

The Dynamism of the Night Market Environment at Bandar Baru Kuala Selangor

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This ethnography study focused on factors contributing towards the dynamism of the night market environment at Bandar Baru in the district of Kuala Selangor. The overall night market dynamism was found to be quite vibrant taking into account the combinations of those three factors which found mixed results. The study looked into the night market environment, the variety of traders and products, and the night market atmosphere. Both the exploratory and descriptive method were used to examine the variables. Primary information was derived based on observations of the night market environment and atmosphere by using checklists and also in depth 15 to 20 minutes interview with 15 traders were conducted to determine their characteristics and attributes. The findings provide an understanding of the factors contributing toward the vibrancy of the night market environment and the nature of interactions between the traders and customers and among the traders.

Key words: *environment, planning, night market, tourism attraction.*

Introduction

Night Markets, which are called "Pasar Malam", have been a very prominent feature of Malaysian shopping alternatives. A night market represents the grouping of temporary outdoor stalls or stands that display products, food, and others for sale. They could be found in almost every village, small town and city in every state in Malaysia. A night market would be operated between once and a few days of the week, at a specific location, as determined by the Local Authority or Council. The traders often rotate their business around different neighbourhoods on different days of the week. Night markets or the farmers' markets have definitely been a popular alternative to main stream shopping among the local community in Malaysia.

With the concept of open space market place, the local authority would assign stall/stalls to traders, and traders would set up tents, tables, tools and other necessary equipment for them to prepare and display their products. The number of stalls at one night market could range from 50 to 300, which is a lot. A trader would usually be allowed to have more than one stall lot space, depending on the regulations imposed by the local authority. Usually the authority sets the maximum number of lots at 4 per trader. The trader has to declare the type of product to be offered for sale since the authority usually also set a limit on the variety of products. The type of products offered for sale include fruits, vegetables, fish, meat, poultry, dairy products, toys, accessories, clothes, and cooked food and beverages. The most popular product offered would usually be cooked food and beverages. Some night markets, especially those located in villages or small town offer local delicacies, local exotic jungle plants and fruits that could only be found within the vicinity of the village or from the nearby jungle. Thus, a trip to night markets could be an educational experience for the city dwellers as well as for the tourists.

Night markets are usually located on designated streets or in open space areas in housing estates or residential areas, which are converted into a market place on a certain day/days of the week. They have become popular as they provide the surrounding local community with the capacity to shop for their household needs within their own residential areas and most often the goods offered are fresh and at affordable price.

Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted with the following objectives: (1) to determine the night market environment, based on the size, physical setting, and characteristics (2) to examine the traders' characteristics and motivations and product varieties, and (3) to address the market atmosphere by studying the extent of diversity, density and social interactions amongst the traders and the customers at the night markets. The overall objective was to determine the level of vitality or dynamism of the night markets.

Significance of the Study

The research project was undertaken to examine the night market environment of the night market at Bandar Baru Kuala Selangor. Night markets have been an important generator of income for new entrepreneurs and have also provided employment to thousands of people living in small town and villages. The night markets have acted as a spur for business start-ups and the growth of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Traders are provided with an attractive platform to improve and learn new entrepreneurial skills, such as product development, marketing and retailing. For some night market traders, the income derived might be supplementing their main income source, while for others, it might be a full time job that could be very lucrative.

The night markets represent an excellent alternative to mainstream supermarket shopping especially in periods of economic downturn. It provides customers with a friendly, relaxed atmosphere that could not be duplicated elsewhere. Customers enjoy the atmosphere and the experience of browsing through night markets with no pressure or hassle by salespersons. The night markets offer variety and choice especially freshly cooked food and extra fresh local vegetables at affordable price. It can also be a place to meet neighbours and friends, thus helping to strengthen community spirit. The atmosphere at night markets is often vibrant and colourful and one can encounter people from all walks of life.

