

EFFECTIVE PARAMETERS ON STREET VITALITY IN JOHOR
BAHRU CITY CENTER

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To my loving family,

To My mother for its sincere support of me making my dream come true,

To my father who has been always inspiring my life.

To my husband for showing his most enthusiasm and support throughout my journey

And to my brothers for their attentions

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ABSTRACT

Cities all over the world are rediscovering their public spaces and a general awareness has been awakened regarding the need for dignified, high quality city environments for people. Vitality is a major characteristic in public spaces and especially streets to attract more people. To have a lively area we need some elements to create an environment suitable for all ages and races to come, walk, sit, gather and spare time without force. Johor Bahru city is the fast developing and changing which attracts many users and tourists every day especially in the city center. The study established on the effective parameters of vitality in streets as a prerequisite to create a livable urban environment. The study discusses the essential components of vitality, its criteria, its determinants and finding the most effective parameters of street vitality in Johor Bahru city center. The study is limited to the functional and physical character of the street and different criteria relating to the activities and behavior of street users.

ABSTRAK

Bandar di seluruh dunia kini mencari semula peranan dan fungsi ruang awam selain kesedaran awam yang semakin meningkat terhadap kepentingannya berdasarkan kepada keperluan mempunyai suatu persekitaran yang berkualiti tinggi untuk manusia. adalah elemen utama dalam ruang awam terutamanya jalan yang berfungsi menarik orang ramai. Untuk menghidupkan sesebuah kawasan, suatu elemen diperlukan bagi menghasilkan persekitaran yang sesuai dengan semua tahap umur dan bangsa untuk datang berjalan, duduk dan mengluangkan masa tanpa sebarang paksaan. Bandaraya Johor Bahru yang pesat membangun sentiasa menarik pelancong setiap hari terutama di pusat bandar. Kajian ini bertujuan mengukur tahap di jalan sebagai syarat asas untuk menyediakan sebuah persekitaran perbandaran yang hidup. Kajian ini membincangkan mengenai keperluan komponen, kriteria, penentu dan mencari parameter yang paling efektif di sekitar jalanraya Johor Bahru. Kajian ini hanya terhad kepada fungsi dan ciri-ciri fizikal pada sesebuah jalanraya dan perbezaan kriteria berkaitan dengan aktiviti dan tingkahlaku pengguna di jalanan.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This study investigates the effective parameter of street vitality in Johor Bahru city center by gathering different parameters that affect the street vitality according to different scholars, picking the most mentioned ones and analyzing each of them in the area. The study specifically explores the functional and physical aspects those contribute to vitality. In order to achieve these purposes, this chapter discusses the background of study and statement of the problem. It also covers the objectives and research questions of the study.

1.1 Background of Study

In a vibrant environment, various activities take place on street, which is one of the most significant physical spatial elements of any city. The street environment has a large role in identifying the city character; high quality street environments will create livable cities. People use the street for different activities; necessary activities, optional activities

(urban recreation) and social activities. The streets are places where informal activities take place along with the formal ones. Formal activities take place within the buildings of both side of the street space; meanwhile informal activities take place in between the buildings. As a manifestation of street culture, informal human activities take most part of the street spaces in between the physical street walls on both sides of the street space.

Today, friendly city centers are subjected and discussed by many scholars. Therefore, liveliness besides diversity is mentioned as the important issues related to these subjects (Gehl, 1994).Streets contain people and their activities .Based on public spaces, liveliness is entirely associated with people and activities (Montgomery, 2006).In other words, liveliness refers to how busy the public spaces are (Oruce and Giritioglu, 2008).

According to Gehl (1987), there are three types of activities occur in public places. The first type is necessary activity, which people have to do them regardless of environment. The second type is optional activities; those activities that people are attracted to do them when the conditions are charming. The last type is social activities; which is based on the presence of others. In a good city, which has lively streets, large amount of optional activities and people are visible and at the same time people are experiencing these activities and also each others.

A lively street is defined as a street with the existence of people engaged in a variety of stationary(the key characteristic of activity) and sustained activities, particularly those activities that are social in nature (Mehta, 2006).

Many of architectural, urban design and planning solutions established priorities for people and their activities in street. Their interventions were to ensure that streets would be successfully functioning or “lively” as “places of interaction”, “living spaces”, etc. However , the solutions arrived at for integration of pedestrians “static activities” such as sitting , standing , chatting and browsing , compared with their dynamic movement were theoretically and empirically limited. In particular, an operational solution for balancing the use of streets for both static and dynamic activities has been unattainable (Appelyard

1987). While many streets have been much used for static activities and conducive to people sitting, waiting and meeting other people, others have much less so. Even in a highly dense shopping or commercial area, some streets have still failed to attract such activities. This is still a problem pertinent to urban design practice (Gehl, 1979, 1987, Whyte 1980, Appleyard 1980, 1987).

