Customers Behaviour and Tourist Attraction Factors of the Bestari Jaya Night Market


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Abstract

This research explored the customers’ characteristics, and their visitation and spending patterns at the Bestari Jaya Night Market in the district of Kuala Selangor. It also looked into the night market environment and examined the factors that contributed towards the liveliness of the night market so as to ascertain if it would be attractive to both customers and tourists to visit. The findings indicated that the Bestari Jaya night market environment had a medium to low impact since the night market was of average size, with medium traders’ and customers’ density and diversity, and that, on average the customers spend only about 35 minutes. They would usually go directly to the stalls where they had planned to get their supplies which was mainly cooked food. Factors that could attract tourists would be the location of the night market since it was situated close to other popular and established tourist attraction sites, that the safety and security of the area is assured by the local authority, the cleanliness and wholesomeness of the cooked food, and that the prices of items were reasonable. Additionally, the tourists could, in a short time, be able to catch a glimpse of the local culture and taste the local cuisine. The Bestari Jaya night market operated only on Fridays, but every evening there would be at least one night market that would be operating in the Kuala Selangor and Sabak Bernam districts. Thus, tourists would be able to visit the night market on any chosen evening.

Keywords: Customer Typology, Customer Behaviour, Spending Patterns, Night Market Environment, Tourist Attractions.

Introduction

Tourism comprised of the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes (Songel, 1993). In Malaysia, the tourism sector had contributed to the national economy whereby, it had become the second largest foreign income earner. The Malaysian government had put such great effort in the promotion of tourism products internationally via its Ministry of Tourism and the National Tourism Board and it had been strongly supported by the private sectors and the various tourism associations. With the abundance of cultural and natural resources, and the diversity in food and ethnic groups, the tourism industry had flourish and would continue to be an important agenda in the Malaysia’s development plan. One major contribution towards the development of the rural and small towns would be the night markets for they had served as the platform to support the growth of small businesses especially among the youths, the provision of steady income for the traders, and an important shopping alternative for the customers.

A night market had been identified as a small business that operated during the evening hour, which offered for sale a variety of products and cooked food. It had increasingly become a preferred place for customers to shop for their needs as the location was usually in nearby residential areas, and the operating hours were convenient. Customers could find a variety of...
goods at bargained prices. The colourful sight, smell and sound at the night market had made it an attractive place for spending the leisure time in the evening with families and friends. The diversity of the customers, visitors, and traders had become an additional attraction factors of the night market and these had contributed towards making the night market as a popular place for social encounters for the local communities, customers, and visitors.

**Purpose of the Study**

This exploratory study was conducted to understand the:
- customers behavioural pattern at the night market,
- major factors influencing the customers to visit the night market,
- potential factors that could contribute towards making it attractive for tourists and visitors, and
- factors influencing the customers’ buying decisions.

Upon the understanding of those factors, the study would suggest the major factors that could be used to attract customers and tourists or visitors to the night market.

**Significance of the Study**

The study could provide some important insights into the understanding of customers’ behaviour at the night market. An understanding of the customers’ pattern of behaviour at the night market could help the various stakeholders to provide appropriate services and facilities that could indirectly add to the positive perception on the night market and which could draw in more visitors and tourists.

From the knowledge on customers’ behaviour such as regularity of visitation and spending patterns, the traders could provide better services such as queuing system and mode of interaction, and appropriate products such as quality, quantity, packaging, and price that could meet their needs. The local authority could provide appropriate safety and security measures, and provide ample and suitable support facilities for the customers such as parking areas, resting areas, restrooms, and praying area. For the researchers, the study could add to the limited body of knowledge available on the viability and dynamism of the night market from the perspective of customers and visitors.

**Research Framework**

The study focused on the analysis of two major variables, the night market environment, and the night market customers. The night market environment would be determined by two factors: its characteristics and the location of the night market or its site. The night market customers would be assessed through their characteristics, their regularity of visitations and their spending patterns. Thus, the attractiveness of the Night Market would depend on those two major factors, as illustrated in the following framework.

**Illustration 1: Study Framework of Night Market Customers’ Behaviour**

**Literature Review**

The literature review briefly explained the concept of tourism, the concept of customers’ behavior, and the concepts and definitions of night market.