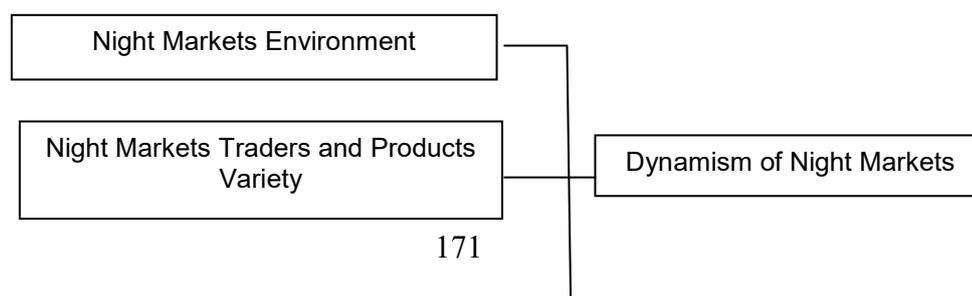
Night markets often make a local area or region more attractive for visitors. They tend to offer a unique blend of fresh local farm products, local food and craft businesses and they exemplify the sights, smells and sounds that reflect the culture of the local community which are factors that can draw tourists who bring new dollars from outside the community.

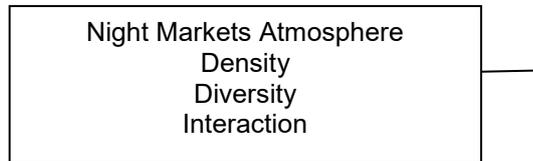
Research Framework

The night markets dynamism was determined on 3 factors. They were:

- i) Night Market environment based on the size, physical setting and characteristics
- ii) Night Market trader characteristics and motivations and product varieties
- iii) Night Market atmosphere by examining the extent of diversity, density and social interaction

Illustration 1: Conceptual Framework





Definitions of Terms and Variables in the Conceptual Framework:

- ***Night Markets Environment:*** Temporary open markets operate in public spaces. Physical characteristics of the market site; access, flow of people and traffic, market infrastructure, parking facilities, safety and cleanliness.
- ***Night Market Traders:*** Small, petty traders, who participate in the selling activities at the night market as a full time job or to supplement their income or for the purpose of learning business skills. Night Market Product Varieties
- ***Night Market Atmosphere:*** The combinations of three components: Density, Diversity and Level of Social Interaction.
- ***Night Market Dynamism:*** The overall status of the Night Market as determine from the level of night market environment, the varieties of night market products and traders, and the night market atmosphere.

Literature Review

The study focused on determining the dynamism of the night market via the night market environment, night market traders' characteristics and product variety, and the night market atmosphere. Night markets in Malaysia have definitely been popular destinations among local community and surrounding residents and they can be found in almost every small town and city in every state. Night markets in Malaysia are usually located in residential neighbourhoods where they can be easily accessed by walking a short distance from home. Moreover, their strategic locations also allow other customers from slightly further afield to travel by car and public transportation such as bus or taxi. As stated by Khalilah (2010), "Night markets would usually be located in three main areas namely, urban, rural and housing estates. It had been identified that the most frequent sites to be used as night market places were the local/public roads, public playing fields, parking lots, and other specially approved areas." Night markets as defined by Huang et al (2009) are places for selling products which take place during the evening period and were participated in by small business that offer a variety of cheaper products, cooked foods and other popular household items.

In Malaysia, as far as retailing is concerned, there were four types of market: morning market, farmers market, night market or the whole-day market. They were differentiated based on their operation hours. The whole day market usually operated every day of the week, had a designated building, and business could start as early as 7:00 am and could end at about 5:00pm. The farmers market represented a distribution outlet for farmers, and these markets would operate under the authority of the FAMA (Federal Agricultural and Marketing Authority) with the cooperation of the local authority. They start their business as early as 7:00 am and end at noon. The morning market could sprout up anywhere, especially in villages and small town when individuals would spread out their own produce on mats at roadsides, or in baskets on their bicycles. They would only operate for a very short time period in the morning since their product offerings would be very limited. The night markets could be very large and extensive covering a major street area. The traders usually started their operation at 3:00 pm and ends at 10:00 pm, but the operating hour might be vary depending on the location. Night market traders might arrive early to set up their stall. The night markets offer a wide range of consumer commodities from food to non-food items and they offer goods at affordable price.

The night markets represent an excellent alternative to mainstream supermarket shopping, where the customers could do their shopping in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere as they stroll through the night markets. The night markets offer a “heads up” interaction with the traders, rather than the “heads down” impersonal interaction at supermarkets. These night markets offer choices, often freshly cooked food and fresh local vegetables at affordable price, in a vibrant environment. They can also be a place for rendezvous with friends and a meeting place for communities. Night markets could therefore be used by the authorities as a place to strengthen the community spirit.

