Sentimentalism and Contemporary Art in Interpreting Cairo Identity within Interior Design

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Abstract:

The well-being and satisfaction of citizens and visitors are strongly influenced by the image of a city or place, to which monumental or iconic buildings have a great contribution. Thus, the most familiar way to identify a city is to go through its heritage as historical elements, monuments and famous ornamentation related to the city's civilization, as well as inspiring from the city's landmarks and architecture, but manipulating the space to feel the identity of a city through the context of design is a different vision. Without using those defined elements directly to refer to the identity of Cairo, the researchers introduced this different vision about spatial design through the space atmosphere and how could we touch the identity implied through the art and design of space, thus we can achieve emotional interaction between the space and the one dealing within it.

Keywords : **Cairo identity;old Cairo ;Contemporary Cairo;Contemporary art;indirect inspiration;emotional design**

ملخص البحث:

يعتبر التراث المصدر والملهم الأول لدي المصمم في التعبير عن هويته ، والمصمم الداخلي المصري يعتاد الاستلهام من تراث مصر الثمين في التعبير عن هوية الفراغ الذي يقوم بتصميمه، كما أن القاهرة تمثل منبعاً ثرياً للتراث المصري حيث مرت علي أرضها أعرق الحضارات، كما أنها تحتوي علي الكثير من المباني و المعالم الرئيسية التي ترسخت في أذهان سكان القاهرة وأصبحت دلالة في أذهانهم للهوية القاهرية، وبناء علي ذلك تطرق البحث إلي اختبار فرضية تطرح رؤية مختلفة للهوية القاهرية تعتمد علي اختبار التفاعل العاطفي مع الحياة اليومية داخل القاهرة، والتي تعتبر رؤية معاصرة تهتم بالصفات العاطفية التي تنتج من مشاعر ذات طابع خاص تجاه القاهرة، فالبحث يحاول إثبات ما إذا كانت هناك مفردات مميزة يتلقاها من خلال دراسة إستقصائية لتعريف ووصف الهوية القاهرية ليس فقط من خلال معالمها التاريخية و التراثية إنما من خلال التفاصيل الغير مباشرة والمكونة لصفات معنوية ذهنية يعتمد عليها الباحث في وصف الهوية القاهرية.

يختبر البحث هذه المفردات للحصول علي إستنتاجات قد تكون استلهاما جديدا للمصمم الداخلي للتعبير بصورة مبتكرة عن الهوية القاهرية، تعتمد علي قاعدة فنية تشكيلية معاصرة كمصدر رئيسي للإلهام في الدراسة الإستقصائية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: هوية القاهرة ؛ قديمة - القاهرة ؛ معاصرة - القاهرة ؛ الفن المعاصر ؛ غير مباشر - إلهام ؛ تصميم عاطفي.

1.Introduction

The city is a powerful source of expressive symbols and signs, People know their location in spaces and differentiate themselves from others through a reading of the elements that make up places. Identity is an important issue because it involves the self-identity has consequences for cognition, affect, and behaviour.

Studies have indicated that globalization, despite all the positive effects, has resulted in aloss of identity within a city, as acity develops over time, its identity is envolving as well and may even be lost due to rapid and constant changes it is subjected to.Cairo is not just a city ,it is the capital city,one of the oldest and the most centerilized in Egypt and the crossroad of many civilizations, which consequently leads Cairo to be highly exposed to globalization. In this research ,we –researchers-seek interior design with the spirit of Contemporary Cairo identitiy,but there are some questions have to be answered to achieve this objective. how Contemporary Cairo looks like? What are the main features of Contemporary Cairo ? and does it creates its features from its history or it has been transformed into different characteristics ?.Also, does the interior design should include historical items to express Cairo identity, or could emotions of living people and their vision about the identity do?. For the sake of answering all these questions, we have done a survey to collect data about the vision of Contemporary Cairo identity, so as to prove if this concept is applicable or not.