**Concept of Tourism**

In the *Annals of Tourism Research*, 1979, VI (4):390, the framework for the general study of tourism, tourist, and the tourism industry was discussed and it stated that there were three
approaches to the topics: economic, technical, and holistic that might formed the foundation for the discussions and analysis. It was argued that the multi facets approaches would require a holistic definition. Thus, a system methodology was often used to develop a relevant definition of tourism for the study. But, whatever the orientation, there were five elements that were consistently differentiated and they were the tourists, the three geographical elements (generating region, transit route, and destination region), and the tourist industry. The process of tourism should be dissected to show that it was inherently a partially-industrialized one, and the tourist industry was shown to contain several sectors with functional and spatial connections across the system. Some researchers had suggested on the applications of the proposed framework for academic research, education, business and government arenas of tourism. The main theme would be to emphasize that the tourism's many facets were to be connected and that it would be both possible and desirable to include an explicit recognition of those connections in the general studies on the subject.

**Concept Customer/Consumer Behaviour**

The Market Business News defined customer as “a person or company that received, consumed or buy a product or service and could choose between different goods and suppliers. The main goal of all commercial enterprises was to attract customers or clients, and make them purchase what they had for sale. One definition of customer behaviour would include "the study of individuals, groups, or organizations and the processes that they used to select, secure, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes would have on the consumer and society (Lars Perner, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Clinical Marketing, Department of Marketing, Consumer Behaviour: the Psychology of Marketing).

Customer behaviour had been legitimized in marketing for it had provided the conceptual framework and strategic thinking for carrying out successful segmentation of markets (Schiffman and Kanuk 2000). However, this was because the marketing concept and idea that existed in firms, according to Winer (2000), was to satisfy the customer needs. He added that the firms could satisfy those needs only to the extent that they could understand their customers. Thus, for this reason, marketing strategies must incorporate knowledge of customer behaviour into every facet of a strategic marketing plan (Solomon, 2002).

**Defining Night Market**

There were numerous conceptual definitions of night market in the literature. According to Huang et al (2009), "night market could be defined as a trading place during evening and would include small businesses that offered a variety of cheaper products, and cooked food". It was an extension of ordinary market in the early days and it would usually be located in old urban centres. In an article in http://www.virtualmalaysia.com/destination/night market, it was stated that, “Night markets in Malaysia are definitely popular destinations among shoppers and many of these spots, like the famous Petaling Street, would already be on the must-visit list for tourists. Night market or “pasar malam” would take place in the evenings from about 6 pm to 11pm at various places”. In Malaysia as well as throughout Asia, evening hours would often be used as the time for socializing, and night markets often function as the place for leisure activities where people would interact which experiencing and enjoying the local food, the sight, and sound of the place. The night markets would be the place where customers could weave their way around the stalls, enjoying the smells of local foods and might pick up some souvenirs. Huang et al (2009) and Nasir et al., (2019) also indicated that night market offered variety of services from selling food and clothing to public performance and entertainment, and that night markets had been known as the sign of the bustling urban life in many Asian cities. In Asian communities around the globe, night markets had emerge not only as a popular form of leisure and commercial activity, but also as a platform for community building and revitalization of rundown areas.

**Research Methodology**

The section discussed the appropriate research design that was selected. The selection was based upon the best way to minimize interruption and disruption on the phenomenon to be examined so as not to distort the actual sequence of behaviour. However, the required demographic information on each customers was required, and these were only gathered from the customers just before they exit the site.

**Research Design**

The research design used in this study was the combination of exploratory and descriptive designs. The exploratory design was aimed at searching for information to help explain the phenomonon, while the descriptive design would be used to describe the phenomenon. The study was carried at one particular site where a close examination was undertaken to probe somewhat
in depth into a few customers’ characteristics, behaviour, and spending patterns. This would entailed that each of the customer’s steps, and behaviour and spending pattern would had to be follow through until he or she left the site. Additionally, the night market conditions or environment would had to be tracked to determine the density and diversity at certain specific point in time. Thus, the research approach appropriate was the ethnographic approach.

The research was conducted at the Bestari Jaya night market, and the data collection were conducted twice. Each period extended over the entire operating hours of the night market. The customers to be interviewed were randomly selected.

**Types of Data and Data Collection Methods**

A typical ethnographic research would employed three kinds of data collection: interviews, observation, and documents. These in turn, would generate three kinds of data: descriptions, quotations, and excerpts of documents. The combination of those three kinds of data collected could then resulted in the narrative description of the night market environment and on each of the customers observed. This narrative form would most often be supported by charts, diagrams and tables.