The night market atmosphere often provides an almost festive environment where social encounters and interactions take place, and it could lift the customer and tourist spirit and lessen stress. The sight, smell, and sound as well as the taste of the foods could be an exhilarating experience that could draw repeat visitations. Visiting the night markets is a popular leisure activity among the local community where they usually stroll from one end of the night market to the other end, looking around, stopping every now and then to look over products, inquire regarding price, haggling for discounts and may choose to buy or just walk on.

According to Chang (2002) and Hsieh and Chang (2006) night markets have cultural uniqueness especially in oriental societies. They reflect the local heritages and function to meet demands of people regarding consumption and leisure, and provide local residents and outside visitors with special services for their evening shopping. Lee et al., (2005) and Mujtaba et.al, 2018 indicated that most night markets offered entertainment, bargains, casual clothes, fruits, exotic snacks, and novelty items. The markets offered an insight into the local culture that might not have been apparent seen otherwise. Night markets often are differentiated by

ethnicity. Malaysia is known for its ethnic diversity, where each ethnic group has been able to preserve its unique cultural heritage, and the one place that could portray this rich cultural diversity would be the night market.

Lee et al., (2008) stated that the night market reflected the local environment, the society, and the community's local economy. Khalilah (2010) added that the night market not only could become a venue for commercial trading to take place but also an outlet for exhibiting cultural richness and local identity. A Malay night market often has stalls selling Islamic books, and hijabs, head coverings, sarongs, and other Malay specialty items. A Chinese night market might sell Mah-jong sets, [incense](#), [joss sticks](#), [joss paper](#), and various other Chinese prayer supplies. An Indian night market might offered Hindu prayer supplies, sweet goodies, candies, and flowers.

At the night market, entrepreneurs induce various purchasing behaviours and interact closely with potential customers thus, a night market experience might be an interesting adventure. In addition the coloured lighting, myriad of sounds and different smells from all directions and the variety of customers add to the vibrance of the night market environment. . Chan (2010) and Naghavi & Mubarik (2018) indicated that the main reason for visiting the night market would be shopping, and it could be place for casual shopping, leisure, social gathering, and relaxation. In a study by Gregory (1987) entitled 'The Management of Chinese Small Business Enterprises in Malaysia' the night market was identified as providing a convenient shopping alternative for residents who were unable to make their purchases at the wet market during the day. It is a known fact that the traders at the night market charge different prices for the same product, depending on the location and the social and economic status of the local community that a night market is located in.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Research design adopted in this study was a combination of exploratory and descriptive design. This design was appropriate since the purpose of the study was to determine the market physical characteristics such as the size and layout of the night market, the variety of product offerings, and the traders' motivations, and to find out the extent of the density, diversity, and the level of interaction between the traders and customers. Data was collected within a one-week period. Data was collected in-situ from 2.00 pm up to 11.00 pm or when the local authority cleared the waste and rubbish from the night market area.

Data Collection

There were two types of data utilized in this research, primary data and secondary data. Primary data represented the raw or original data collected during the research study period through

observation, surveys and interviews sessions conducted with the night market traders. Secondary data were published articles, reports and data derived from the print media such as newspapers, journals and reports from local government documents. Direct observation, using checklists, were made to examine the flow of customers' traffic, interaction patterns among traders and customers, and the volume of traders and customers at different periods. The variety, display, pricing, and labelling of products were also noted. Surveys were conducted to get more across the board information on the traders and customers.

Study Site

The study were conducted at the Bandar Baru, Kuala Selangor night market. This night market was selected due to its simple configuration and also a well-defined separation of the boundaries between the community residents, public areas, and the night market area.

Research Instrument

Four instruments were developed for used in the study. The following were the components on each instrument and the data collection method used:

Instrument 1: Night Market Environment

Definition: Temporary open markets operate in public spaces. Physical characteristics of the market site: access, flow of people and traffic, market infrastructure, parking facilities, safety and cleanliness.

Data Collection Method: Observation Method – Checklists and Descriptions
Worksheets covered 3 areas: Physical Market Setting, Market Atmosphere, Traders and Products

Instrument 2: Night Market Traders

Definition: Small, petty traders, who participate in the selling activities at the night market as a full time job or to supplement their income or for the purpose of learning business skills.