2.Problem

- The deffieciecy in the visual identity.
- Expresseing identity through traditional direct motifs and icons.
-The identity confusion between old Cairo and Contemporary Cairo.

3.Aims

- Interpreting Cairo Identity using metaphors through visual and emotional expressions.
- Finding whether or not is Contemporary Cairo identity linked to its history
-Testing the emotional and Visual interaction between Cairo and people living in it.

4.Methodology

The paper methodology mainly based on the survey that was sent to 50 persons in the field of art ,architecture and design , the sample was chosen in the field of art and design as they have the sufficient knowledge about art history and Egyptian identity ,also they are able to express their thoughts and emotions deeply and in a detailed way.

The survey methodology was based on a group of varied structural questions to get more valid answers, as follow:

a) Multiple choice questions related to the respondant age, industry,degree, travelling experience and living abroad.

These questions are designed to add different variables ,thus receiving variable answers of different experiences ,each has differerent exposure .

b) Two questions about Old Cairo and Contemporary Cairo.

The first one is to know which come first to the respondant minds on hearing the word Cairo, either Old Cairo or Contemporary Cairo, and the answers show which of them is more stable in the respondants' mindset.

The second one is asking the respondants which do they prefer to live in? Old Cairo or Contemporary Cairo.

c) Open ended questions, to seek a free response and aim to determine what is at the tip of the respondents' mind. It was in the form of stating keywords that describe Cairo ,and keywords that describe the respondant emotions towards Cairo.

d) Questions related to the respondant visual experience, as we take the respondants' opinions about different visual images each has their own reference . and they are classified into 4 questions as follow:

- The first question is a multiple choice for one of two options that represents Cairo.

The objective of this question is to know whether the respondants will tend to the picture that symbolize spirtual emotions or to the historical icon in their memories.

- The second visual question is a checkboxes question for a variety of paintings with variable references (spirtual,political,historical..etc), representing different aspects in Cairo from the vision of the researchers ,and they asked the respondants to choose which of them could relate to Cairo from their point of view.

The main objective of this question is to know to what extent could the respondants interact with these contemporary paintings and which of them have a stronger link with the respondants's minds and vision.

- The third visual question is a checkboxes questions for a variety of contemporary paintings for Egyptian artists (mentioned as that in the question) expressing Cairo ,and the respondants are asked to check on what they see of them representing any of Cairo characteristics.

The main objective of this question is to know to what extent the Egyptian contemporary artists succeeded in expressing the characteristics of contemporary Cairo and translating their vision of identity, and how do these paintings reflect on the respondants' minds and vision and their reaction towards them.

- The fourth visual question is a checkboxes question for different color schemes ,and the respondants are asked to check which of them could represent Contemporary Cairo.

The main objective of this question is to conclude the psychological effect of Contemporary Cairo on the respondants'emotions through colors, as this question could help the researchers in choosing the convienient palette that represents Cairo in their interior design project, also it helps in detecting the respondants pshycological review about Cairo.

e) A checkboxes question that asks the respondants to check on some keywords of the researchers vision about Cairo identity,these keywords are:

f) climate, nature, traffic, architecture, attitude, globalization, memories, art.
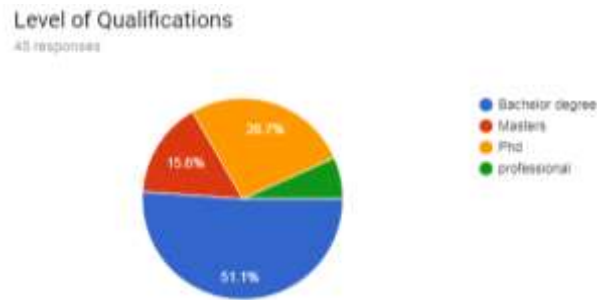
Fig.3. The pie chart for the answers of question (3) in the survey.