The primary data were collected from four randomly selected customers at the site. Two customers were tracked at each data collection period. They were observed from the moment they arrived at the site and a detailed narration were noted on his/her behaviour at the night market. A short interview was conducted with the customers just before they left the site, mainly for the purpose of getting their profile. Information on the night market environment such as the configuration, diversity and density were made mainly via observation.

The secondary information was derived from document supplied by the local authority and from their official website. Other sources of information such as papers-based published sources (conference proceedings, research reports, and newspaper articles) or unpublished sources (excerpts derived from discussions and meetings with local authority, and officers at the night market). Information on the surrounding community such as the ethnic groups and the types of residents were also noted. These would had some influence on the types of customers that visited the site and also their spending power.

**Research Instruments**

There were two sets of questionnaires developed for the study. There were: Set 1 which was aimed at finding out the characteristics and behaviour patterns of the customers; and Set 2 was aimed as deriving information on the night market environment. The following were the detailed information on each set of instrument:

**Instrument 1: Night Markets Customers**

Definition: Customers/Shopper who patronizes the night markets whether on a regular or irregular basis.

**Data Collection Methods**

- 5 Customers: Face to face interview – 15 to 20 minutes
- 20 Customers: Survey questionnaires – mail returned.

**Questions/Items**

1. **Demographics Characteristics, Profile and Attributes:**
   - Age
   - Educational level
   - Ethnic background
   - Occupation
   - Distance of residence to night market
   - Workplace distance to night market

2. **Visitation Patterns**
   - First visit
   - Number of visits per month
   - Number of years been visiting the night market
   - Time usually arrive
   - Come with whom
   - Also visit other night market
   - Time duration spent
   - Usually follows the same path/way while walking through the night market

3. **Spending Patterns**
   - Have shopping list
   - Buy things for who
   - Depended on night market for raw materials and groceries
   - Reasons for choosing the night market for shopping
   - Usually buy the same items at each visit
   - Total spending
   - Tendency to underspend/overspend
• Percent of cooked food expenditure
• Usually visit the same stalls
• Number of stalls visited
• Bargain/haggling for discount

4. Customer Behaviour Patterns (via observation)
• Transportation mode
• Arrival time
• Walking through behaviour
• Interaction with traders, with other customers etc
• Number of stalls visited
• Items bought
• Total time spent at night market

5. Customer’s Opinion of the Night Market
• Opinions on night market environment
• Perception of the night market favourable factors and unfavourable factors about the night market
• Suggestions on improvement of the night market

Instrument 2: 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 Methods

Observations at 7 specific periods – At arrival of 1st. trader, 1st hour, 2nd. Hour, 3rd. hour, 4th, hour, 5th hour, and at closing. This would involved an estimation of headcounts.

Questions/Items

Researcher’s Observations
• Favourable factors and unfavourable factors about the night market
• Suggestions on improvement of the night market
• Density of the night market (at 7 observable time)

• Diversity of the night market (age group, ethnic group)
• Intensity (interaction patterns)
• Overall atmosphere/environment (rate of pace movement, noise, colour, smell etc.)

Finding

Information on the Study Site

The selected study site was the night market at Bestari Jaya which was located in the district of Kuala Selangor in the state of Selangor, Malaysia. The night market was under the controlled of Kuala Selangor Town Council or Majlis Bandaran Kuala Selangor (MBKS). The MBKS had in total 7 night market sites in Kuala Selangor. Bestari Jaya was a small town and the night market was located at the intersection of Jalan Bukit Badong to Ijok, near to SMK Batang Berjuntai.

Night Market Environment

The night market opened only on Friday and it operated from 4:00 pm to 10:00 pm, but there might be some customers who came in early since some traders would have set up their stalls as early as 3:00 pm. The surrounding areas of this night market site consisted of a multi-ethnic community. There were 3 major ethnic groups there: the Malays, the Malaysian Chinese, and the Malaysian Indians, and with a very small minority of the indigenous groups, and the foreign workers from Indonesia, Bangladesh, India, and Vietnam that had added colour to the population of Bestari Jaya. The area could be described as having a multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-religious community. The nearest housing area was the Taman Suria where quite a number of residents worked at the nearby industrial area. The Bestari Jaya night market was also located in the Taman Suria housing area. The night market was considered as medium in size since it had 130 stall lots, but 6 lots were vacant. There were 117 traders and some traders had taken up 2 stall lots. One third of the total number of traders were involved in selling cooked food, while another 20 traders, who were mainly teenage Malay traders were selling clothing and accessories. The Bestari Jaya night market was easily accessible since it was located only about 16 kilometers from the town of Malawati and it would take about 25 minutes to drive to the site.
Night Market Typology