Data Collection Methods: 15 Traders: Face-to-Face 15 to 20 minutes Interviews

Questions/Items:

1. Demographic – Characteristics, Profile and Attributes
2. Selling Activities
3. Income and Revenues
4. Products, Suppliers (supply chain) and Transportation
5. Customers

Instrument 3: Night Market Atmosphere

Definition: Status of the Night Market

Data Collection Method:

Direct Observation - Checklists on:

Scope:

1. Density
2. Diversity
3. Social Interactions

Findings

The Bandar Baru Night Market: Physical Market Setting

The night market layout was systematic with the stalls (termed as lots) arranged facing each other along Jalan Pendidikan. It comprised 204 trader lots and each lot is assigned the size of 10' x 10', with 2 feet wide borders marked with yellow grid lines. There were two main entrance points to the night market location. One main entrance and exit point was from Jalan Stadium and the other was from Jalan Perbandaran. From observations, the customers would usually enter from the Jalan Stadium and to a much lesser extent from Jalan Perbandaran. However, the nearby residents would enter by walking in and weaving in between the stall nearest to their homes.

The Bandar Baru night market have been in operation for over 20 years. Signage of the night market which was strategically located at Jalan Stadium, indicates that the operating hours were from 4.30 pm to 10.00 pm. Traders, however, were allowed to set up their stalls earlier or later than the specified time. This night market opened its business twice a week, on Tuesday and Saturday. The traders indicated that there were usually less customers on Saturday than on Tuesday. Since Tuesday is a working day, thus many blue-collar workers from the nearby factories would come in to buy foods for their dinner or some other supplies they needed.

Based on the number of stall lots which was 204, the market size was considered large, but the number of vacant lots (during the study period) was substantial at 61. The customer traffic volume was considered as medium. A third of the 72 traders sold cooked food, followed by clothing (18%), and accessories (16%). The customers, a vast majority of them were of the Malay ethnic group, would spent on average 45 minutes walking casually from one end of the night market to the other end and they would usually be accompanied by family members or friends. The surrounding residents seemed to fully support the night market business as they were seen walking to the market from their nearby homes. They were mainly housewives and youths. The surrounding area comprised mainly of single and double-storey link houses, which

would indicate that the residents were from the medium to the low-medium income groups. There were community facilities nearby provided by the local authorities such as schools, playground, public transportations, public telephones and a prayer room or surau.

Public transportation is available and people could wait for the bus at the bus stop which is located at Jalan Stadium. The Omnibus bus service number that plied along the route was 145A. The bus route started at Medan pasar to Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman, Jalan Ipoh and would proceed to the towns of Kepong, Sg. Buloh, Ijok, Batang Berjuntai and looped back to Bandar Baru. Another bus service was the Cityliner which would make 3 transit stops. The route began from Klang and proceed to Kuala Selangor and Sabak Bernam. Its service would start from 6.30 am to 7.30 pm. The frequency of the bus services was every 30 minutes. Some night market customers were seen arriving on those buses.

Parking facilities were not specifically provided by the Town Council (Majlis Daerah Kuala Selangor) as many customers came to the night market by walking as the houses were in the vicinity of the night market. However, those that drove in, would park their vehicles on the roadside where there were ample parking spaces available along Jalan Stadium and Jalan Pendidikan. There were about 200 parking bays. Other facilities such as public phone and mobile public toilets were provided. A covered shelter area with concrete seats had been built at the field near Jalan Stadium for customers in case it rains. Behind the covered area, was a playground for children if they wish to play while waiting for their parents to shop at the night market. The walking space isle between the two rows of night market stall lots was wide enough (approximately 10 feet wide) to allow sufficient area for customers to comfortably walk through without bumping into each other. The aisle between each trader stall lot was about 2 feet apart, and the traders were prohibited to block the area. Thus, lessening cases of argument between neighbouring traders on “crossing over” borders. Overall, the Town Council crew had maintained the cleanliness of the night market throughout the period of operations. The cleaning crew would also do a thorough cleaning and clearing job of the area once the night market ends its operation.