This study attempts to identify the characteristics as components of those contribute to the (vitality) liveliness of street environment in Johor Bahru city center, especially, those that center for static activities.

1.2 Problem Statement

Johor Bahru is the third largest city in Malaysia with a total population of 1.4 million, which is expected to grow to 2.2 million by 2020 (Draft Local Plan of Johor Bahru, 2020 and Economic Report, 2005/2006). Provision of safety in the city centre is the main concern to many Johoreans.

The Social Report and Quality of Life Index 2007 indicated that increasing crime rate, such as snatch thefts, car thefts and vandalism in Johor Bahru is getting worse. The crime rate in Johor Bahru was the highest, with 13,649 cases 68.8% out of a total of 15,679 cases in Johor State. (GOH SCE YUAN, master thesis). The characteristics and nature of businesses and services offered in city centre also play an important role. The movement of population shifting to outskirts of the city centre, the physical image of the buildings, lack of public amenities such as; proper bus stop and taxi stands in the city centre, poor maintenance of public facilities such as dirty street, poor sidewalk, dirty toilets, poor landscape and street light were also highlighted. Other areas of concerns are social problems associated with the crime, snatch thief and vandalism, poor traffic, insufficient parking and good entertainment, retail outlets also among the main factors contributed to decline of city centre. Therefore if the city centre has to attract business and visitors, it

is important that the city centre is safe, clean, interesting and offers a wide choice of merchandise, in addition to well-established entertainment and leisure facilities. When the city centre becomes more interesting and where entrepreneur opportunities exist, people will come to the city centre.

Simple activities such as walking, talking and eating have taken to parks, restaurants and public buildings; this makes streets not to be lively spaces. Livable streets are needed to absorb people in all situations to gather and have activity without any difficulty. In order to create an environment that is lively at first, the vitality and liveliness in urban Design should be identified and different criteria of it should be found out and the most effective parameters causing a street to have the quality of vitality will be figured out.

1.3 Research Agenda

1.3.1 Aim

The purpose of this study is to determine the characteristics of vitality and the prerequisite elements and characteristics of an area to have the quality of vitality in Johor Bahru city center.

1.3.2 Objectives

- I. To identify the functions that contributes to user activities.
- II. To identify the physical aspects contribute to vitality.
- III. To establish the components and characteristics contribute to vitality.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the functional aspects of vitality?
2. What are the physical components related to vitality?
3. What are the important components and characteristics contribute to vitality?

1.5 Scope of the study

Jalan Wong Ah Fook has been chosen among different streets of Johor Bahru city center, it is a main street about one kilometer long and 16-18 meters wide in the heart of city center.

The study will focus on the physical, functional and characteristics along Wong Ah Fook Street with the people using it live or work around it. The study will be based on the theories of the environment – behavior sciences derived from literature review.

The purpose of this study is focusing on the Johor Bahru City Centre; the information of this study is used to identify ways to create a livable city centre so that the city centre can offer more vitality. In order to have a better understanding of vitality elements, this study shows the different parameters mentioned by different scholars. Different activities will be analyzed along Jalan Fook.

1.6 Methodology of the study

This research will adopt a qualitative methodology, which involves visual survey of field observation in the form of photographs and physical mapping. The methodology includes the following:

First Stage: Identify the Problem Statement and Objectives

The first stage mainly concentrates on identifying the problem statement, the objectives, significance and scope of the study. The idea for the problem statement was taken from observations and recent media coverage.

Second Stage: Theoretical Research

The second stage is the theoretical review. In this stage, the study emphasizes on gathering theories that are relevant to the study. The focus for this stage is to gather parameters affecting the vitality according different scholars.

Third Stage: Data Analysis

At this stage, the data and information collected from the second stage will select to glean the relevant data for the study.

Forth Stage: Suggestions, Recommendations and Conclusion

The outcome of the analysis will be used for a final discussion regarding the vitality of the city centre. Suggestions and recommendations from different urban experts would also be stated at this stage. The suggestions and recommendations are related to the Johor Bahru city centre.

Physical Mapping

Documentation of the physical elements of streetscape is extremely useful in the analysis stage and final reports because it can help precisely imaging the condition of the street.

1.7 Study area

Johor Bahru central business district is one of the most popular shopping districts in Johor, attracting local visitors and tourists to its wide range of shopping and public plaza. The study will focus city center area in Johor Bahru exactly in the Wong Ah Fook Street.

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