The Night Market Environment was examined from its physical setting, the market atmosphere which included the density and diversity of traders, products, and customers. The night market typology had been classified into the following 5 types: (1) Large and High Impact (Number of stalls was 200 and above and is located in high traffic and busy areas, very high density and diversity of traders and customers); (2) Medium Impact (Number of stalls ranged between 150 to 199, and situated just off the main traffic flow, medium diversity and density of traders and customers); (3) Medium to Low Impact (Number of stall ranged from 100 to 149 and located within town areas, with medium density and diversity of traders and customers); (4) Minimal Impact (Number of stalls ranged between 70 to 99, located in the suburb, with low traders and customers density and diversity); and (5) Very Little Impact (Number of stalls was below 70, located in rural or village area and with low density and diversity of customers and traders).

The Bestari Jaya Night Market would be classified as typology 3 which indicated a Medium to Low Impact. As indicated earlier, the number of stall lots was 130 and the customers comprised of mainly Malays at 53%, and the Malaysian Indians at 28%. The customer volume peaked between 7:30 pm with a total of 631 customers. During the peak period, customers and visitors could be seen walking almost shoulder-to-shoulder, almost bumping into each other as they made their way through the narrow pathways. The loud voice of the traders could be heard as they promoted their products. The smoke and smell from various types of food being cooked added to the interesting and colourful scene of the night market. The crowd, noise, smell, and loud voices would began to taper off until only the sound of the dump truck could be heard at about 11:00 pm. The ratio of customer to trader was 19:1. The estimated earning per night for the night market was RM34,400, with the average spending per customer at RM15.80 and each stall would derived approximately RM277.40.

Information on Customers

Respondent 1

Respondent 1 was male of 39 years old, a Malaysian Indian, who live in very close proximity to the Bestari Jaya night market. It would take him about five minutes to walk to the night market since his house was located about 50 meters from the night market. According to him, the night market had provided him with the closest place to get his fresh supply of groceries, especially vegetables. He worked at an oil palm plantation, as an assistant manager. He had worked at the plantation for almost 20 years after he completed his secondary education. He earned a salary of about RM1,500 per month. He had been married for about 10 years and they had a teenage son and 2 daughters. He always come to the night market with his wife or with one of his daughters, but sometimes he would come by himself to buy things that his wife have listed.

He was very familiar with all the stall's location so he would usually go directly to the stalls that sells the items that his wife had
requested. He bought a variety of vegetables at several stalls as he usually did. He seemed to just know what vegetables to buy at which stall. He wasted no time in looking for what to buy and the traders also seemed to know what he wanted and in what quantity. He spent a total of RM9.70. He stated that his extended family members also visited the night market almost every Friday since they also live nearby. He met two of his cousins in front of the toy stall and had a short chat with them before moving on. The following table indicated Respondent 1 the time and his activities. His spent almost 1 hour at the night market.

Table 1.
Information on Respondent 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Type of Stall</th>
<th>Amount Spent (RM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.50 pm -</td>
<td>Vegetable (Tomato, chilli)</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrival Time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.55 pm</td>
<td>Vegetable (cucumber)</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.00 - 6.07 pm</td>
<td>Vegetable (cucumber)</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.11 - 6.17 pm</td>
<td>Vegetable (cucumber)</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.30 - 6.35 pm</td>
<td>In front Toy stall (Chat with cousins)</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.45 pm - Time of Leaving</td>
<td>Total Amount Spent</td>
<td>RM9.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondent 2

Respondent 2 was a male of 31 years old. He had a diploma in Information Technology which he earned from a college in Klang. He was also a Malaysian Indian, and he stayed at Kampung Hollywood which was about two and a half kilometres away from the night market. He had been married for about one and half years and his wife was pregnant with their first child. He worked as a factory security system officer at a nearby oil palm plantation and earned a salary of about RM1,200 per month. He would come to the night market with his wife every week. On this particular night, they arrived by motorbike at about 8:20 pm. He would usually buy fresh vegetables such as birds eye chilly, and tomatoes, and fruits such papaya and oranges. They bought some household items such as spoons and knife. They would usually head for the cooked food stall first to buy fried chicken and fruit juices at the beverage stall, before walking to the other parts of the night market to buy the other items. The wife stated that most of the time they would stick to what they had plan to buy but sometimes they did buy on impulse especially the kuih and fish crackers. The total amount they spend was RM44.15 which was slightly below the RM50.00 that they had budgeted.