Table 1: Basic Information on the Bandar Baru Night Market

NO	FACTORS	DESCRIPTION
1	Location and Accessibility	Jalan Stadium and Jalan Pendidikan, Bandar Baru, Kuala Selangor. The night Market is located along Jalan Pendidikan, which is parallel and about 400 meters from the main trunk road.
2	Operation Day/Hours	Tuesday and Saturday From 3:30pm – 10:00pm

<p>3</p> <p>Size of Night Market Empty lots: Night Market Layout Configuration</p>	<p>204 Stall lots 61 1 I- Parallel shape</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="756 456 1385 672"> <tr> <td>Fresh Produce Meat Fish</td> <td>Clothing Accessories Digital/Electronic Materials</td> <td>Cooked Food Beverages</td> </tr> </table> <p>Lot No.204 - Lot No 85</p> <p>Walking Isles</p> <p>Lot No 84 - Lot No 1</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="756 842 1385 1057"> <tr> <td>Fresh Produce Meat Fish</td> <td>Clothing Accessories Digital/Electronic Materials</td> <td>Cooked Food Beverages</td> </tr> </table>	Fresh Produce Meat Fish	Clothing Accessories Digital/Electronic Materials	Cooked Food Beverages	Fresh Produce Meat Fish	Clothing Accessories Digital/Electronic Materials	Cooked Food Beverages
Fresh Produce Meat Fish	Clothing Accessories Digital/Electronic Materials	Cooked Food Beverages					
Fresh Produce Meat Fish	Clothing Accessories Digital/Electronic Materials	Cooked Food Beverages					
<p>4</p> <p>Surrounding Areas</p>	<p>Surrounded by Single-storey and double-storey terrace houses on both sides of the Night Market. At one end, there is a school, while at the other end, there is the Telekom and the Magistrate Court House Building.</p>						
<p>5</p> <p>Facilities</p>	<p>Bus, Taxi, Car and motorcycle parking areas. Portable Toilets Nearby Surau</p>						
<p>6</p> <p>Estimated Total Night Market Earning Per Night</p>	<p>RM15,100</p>						

Traders and Products

Time and Number of Traders Have Set Up Their Stalls: The study observation started at 2 pm. At that time, no traders had arrive to set up their stalls. The earliest trader (a fruit seller) started to set up his stall at about 3.30 pm. At 4:00 pm, 5 traders were seen arriving in their mini trucks and had begun setting up their products for display. The traders usually arrived and leave via Jalan Stadium as there is less traffic flow on the adjacent road. However, some of the traders did arrive via Jalan Perbandaran. At about 4.30 pm, 27 total traders arrived with their cars or

trucks. The peak arrival hour was at 5.00 pm, where 26 traders came in to set up their stalls. At 5.30pm, total number of traders that had arrived was 61. The late arrival traders would had a challenging task of getting to their stall lots since the customer traffic flow who peak at about 6.00 pm. After 6:00pm, very few traders arrived. From 7:00 pm to 7.30 pm the total number of traders remained static at 72. One trader closed his stall at 8.00 pm and another 14 traders closed at 8:30pm. An additional 25 traders ended their business at 9.30pm.

Table 2: Time and Number of Trader Arrival

Time	Arrival	Total Traders
3.00pm	0	0
3.30pm	4	4
4.00pm	5	9
4.30pm	12	27
5.00pm	26	53
5.30pm	8	61
6.00pm	7	68
6.30pm	1	69
7.00pm	2	71
7.30pm	1	72
	Departure	
8.00pm	1	71
8.30pm	14	57
9.00pm	26	31
9.30pm	25	6
10.00pm	6	0

Majority of the traders, especially those that sells cooked food or beverages, would park their vehicles behind their stall lots as it was convenient for them to load and unload their goods. However, a small number of traders, those with big trucks and those that sold fruit and clothing, would unload their goods and parked their vehicles on the grassy area next to the field.

The cooked food traders would normally set up their stove and cooking equipment at the back portion of their stall lots so as to avoid accidents and also prevent the heat and smoke to affect their customers. The fresh vegetable and fruit traders would set up their products display at the stall lots on a U-shaped table top which would allow them to place as many products as possible. The clothes traders would place their goods on hangers and arranged them in neat rows so that customers could make their selection easily.

There were basically 9 types of traders as indicated in Table 3. The highest number of traders, 36 traders, were cooked foods and drinks traders and they occupied 52 stall lots. Some of the cooked food offered for sale were fried food such as fried mushroom, fried potatoes, fried kuey

teow (flat noodle), fried mee and meehoon (noodles), and fried fish crackers (keropok lekor). Other popular food items offered for sale were apam balik (a type of pancake), burger, buttered corn, nasi lemak, malay/nyonya kuih, laksa and bihun sup (noodle soup), mee kari (noodle curry), satay (meat on skewers), kebab, rojak, otak-otak, popiah, karipap, pizza, coffee powder and yong tau foo. Assorted beverages and juices were offered for sale such as sugar cane, soya bean, lime juice, corn, asam boi, honeydew, yam, coconut, longan, and orange. The beverage trader stall were usually the most attractive with the display of a spectrum of colours from the different fruit juices. The second type was 11 clothing traders who occupied 26 stall lots.