The results show that almost half the respondants are of bachelor degree qualification ,following are the phd holders, and this supplies the researchers with visions of different experiences in the art and design industry,while the rest of respondants are between masters holders and professionals.
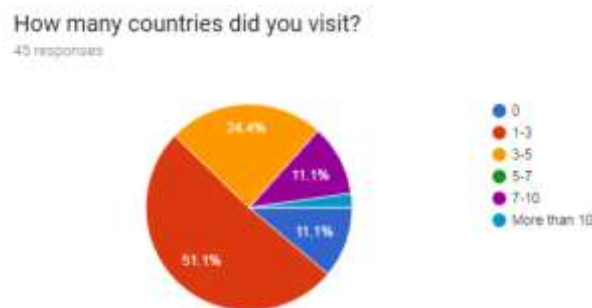

Fig.4. The pie chart for the answers of question (4) in the survey.

The results show that most of the respondants at least visit from 1-3 countries, and only very few of them have no travelling experience, which has a good reflection on the survey results, as the respondants are highly exposed to different cultures, and this is an added value to their experience and vision.
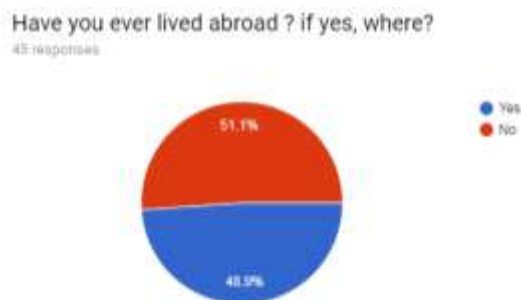

Fig.5. The pie chart for the answers of question (5) in the survey.

The resuts show that nearly half of the respondants are of great exposure to other countries as they have not just visited them, but they lived almost a complete experience with most of those countries, and this could give them the advantage of high evaluating skills for the positive and negative sides in Cairo .

The objective of this question is to receive answers about the more dominent of the defined elements in the features of Contemporary Cairo, so we can figure out its main features.

g) Two agree/disagree questions about statements from references describing Cairo , the two statements are :

1- "Contemporary Cairo has multicultural character".

2- "Cairo is a multilayered city".

The objective of these questions is to know to what extent the acceptance or rejection of the respondants to such statements, thus their vision about Cairo identity is clearer.

h) At the end of the survey there is an optional request to upload a sketch of the respondants' vision about Cairo.

The objective of this request to see visual translation of the respondants' vision about Cairo identity that could be helpful for the reseacher in the inspiration stage.

5.The findings (Results) :

The researcher collected 45 responses from the sample chosen of 50 persons.

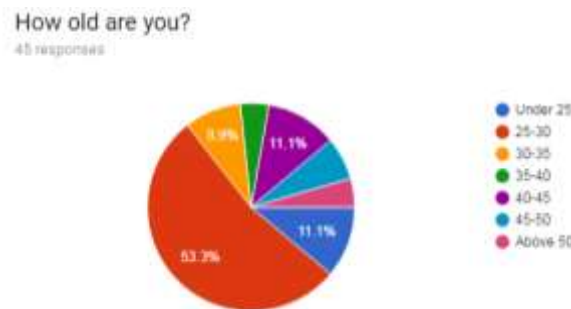The findings of the survey are shown in charts that illustrates the statistics of the survey results as shown:

Fig.1. The pie chart for the answers of question (1) in the survey.

The results show that the highest percentage of respondents are in the age range 25-30 , which are the youth generation who has high exposure to contemporary Cairo.
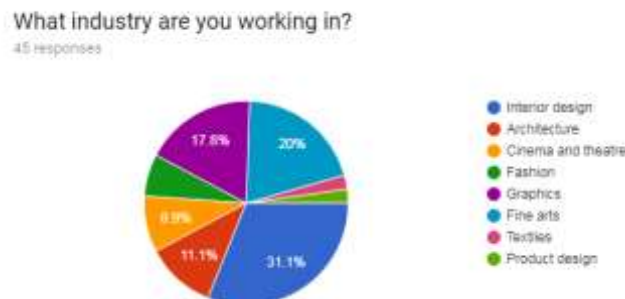

Fig.2. The pie chart for the answers of question (2) in the survey.