He apparently had quite a few friends that he greeted as they walk leisurely, but there was one particular friend that he took some time chatting for about 15 minutes. Overall, they spent about two hours at the night market. They left at 9:20 pm and at that time, there were very few customers at the night market.

Table 2.
Information on Respondent 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Type of Stall</th>
<th>Amount Spent (RM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:20 - 7:45 pm</td>
<td>Cooked Food and Drinks (Fried chicken, Keropok lekor, kuih, and Drink)</td>
<td>20.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:55 - 8.10 pm</td>
<td>Vegetable (Chili Padi, Tomato)</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:20 - 8.30 pm</td>
<td>Fruit (Orange, Papaya)</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.40 - 9.10 pm</td>
<td>House equipment (Spoon, Knife)</td>
<td>15.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:20 – Time of Leaving</td>
<td>Total Amount Spent</td>
<td>RM44.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondent 3

Respondent 3 was a female aged 28 years and lived in a rented house with her husband and two children at the Bukit Dagar Estate area, which was about 25 kilometres from the night market. Her husband worked on odd jobs as a building contractor and usually worked near their house. They had been married for three years and had one son and one daughter. She came with a friend who was her neighbour by car. She came at least once a month, and she liked coming to the Bestari Jaya night market because she used to live in Bestari Jaya before she got married.

They arrived quite early at about 4:30 when some of the traders were still setting up their tents. They spent some time walking leisurely looking at each of the cooked food stalls before they decided to buy some fish sticks, keropok lekor, and some fried noodles for the family. Her husband had reminded her to buy a t-shirt, so they walked past several stalls before arriving at the stall selling t-shirts. They then walk back a few stalls to buy some vegetables. After buying some fruits and vegetables, she decided to buy a pair of sport shoes for her son, so they retracted their steps back to the clothing and shoes area where she bought the shoes.

Respondent 3 did not prepare a purchasing list and she would try to recall the things that she needed to buy. Thus, it had taken her and her friend a much longer time at the night market. But, to her it was a time well spent away from home because she had been very busy with house chores all day long and it was well worth the time spent with her friend. In total they spent slightly over 2 hours and between them, they spent RM71.50.
Table 3.
Information on Respondent 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Type of Stall</th>
<th>Amount Spent (RM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4:30 – Arrival Time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:35 – 5:15 pm</td>
<td>Cooked food (fish sticks, keropok lekor, fried noodles)</td>
<td>35.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:20 – 5:40 pm</td>
<td>Cloth (T-shirt)</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:45 – 6:05 pm</td>
<td>Vegetable and Fruit (Long bean and red apples)</td>
<td>4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:12 – 6:25 pm</td>
<td>Shoe (sport shoes)</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:35 – Time of leaving</td>
<td>Total Amount Spent</td>
<td>RM71.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondent 4

Respondent 4 was a Malaysian Chinese aged 55 years who was staying about one kilometre away from the night market. He had worked as a truck driver at the nearby oil palm factory but had since retired. He had six children and seven grandchildren. He lived with his wife who was a Malaysian Indian aged 50 years, with one of the children and their daughter-in-law and their three grandchildren. He was originally from the island of Penang, but had stayed in Bestari Jaya when he got married to his wife who was from there. He would walk to the night market with his wife and they would talk as they strolled leisurely to the night market. They looked at it as a form of exercise and also to spend some quite time away from the grandsons. Thus, to them the night market would be a place to relax. He would make a point to come to the night market every Friday. They spent about 50 minutes at the night market to buy some Tou Foo Fah and some banana. On the way back, they would stop at a retail shop to get some eggs and bread and also some biscuits and sweets for the grandsons.

Table 5.
Customer Counts by Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time (PM)</th>
<th>Malaysians</th>
<th>Malaysian Indians</th>
<th>Other Ethnic Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3:30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Night Market Customer Typology

Customers were those that patronized the night markets whether on a regular or irregular basis. The typology was built based on the combinations of information on demographic variables, visitation patterns, and spending patterns of customers. They were four types of customers that were identified on the overall customer behaviour at the night market: (1) Social Opportunity (dual purpose – buying and taking the opportunity to meet friends, traders and therefore would spend a longer time at the night market); (2) Family Outing and Leisure (a weekly affair with two of more family members walking in group and buying things that meet the need of various family members, normally would arrive towards late night market.)
afternoon); (3) Hanging Around (usually students and teenagers walking in two or group of three, eating and sipping their drinks while walking, often stopped (intermittently) and discussed on specific topics as they casually walked the about the whole area, no specific time of arrival. They would usually buy cooked food); and (4) Buy and Go (stopped by on the way from office or place of work to home, would spend very little time at the night market, products bought were mainly cooked food and groceries). In observing the customer behaviour at the Bestari Jaya Night Market, a vast majority of the customers would be classified as the ‘Buy and Go’.