The results displayed in Table 9 indicate that a third would be the 9 traders selling accessories (shoes, watches, books etc) who occupied in total, 22 stall lots. The shoes traders were selling a spectrum of shoes ranging from man to woman, kid to adult and shoes for working and for formal wear. There were 4 dry food traders that took up 14 stall lots. There were 4 traders each that sell fruit and vegetable, but the fruit traders occupied 11 stall lots while the vegetable traders took up 9 lots. The fruit traders displayed various fruits such as orange, apple, pear, prune, pineapple, banana, durian, dokong and other seasonal local fruits to cater to different customers' demand. There were 2 fish and sea products traders that occupied 4 lots and 1 household goods trader that occupied 3 stall lots. There also only 1 trader that sold uncooked chicken and fresh meat and he took up only 2 stall lots. Accessories including hand phone accessory, man accessory, woman accessory, shoes, watches, clock, CD, books and toys. Clothing including stocking, bed linen, and second-hand clothes was for sale.

Table 3: Types and Breakdown of Traders

No	Traders Product Type	No. of Lots	No of Traders
1	Cooked Foods & Drinks	52	36
2	Clothing	26	11
3	Accessories (shoes, watches, books, etc)	22	9
4	Dry Foods	14	4
5	Fruits	11	4
6	Vegetables	9	4
7	Fish and Sea Product	4	2
8	Household Products	3	1
9	Chicken and Meat	2	1
	Total	143	72

There are 55 traders of the Malay ethnic group, followed by 15 Chinese traders and 2 Indian traders. The Chinese traders mainly sell vegetable and fruits, while the Malay traders sell cooked food and beverages, and some also sell clothes and accessories. This would be a typical

division/breakdown of traders for a night market located in a predominantly Malay residential area.

Table 4: Breakdown of Traders' Ethnic Group

Ethnic Group	Number of Trader	Percent
Malay	55	76
Chinese	15	21
Indian	2	3
Total	72	100

Traders' Characteristics and Behaviour

Traders are quite competitive especially those who were selling similar items. However, they were apparently quite friendly with one another for they had grown to know each other well over the years. They also estimated well on the quantity that they could sell. Fluctuation on their sales depended on the weather conditions and public holidays, rather than on how tough the competition might be (Mwanja, Evusa & Ndirangu 2018). Customer loyalty translated into repeated purchase which remains an important aspect in the night market business. Customers usually buy the same product from the same trader when they visit the night market. Therefore, there would usually be no “hard/pressure” selling by the traders. Also, at the end of their business day, the traders would get rid of their unsold cooked food by exchanging with others.

Generally, the traders were found to be friendly, very hospitable and to respond well to customer enquiry. They usually provide more information than what is asked when they are not attending to any customers. They are prompt in attending to customers' requests and would carry on a conversation with their regular customers when they were not busy. Most traders seemed to know what their regular customers' would request and they would enquire if they would like to request the same order. The traders of the accessories, shoes and clothing would attentively help their customers to make the product selection. However, those traders were often the loudest in calling out to customers to visit their stall. Generally, all the traders were quite persuasive in inviting customers to their stalls but in a friendly manner. Four traders were interviewed on an in depth basis, and Table 5 shows the breakdown of the responses of the 4 traders. The interesting item to note was that the traders would normally participate in more than 1 night market. Some are known to have teams of traders under them so that they can participate at higher frequency and earn substantial income.