The results show that the highest percentage of respondents are in the industry of interior design and fine arts, and it is a good indication about their knowledge about history and heritage, aslo the respondants of other design industries are nearly equal and they offer a variety of visions to the survey.
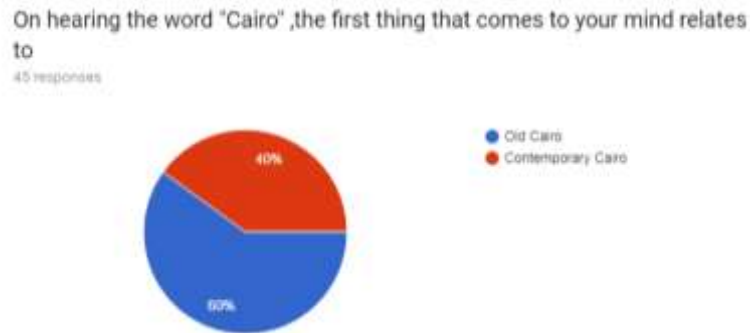
4

On hearing the word "Cairo" ,the first thing that comes to your mind relates to

45 responses

- Old Cairo
- Contemporary Cairo

Fig.6. The pie chart for the answers of question (6) in the survey.

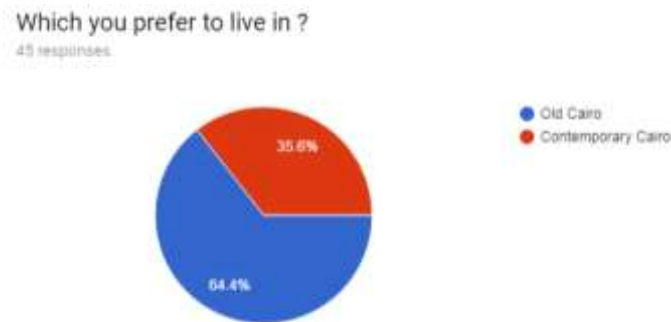The results show that 60% of the respondants have a great bond with Old Cairo.

Which you prefer to live in ?

45 responses

- Old Cairo
- Contemporary Cairo

Fig.7. The pie chart for the answers of question (7) in the survey.

The results show that most of the respondants prefer living in Old Cairo than living in Contemporary Cairo despite all its facilities and entertainment sites.

- After analysing the respondants' answers for the openended questions , the researcher found that the answers goes around 12 expressions with different words in the question of describing Cairo as follow:
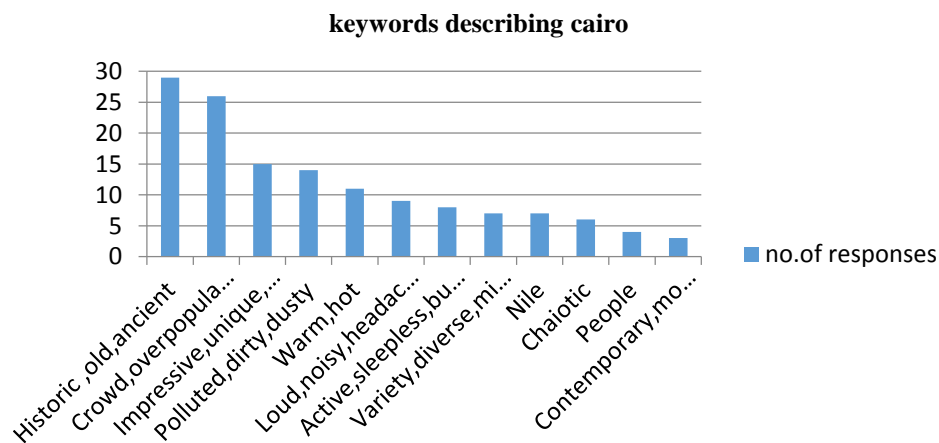

Fig.8. The bar chart for the answers of question (8) in the survey.