The customers, which totalled about 2,177, spend on average 35 minutes at the night market where they were seen mainly buying cooked food and groceries. These included family groups that had come to the night market to buy food supplies and cooked food. A large number of customers were transient customers, being those from nearby factories who stopped by on their way home. These transient customers were mainly foreign workers and they walked or use bicycles to and from work. There were numerous oil palm plantations within a five mile radius of the night market. Thus, the plantation workers represented another major customer segments. Several visitors were seen looking around at selected stalls and they were observed buying mainly cooked food for themselves. They spent on average less than RM5 each. They would walked about leisurely for 5 to 10 minutes before making their way to some other destinations or rendezvous.

**Summary and Recommendations**

The following were the two main findings from the study on the Bestari Night Market:

1. **Night market typology: Medium to Low Impact:** Number of stall lots were 130 with 6 vacant lots. There was medium level of diversity since of the total number of traders (117), 77% were Malays, 15% Malaysian Chinese, and 8% were Malaysian Indians. Of the total 2,177 customers, 53% were Malays, 6% Malaysian Chinese, 29% Malaysian Indians, and the balance 12% were foreigners, thus the customer diversity was also considered as medium. The density of the night market was at medium where the most crowd was at 7:30 pm with about 29% of the total customers were there at that time. The interaction level between traders and customers was also at minimal level since the pace of movement was quite rapid.

2. **Customer typology:**
   - **Buy and Go:** Stopped by on the way from place of work to home, would spend very little time at the night market, products bought were mainly cooked food and groceries. The average amount of time spent at the night market was 35 minutes.

The factors that could contributed towards drawing in more tourists and visitors were:

1. **Location** – close proximity to tourist attractions destinations:
   - Bukit Melawati, the historical landmark in Kuala Selangor
   - Firefly habitat tourist attractions,
   - Eagle feeding area
   - Popular seafront locations which had seafood restaurants

2. **Availability of 7** other night markets in operations every evening of the week within the Kuala Selangor and Sabak Bernam districts. Thus, visitors or tourists would be able to visit a night market on any night of the week.

3. Strong support of local authorities – to ensure safety and security of customers, tourists and visitors. Their close monitoring of activities at the night markets.

4. **The perceptions of customers on the night market were positive** – as a convenient place to get their food and household supplies at reasonable price and at convenient location and time

5. **The vibrant factors of the night market environment** – friendly atmosphere, sight, sound, and smell and the extensive choices of products available.

6. **Display of some aspects of the local culture and local cuisine.**

**Conclusions**

The knowledge derived from the study on the customer behaviour at the Bestari Jaya night market had provided additional understanding on the importance of the night market as a viable alternative to retail shopping. It had provided some insights into the customers’ behaviour, their visitation and spending patterns. It provided information on the heads up interactions, and it could bridge the gaps through the promotion of greater understanding amongst the various ethnic groups and the community of the area. The night market, in its small way, had contributed to the development of aspiring entrepreneurs and it had brought some lively actions to the otherwise slow moving pace of the rural and village areas of the country.

The major player to ascertain that the night market would continue to contribute and meet the
expectations of the traders, customers, tourists and visitors and the surrounding communities would be the local authority. The Kuala Selangor local authority had been very proactive in monitoring the activities at the night markets and the maintenance of appropriate behaviour of traders and customers. It had in place an appropriate strategic development plans for the night markets to ensure that adequate support facilities for traders, customers and visitors would be available. To ensure the professionalism of the budding traders, the local council had provided advisory services, training programs, and health check for traders. The local council had also assigned officers to work closely with the communities to ensure their safety and that their privacy would not be violated especially by haphazard parking, littering and unsightly garbage, and the loud noise emitted by the night market.

Evidently, this research had been just the beginning step toward understanding the customers' behaviour at the night market. Further in-depth qualitative and quantitative studies would be required to ascertain on the important roles of the traders, customer, tourists, visitors, and local authority in ensuring the continued success of the night markets in their contribution to the local and national economy.

References