Table 5: Selected Individual Trader Profile

No	Traders Characteristics	1	2	3	4

1	Age	47	42	24	51
2	Race	Malay	Malay	Malay	Malay
3	Gender	Male	Female	Male	Male
4	Residence Location	Tanjung. Karang	Taman Melawati	Bukit Badung	Bestari Jaya
5	Product	Cooked Food	Clothing	Meat	Cooked Food
6	Year Started Business	7 years	5 years	10 months	8 years
7	Other Night Market Locations	Tg. Karang B.Rotan Sg Sirih Btg. Berjuntai (4)	Pantai Remis Paya Jaras Bukit Belimbing (3)	Pasar Ijok Bukit Badung (2)	Bukit Cheraiah, Tanjung Karang, Kapar (3)
8	Investment per night	RM400	RM150	RM800	RM100
9	Investment to start the business		RM1,500		
10	Estimated Net Earnings	RM500	RM200-500	RM1,400	RM150 -230

Other important aspects of the product at the night market included pricing, labelling, and packaging. Product pricing has always been important and traders compete to set an attractive price for those uncontrolled items. Customers are used to bargaining for discount and the traders would usually provide discounts for quantity. Customers make comparisons and judgments based on the pricing, but they usually know which product (especially for cooked food items) would be best for them and pay for these even if they are at a slightly higher price. This minimises misunderstanding between customer and trader and reduces the need for prolonged negotiation. It is a requirement of the local authority that prices on items have to be displayed clearly. Some traders indicated prices on 3"x4" cards, while others would create an attractive banner with the pictures and prices stated on it.

Product packaging is important in ensuring the quality of food is maintained for the total takeaway services of the night market. At the same time, the traders would try to use packaging material that did not reduce their revenue. The state government had been very proactive in stipulating specific packaging allowed and the traders have to abide by the regulations, for example, the use of styrofoam has been banned and the use of plastics is discouraged.

Product display would vary from stall to stall dependent on individual creativity and skill. The kuih traders nicely arranged their product with different colours and sizes, packaging them in

different volume and mixture. The cooked food traders display their cooking skills by preparing and cooking the food at their stall, thus attracting the customers with the smell and finesse. The pizza traders displayed all the different pizza types and sizes in neat and attractive rows to entice customers. The burger and other fried food traders packed their products in attractive clear packaging. The fruit traders hang their fruits in bunches at their stalls.

Food labelling has been widely used for cooked food items. Though the ingredients were not indicated on the label, the traders often responded well to enquiry by customers. Labelling however was widely used for dry food items, such as cookies. The importance of labelling depends on the type of customers the night market is catering to and where it is located.

Night Market Atmosphere: Density, Diversity, and Interaction

The interaction between traders and customers could be considered as “heads-up” interaction where the traders often address personally with the customers by having eye-to-eye contact, and with a smooth flow of two-way communication. Specific information on this aspect was observed at the kuih trader stall. Each transaction with the exchange of information would take on average, 2 minutes. Another observation was noted at the vegetable trader stall. The trader was communicating with a customer who was a foreigner. The trader was doing most of the talking for she was trying to recommend, by using simple words and hand gesture, the best method of cooking a particular green leafy vegetable. The customer was looking at her most of the time while nodding his head. He then selected a certain vegetable and left after 5 minutes. A customer at the accessory stall spend a longer time looking over the wide selection of costume jewellery, while the trader stood slightly behind. There were 4 other customers there. She took about 10 minutes, but there was hardly any conversation except when she asked for the price, acknowledged it and paid for it.

The interaction between traders and traders was very close. They were often heard asking about each family members and having small conversation every so often from the time as they set up their stalls and when they were about to leave. They acknowledged and greeted each other even from 3 or 4 stalls away. Most of the traders came in with 2 or 3 of their family members to help them at the stall. Even their children were friendly with the children of other stall owners. They would also buy each other food items (at a heavily discounted price) and eat them during their dinner or rest period. As indicated earlier, they would exchange food with other traders at the end of the day’s business.

These interactions took place amongst the various ethnic group traders, between the different ethnic group traders and different ethnic group customers, and amongst different age groups of customers and traders, Most of the interactions were “heads-up” interaction and even during the peak, busy period, there would be brief attempts, at least in the exchange of a smile.

Table 6: Night Market Atmosphere

No	Factors	Descriptions
1	Traders Count	72
2	Customers Count	2,214
3	Interactions	Medium to High
4	Density	Average 31 customers to 1 traders. Majority of customers came between 5:30pm and 6:00pm. Average time spent by a customer is 45 minutes.
5	Diversity	Predominantly Malay Traders (77%) and with majority Malay Customers who were residents of nearby terrace houses. Stalls sell mainly cooked food (49%) followed by clothing (15%) and Accessories (13%). However, 30% of the stalls are unoccupied.
6	Overall Atmosphere	A medium size night market with average customers spending from medium income customers. Quite vibrant with ample isles for walking, but it is a long stretch to walk from one end to the other. Quite a large number of families were seen walking leisurely. Authorities were quite alert for illegal traders for a few were seen offering their products as soon as the authorities turned their back.

