of “commercial outlets” in the city. One of the objectives is to identify the role of government in regulating the nightlife culture. This paper also attempts to analyze the rationale behind the regulation of closing hours of nightlife venues in Delhi. For the purpose of this study, the regulations for Eating Houses and Shopping Areas have been examined. This is done keeping in mind the prevalence of nightlife activities around these spaces.

## 5.1. Eating Houses<sup>2</sup>

### Laws regarding closing time

Opening and Closing Timings differ during the summers and winters by half an hour or so. In addition, a coffee shop in a hotel is allowed to stay open for 24 hours while discotheques are allowed to open until midnight. Tea stalls are required to close their outlets by 11:00 p.m. Mobile hawkers selling eatables are allowed to enter any area according to the directives of the concerned Resident Welfare Association (RWA). (Daga, n.d.) Any eating house has to acquire a trade license from the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). These licenses state the working hours according to the zone of operation, whether it is conforming or non-conforming.

The Police regulates the closing hours of eating houses because these are places where public assemble and so there arise the question of public security. They govern the activities to keep a check on the crime rate.

## 5.2. Shops and Shopping Areas

### Laws regarding closing timings

All shopkeepers and occupiers of establishments carrying on any business or profession or rendering any service are required to be registered under the Delhi Shops and Establishments Act, 1954. Thus, this Act stipulates the closing time of shops. Section 15 of the Act says that-

1. No shop or commercial establishment on any day, be opened earlier than such hour or closed later than such hour, as may be fixed by the Government by general or special order made on that behalf. (The Delhi Shops and Establishments Act, 1954, n.d.)
2. The Government may, for the purpose of this section, fix different opening hours and different closing hours for different classes of shops or commercial establishments or for different areas or for different times of the year. The timings as per Sec 15 are as follows: (The Delhi Shops and Establishments Act, 1954, n.d.)

**Table 15.** Shops Opening and Closing Timing

Nature of Establishment	Opening Hour	Closing Hour
Shops (during summers)	9:30 a.m.	7:30 p.m.
Shops (during winters)	9:00 a.m.	7:00 p.m.
Commercial Establishment	8:00 a.m.	6:00 p.m.

Source: (*The Delhi Shops and Establishments Act, 1954, n.d.*)

Closing time of shops is regulated in order to make sure that the employees do not have to work over-time; they reach home in time and get to spend some quality time with their family. In the case of women, the question of their security assumes greater importance. So, it is mentioned in the Act that no women shall be put to work after 9:00 p.m. during the summer season and after 8:00 p.m. during the winter season.

In 2004, changes were made to the Act to boost employment generation and promote a positive and favourable business environment that are a prerequisite for economic growth and the opening time of the establishments was extended to 11:00 p.m. This, however, was not mandatory. According to the new norms, exemptions under Section 14, 15 and 16 were provided. This makes it possible for businesses to be open 24X7 as long as certain requirements for the security of the workforce are met.(Express News Service, 2022) In 2022 budget of the Delhi government, Former Finance Minister Manish Sisodia announced the preparation of a policy that would allow food trucks to operate at designated places in the city from 8:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m.

### 5.3. Master Plan of Delhi and Its Take on Nightlife

The Master Plan 2041 provides various approaches for development and strengthening of economic centres. One of the approaches mentioned in MPD-2041 is Fostering Night Time Economy (NTE). It provides a brief mention of the concept of '24-hour city' as per Model Shops and Establishments (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Services) Act 2015 as well as the NTE policy at the national level. The MPD provides suggestions to attract tourists and locals by identifying nodes, precincts or circuits for continuing work, cultural activity and entertainment at night.

## 6. Conclusion

Cities must be seen as attractive, accessible, safe and unthreatening places to be in at all times of the day and night. Development of urban nightlife is a tool for regeneration. Active night spaces are amongst the city's urban cultures that possess a rich source of everyday life and play an important role in establishing a city's cultural identities. The growth of safe nightlife is a major challenge for the cities and we have to learn how to manage this activity in the interests of all the many stakeholders involved. Many cities around the world have adopted a 24x7 city concept to boost their economy and in turn these cities have become safer for its citizens during the night.

In this paper, theories on urban nightlife and safety provided a framework to analyze the Urban Nightlife of Delhi. Delhi

presented itself as an interesting case with a multitude of spaces to examine. In Delhi, both State Government as well as DDA Master Plan have advocated for a “24x7 Delhi”.