From this analysis, the researcher concluded that the most common expression in describing Cairo is about its history which solve a dialectic issue in the research ,that we need history even if it is implied or shown indirectly in the design as it-history- represents the fingerprint of the identity.

The second most expression was about the crowd, traffic,overpopulation which seems to be a very noticible feature in Cairo that it affects the identity , also this shows that not only the

physical things that leave impact in our minds about the identity ,but also the emotional experience. The expressed keywords could be translated in the interior design as a key for representing Cairo identity.

-Regarding the question of expressing the emotions towards Cairo, the reseachers found the respondants' responses were divided into three types in expressing their emotions as shoen in the graph:
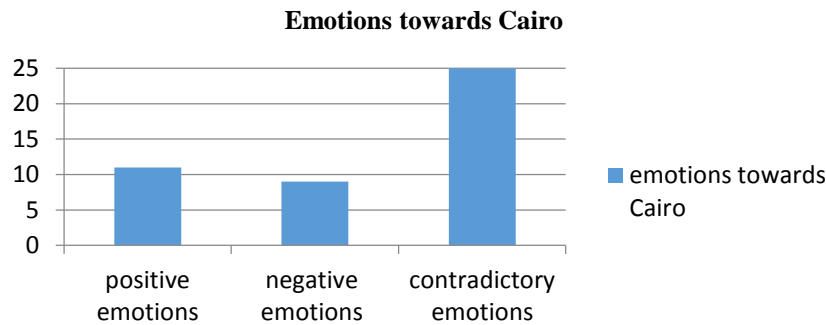

Fig.9. The bar chart for the answers of question (9) in the survey.

The analysis of the respondants answers show that the majority of respondants have contradictory emotions towards Cairo ,which is a highlight point in the paper, also it was noticable that 42.2% of the respondants express their emotions towards cairo using the word love and 37.7% express their emotions using the words belonging and home.

- The results of the visual questions are shown as follow:

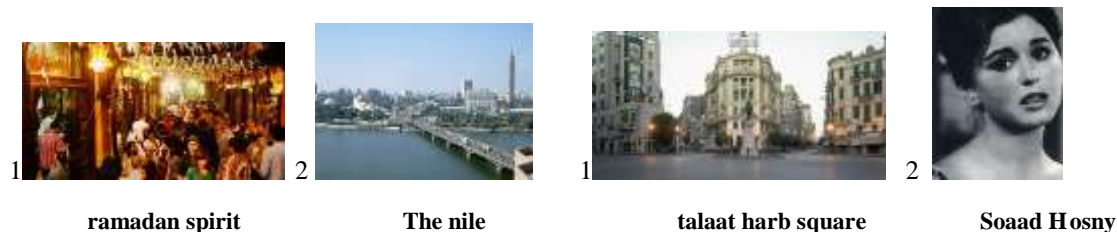**Fig.10. The pie chart for the answers of question (10) parts (A) & (B) in the survey.**

| ramadan spirit | The nile | talaat harb square | Soaad Hosny |

Fig.11 images exposed in question 10, part (A)   **Fig.12 images exposed in question 10, part(B)**