Bandar Baru Night Market Dynamism

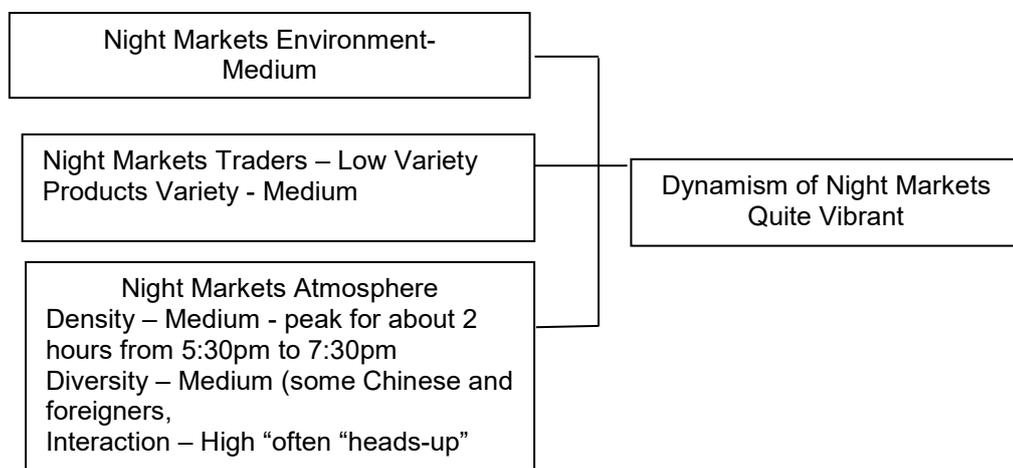
The night market environment was considered a medium in vibrancy since about a quarter of the stall lots were vacant during the study period. The I-shape set-up was seen as too far to walk from one end to the other end. Thus, the stalls close to the Jalan Stadium were often seen as lacking in customer activity. This was partly because there were no cooked food stalls (where the crowd would normally be found) there and also no housing area there.

There was quite a range of product variety with almost a quarter of the stall lots occupied by cooked food or beverage products. Most traders (76%) were of the Malay ethnic group while the majority of customers were also Malays since the night market is located in a predominantly Malay residential area. There were some foreigner customers who worked in nearby factories.

The dynamism of the night market was quite vibrant with the night market environment rated as medium mainly to the large number of vacant stall lots and imbalance in the spread of customers along the night market area. However, it was compensated by the large number of customers walking at the other half of the market area. On the night market traders, a low score was given since three quarters were of one ethnic group. There was a good range of product variety and that range of variety might be similar with other night market offerings. The smell, the sound of music, and voices of traders, customers, and young children, and the colourful blend of food and beverage products, customers' outfits and display of products created a vibrant atmosphere to the night market. The total number of customers for the night was 2,214, and the ratio of customer to trader was 31:1.

The night market atmosphere was considered as medium. The density was considered as to the peak period being from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm. and at a low count at other times. There was also a level of medium in the diversity of customers since most were Malays with a few Chinese and foreigner customers. The Interaction was rated as high since most interactions between traders and customers were close and also the interaction among traders was very close. Overall, the dynamism of the Bandar Baru night market was considered as quite vibrant.

Illustration 2: Association between night market environment, trader and product variety, and night market atmosphere with dynamism of night market



Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to examine the dynamism of the night markets as measured by the night market atmosphere, the traders and product variety and the night market atmosphere. The overall night market dynamism was found to be quite vibrant upon taking account the combinations of those three factors which was with mixed results. The study investigated the night market environment from the aspects of its location, accessibility, and number of stall

lots, its layout configuration and the surrounding area. It investigated the traders to understand their demographic profiles and attributes and further examined the night market atmosphere by looking into the diversity, density and level of interactions among both the traders and customers and traders and traders.

The exploratory and descriptive approaches in combining the information gathered provided an in depth understanding and an appreciation of the role of the night markets in contributing to the informal economy as an alternative option in retailing and the role played in supporting the growth of budding entrepreneurs as well as serving as the main income source for middle aged and elderly traders.

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