Four areas of Delhi were selected based on the level of activities during the late evening hours and typology of the space. The first case study of Matia Mahal, Jama Masjid showed a diverse range of activities that operates till late night making the area relatively safer. The study area of Connaught Place attracts young crowd in spite of the closing of the entire market at 09:00 p.m. Nehru Place shuts at 08:00 p.m. and becomes mostly inactive with minimal activities. India Gate case is different as it is the strategy of exclusion that governs the closing of the place.

The debates on urban nightlife scarcely discusses the impact of **social inclusion** in urban safety. This however is one of the key factors responsible for a healthy and vibrant nightlife. Places that are gender inclusive are comparatively safer than their counterparts which only attracts male visitors. One thing emerged clearly that the ratio of females to males during the night is limited in all the study areas. Most of the study areas are male dominated. There is a sense of fear amongst the women to use the space at night for recreational and leisure purposes. The study recognized a co-relation between social inclusion and diversity of activities for a safe and active nightlife. India Gate with a mix of activities, has a genuine share of women and children. Matia Mahal does have a mix of activities, still the majority of visitors are men. This can be attributed to the decreasing range of activities in the night. In the case of Connaught Place, mostly families and young crowd are seen as the visitors.

Another factor responsible for bringing a sense of safety is the level of **permeability and legibility**. In the case of Matia Mahal, a clear axis exists that runs from Jama Masjid and continues along the street. The active public space at India Gate is a part of an axis which is clearly visible and accessible. The study areas of Connaught Place behave as active nodes where the activity is concentrated and limited. Nehru Place District Centre is the only case among the four that happens to have impermeable spaces inside as well as outside the complex.

A **sense of belonging** can be felt at Matia Mahal which is not just a tourist attraction but represents cultural values and community bond. India Gate is unique as it brings the idea of India in the urban space, instilling a sense of territoriality and belonging among the visitors. It is observed that **surveillance** is present in all the four case studies except for Nehru Place which requires police surveillance post 08:00 p.m.

Isolated places were found to be more vulnerable to threats as compared to lively active places. According to the personal interviews conducted at the study areas, people felt comfortable and safe in the presence of hawkers. The most inactive space of all the case studies was Nehru Place District Centre. In spite of good connectivity and provision of public transportation in Nehru Place, it is perceived as unsafe. There are issues of legibility, negative space and lack of activities. This area requires a more rational use of space. Certain inactive areas are identified in the paper which can be redesigned by connecting them with the outer edges of the complex and by introducing new activities like cultural events that can operate till 11:00 p.m. Entry and Exit points should be made legible and clear signages should be added.

To improve the nightlife of Matia Mahal, a street revitalization project should be considered. New activities with extended working hours should be promoted to boost the night time economy. The study areas in Connaught Place should also be

redesigned as active nodes in the city centre that can operate for longer durations.

After examining the government regulations on nightlife, it is apparent that the government has favored the operation of nightlife establishments by bringing amendments in the existing acts over the time. It is suggested that the government should build on the examples of best practice to develop a more sustainable and safer nightlife. It should promote culturally diverse activities in the night at certain specified city centres and nodes away from the residential colonies which will encourage a range of people to use the areas at night. However, it must be ensured that the security set up is effectively beefed up so that the criminals do not use the situation to their advantage.

To summarize, the future of the city lies in its night time economy that would not only bring economic growth but will create a safer place for its citizens.

While this paper is hopefully useful in understanding the complexity of urban nightlife with respect to safety for the case of Delhi. Still, additional theoretical and empirical research can be done to study the following threads within the domain of Urban Nightlife as identified in this study. Firstly, the role of social inclusion and diverse range of activities on nightlife can be explored further. Secondly, there is a scope to do a comparative study of Delhi with other metropolitan cities. Lastly, the findings of this study can be applied on the other domains to develop and identify new research gaps.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> As per Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, Dhaba is a small cheap restaurant where Punjabi food is served, with basic furniture and facilities, and often with an open front and tables outside.

<sup>2</sup> The Delhi Police Act, 1978, defines “Eating Houses” as follows: Eating house means any place to which the public are admitted and where any kind of food or drink is supplied for consumption on the premises by any person owning or having any interest in managing such place.

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