The results show that when the respondants are suggested to choose between option 1 which represents the spirtual gathering of people in ramadan and option 2 the nile ,the majority chose option 1 ,thus the spirtual events have a great impact on people and it represents emotions . While respondants chose option 1 when they were put in comparison between talaat harb square and Soaad Hosny ,thus it was concluded that the historic land marks are more representitive for Cairo identity than the iconic celeberities.
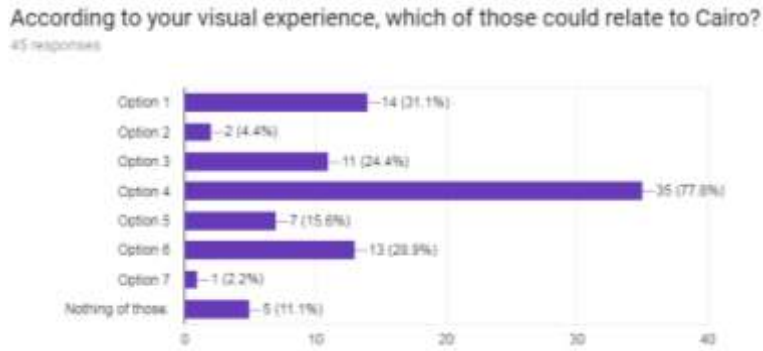
According to your visual experience, which of those could relate to Cairo?

45 responses

Fig.13. The bar chart for the answers of question (11) in the survey.

1

Painting for the artist Alaa Awad.

2

Painting for the artist Hossam Dirar.

3

Painting for the artist Doaa Hatem.

4

Mohamed Mahmoud mural.

5

Painting for the artist Mohamed sabry

6

Painting for the artist Hazem Taha Hussien

7

Painting for the artist Hany Rashed

8 Nothing of those.

Fig.14 images exposed to respondants in question (11)

The results show that the majority have chosen option 4 , thus it was concluded that the political events have the greater impact in the formation of identity, following option 1 and 6 which are paintings including historic pharaonic items with contemporary manipulation.

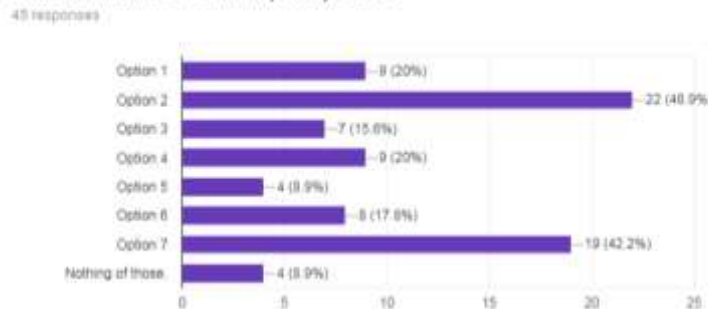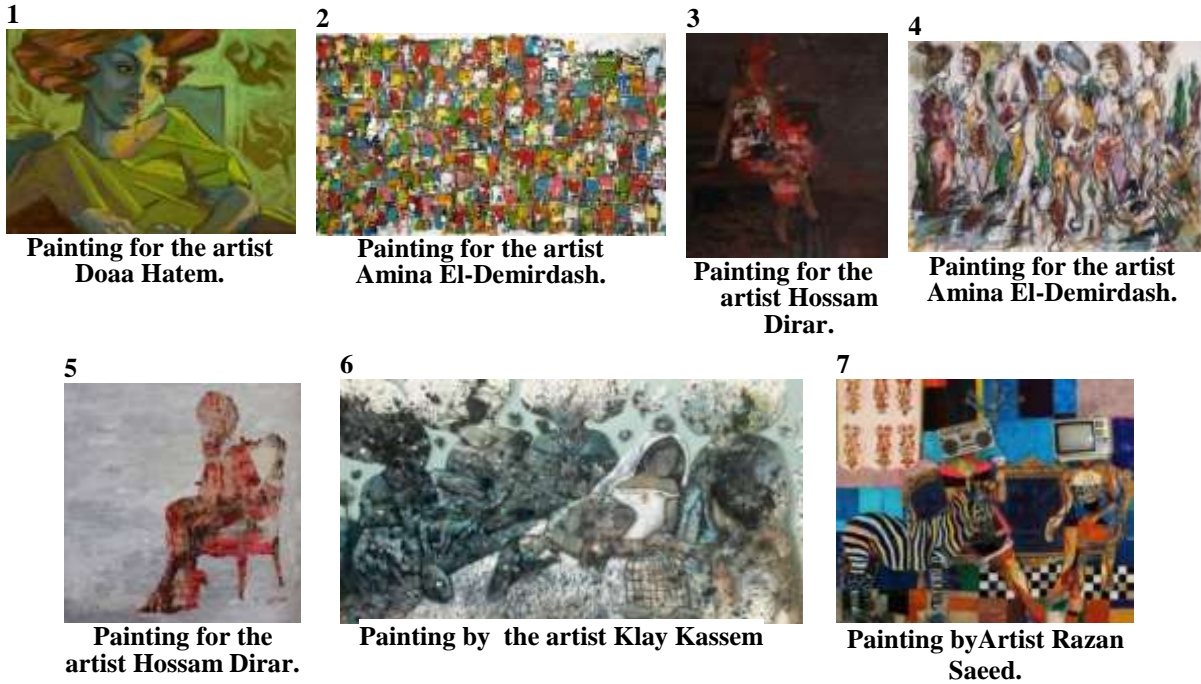Here are some paintings for Egyptian artists ,which of them shows characteristics of contemporary Cairo

45 responses

Fig.13. The bar chart for the answers of question (12) in the survey.

1

Painting for the artist Doaa Hatem.

2

Painting for the artist Amina El-Demirdash.

3

Painting for the artist Hossam Dirar.

4

Painting for the artist Amina El-Demirdash.

5

Painting for the artist Hossam Dirar.

6

Painting by the artist Klay Kassem

7

Painting byArtist Razan Saeed.

8 Nothing of those.

Fig.14 images exposed to respondants in question (12) in the survey.

The results show that options 2 & 7 are more common chosen as representing the characteristics of Cairo.

-Option 2: the artist Amina Eldemerdash named this painting as "buildings downtown" which is a part of Old Cairo, thus the respondants'choice indicates and emphasis the strong bond and feeling of belonging to Old Cairo and its spirit.

-Option 7: the artist Razan Saeed named this art work as "Humans threatened by extinction" as it expresses the effect of media practices and its blinding control on the memberes of the Egyptian society, mislead and misguidance. Thus this choice indicates that media plays an important role in the formation of identity vision in people's minds through all what it feeds people with in different ways.
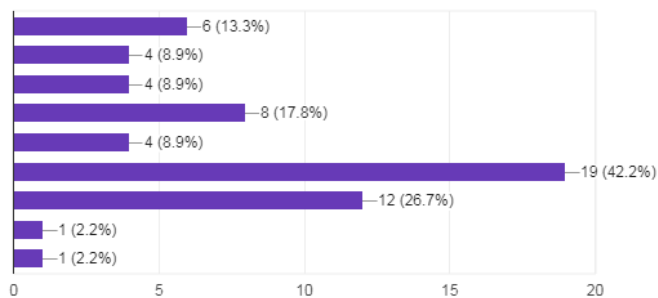

Fig.15 The bar chart for the answers of question (13) in the survey.
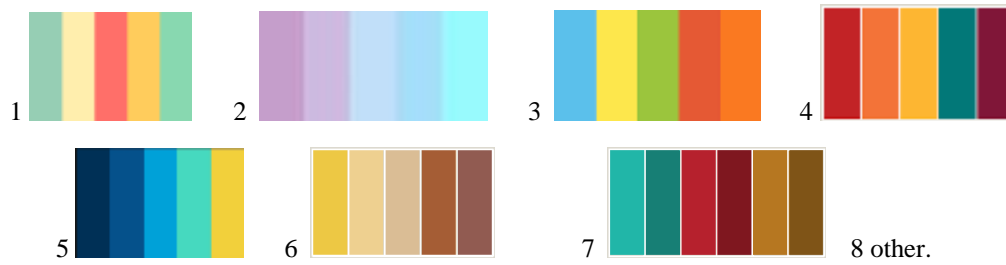
Fig.16 color schemes exposed to respondants in question (13) in the survey.

The results shows that the most relevant color scheme that expresses contemporary Cairo is option 6 ,which include the dusty brown tones and the yellowish tones which are mainly relevant to the atmosphere and climate of Cairo, and this is compatible with the expressed keywords of the respondants about Cairo as dusty, polluted ..etc.
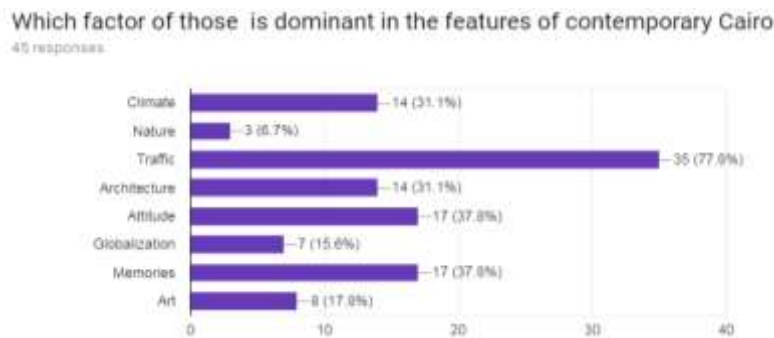

Fig.17 The bar chart for the answers of question (14) in the survey.

- The results show that the most dominant feature is the traffic and this keyword is common in both the researchers expression and the respondants expression about Cairo , which concludes that the traffic is highly rated as a main characteristic of contemporary Cairo identity.
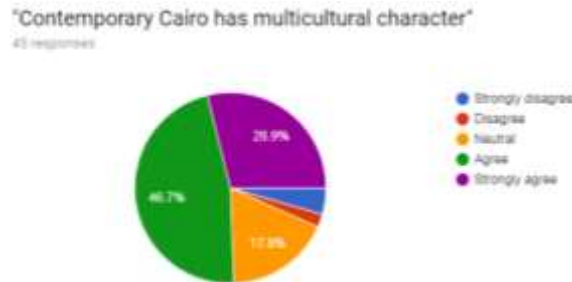

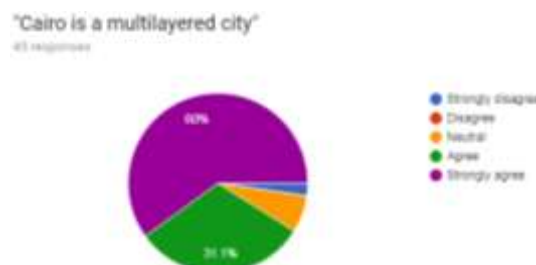**Fig.18 The bar chart for the answers of question (15) in the survey.**

Fig.19 The bar chart for the answers of question (16) in the survey.

- The results show that the majority of respondants are between agree and strongly agree that contemporary Cairo has multicultural character, and the majority strongly agree that Cairo is a multilayered city, Thus Contemporary Cairo is a mixture of lots of factors ,civilizations, cultures and people and even emotions of living people towards Cairo are mixed.

- The last result is the one for the sketch request about something that represents cairo from the respondants'vision and it was like that:

Fig.20 images sent by some of the respondants indicating their vision about contemporary Cairo.

It was clearly shown that the images Sent by the respondants representing their vision about Cairo is a true evidence that historical icons cannot be ignored as well as it can be remanipulated in a new contemporary design context.

6.Conclusion

Contemporary Cairo cannot be separated from old Cairo as old Cairo is a main layer and a solid base for contemporay Cairo ,thus we cannot ignore history even in creating a Contemporary Cairo theme within an interior. We can consider history in emotional design as it has an emotional link with people living in Cairo. As well political, spirtual events and media that deals mostly with emotions and memories represent the image of Cairo identity inside people minds.also there is a lot of expressions and visuals that can be metaphors for Contemporary Cairo identity.

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