

Article

Potentials of Informal Street Vending as a Place Making Tool in Bandar Tasik Puteri, Selangor

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Abstract: The invention of street vendors in urban public places help in creating a living cultural enclave despite the robustness of street activities. This paper aims to explore the potentials of street vending as a place making tool in creating a dynamic public area. By choosing Bandar Tasik Puteri as a case study, this paper investigates how street vendors may help to create and improve the livelihood in a public place. The mixed method approach through site observation and questionnaire survey were adopted to capture tangible and intangible aspect of the study area. Findings of the study reveals that Bandar Tasik Puteri has a great potential for street vendor activities as it will improve quality of life of local community, foster social interactions and create dynamic public space within the area. However, several challenges need to be resolved beforehand, including limited space and regulatory issues. The paper highlights the importance of a supportive legislative framework and a collaborative approach among stakeholders to enable the long-term growth of street vending as a means of improving public spaces and boosting public participation.

Keywords: Public space; place making; street vending; urban design; Malaysia

Introduction

Society and cultural values play an important role in creating public space and social relations within a community. Generally, public space is beyond a typical definition as they reflect the diversity of urban fabric and able to create memories (Deore & Lathia, 2019). Globally, public spaces are the reflection of the city's diversity that foster social interaction and inclusion, promotes human health and well-being, improve economic exchange and boost cultural expression (Jacobs, 2016). Streets are part of public space where people usually socialize and use to experience the city. Streets are important elements of the urban environment's form and functions where social interactions; neighbourhood activities and events take place. Besides that, streets are not only serve as connection between individuals and neighbourhood, but also serves as the effective mobility channel.

Recent studies emphasize how development pressure, increasing space demands and political environment have brought physical shift in urban public spaces, resulting the streets as a highly contested space (Jain & Moraglio, 2014). The absence of public space provisions suppresses economic activity and affects social stability and security. Despite countless successful examples, the importance of public spaces in developing nations has not received the attention it deserves in terms of policy and action. The current proposed site is a spacious area where people usually park their vehicle when visiting this recreational area.

Unfortunately, there is poor provisions especially during night time where the area usually will turn into a hangout spot for the teenagers to do inappropriate things and thus becoming an issue for the community

that lives nearby the area. Given this background, this paper investigate the potential of street vending as a place making tool in creating good public spaces in Bandar Tasik Puteri, Selangor. This paper further argues that street vendors are important elements in creating equitable public spaces. This paper presents an overview of good public space theories and the role of street vending globally.

Literature Review

1. Public Space

Public spaces are areas that are open and accessible to all members of a community, regardless of age, gender, race, or socio-economic status. These spaces can include parks, squares, plazas, streets, and other areas that are open to the public. Designing public spaces requires considering a wide range of factors to ensure that the space is functional, safe, and attractive for all members of the community. According to the World Health Organization (2017), designing public spaces with accessibility in mind can help to ensure that the space is inclusive and welcoming to all. Designing public spaces for inclusivity can help to encourage social interaction and a sense of community in a certain designated space (Francis et al., 2012). A Good Public Space Index by Mehta (2007) identifies six measures of public spaces, including intensity of social use, intensity of use, people's duration of stay, temporal diversity of use and variety of use. These indicators are measured using variables such as duration of stay, number of people engaged in groups, time spent and number of activities in the space.

One of the ideas to create a sense of place for the neighbourhood is through place making. Place making is a planning approach that focuses on creating public spaces that are not only functional, but also reflect the unique character and needs of the community. Place making builds on this idea by incorporating the input and participation of community members in the design and management of public spaces. This can be done through a variety of methods, including public workshops, charrettes, and stakeholder meetings. In addition to creating more attractive and functional public spaces, place making can also have several other benefits. These can include improve economic development, increased social cohesion and a sense of community, and improved public health (Litman, 2014). One of the strategies to achieve the place making strategy is through street vending idea.

2. Street Vending

In the earlier years, the concept of street vendors has been well documented by Cross (2000) who discussed the contribution of street vendors in the community. He argued that street vending activities involve production and exchange of goods and services outside of legal framework, creating various affordable options for consumers. (Bhowmik, 2005) defines street vendor as an individual who offers goods for sale to the public without having a permanent built-up structure from which to sell. Street vending, also known as sidewalk or pavement vending, refers to the sale of goods or services on public sidewalks or streets. It is a common form of entrepreneurship and livelihood in many cities around the world and plays a significant role in place making. Street vending can contribute to a vibrant and lively streetscape, which in turn can lead to increased foot traffic and economic activity in the area (Gehl, 1980). It can also provide a sense of community and cultural identity, as vendors often reflect the diversity and history of the neighbourhood (Lofland & Lofland, 1998). There are several types of street vending, each with its own unique characteristics and challenges. Mobile vending refers to vendors who sell goods or services from a vehicle, such as a cart, truck, or bicycle. This type of street vending is common in urban areas where there is a high demand for quick and convenient access to goods or services (Grobels ek, 2015).

As much as street vending provides a sense of community and cultural identity of a neighborhood, street vending can be categorized as an informal activity. This is because street vending involves production and exchange of legal goods and services without appropriate business permits, violation of zoning codes, failure to report tax liability and non-compliance with labor regulations (Mramba, 2022). This definition is good since it considers all features of informality, which indicates the main characteristic of street vendor activities.

In general, street vending is a diverse activity that plays a vital role in place making and urban life. Mobile-carts, pushcart, and stationary vending are all common types of street vending, each with its own unique characteristics and challenges. By adopting supportive policies and practices, cities can create a welcoming and inclusive environment for street vendors to thrive and contribute to the vibrancy and economic activity of the community. Several studies revealed that street vending activities contribute positively to social sustainability of public spaces. Recent studies by Chen and Chou (2017) discovered that street vendors in Taipei help in fostering dynamic and vibrant public spaces by bringing together people from various social and cultural background in one place. Likewise, (Jon Desron, 2022) observed that street vending activities in Medan help to promote community connections by creating opportunities for social networking and gatherings.

Methodology

1. Research Design

The research was conducted at Bandar Tasik Puteri, a neighbourhood area located in Rawang, Selangor, Malaysia. The neighbourhood area was developed in the early 2000s and has rapidly grown to become a well-established community with a diverse population. Additionally, the development is well-connected to major roads and highways, making it an accessible location for the residents. The development also has several recreational facilities such as playgrounds, swimming pools and jogging tracks, making it an ideal location for families with children.

This research applied a quantitative survey by distributing questionnaires for data collection purpose. The questionnaires are developed into three parts to serve the purpose of this paper. The first section (Section A) comprises the perceptions of street vending activities. Section B captures the current condition of public space in the study area and the last section focused on the general background of the respondents. For both section A and B, 5-point Likert scales are used, ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. (Mahmud, 2008) stated that a Likert scale is a measure of attitude ranging from very positive to very negative, designed to allow respondents to specify how strongly they agree or disagree with the constructed statements relating to an attitudinal object. A good Likert scale should be balanced on both sides of a neutral option that creates a less biased measurement.

2. Sampling Design

Table 1 shows the respondent's demographics profile.

Table 1. Respondent's demographic profile

	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18-24 years old	25	23.2
	25-34 years old	60	55.6
	35-44 years old	16	14.8
	55 years old	7	6.48
Gender	Male	42	38.9
	Female	66	61.1
Race	Chinese	29	26.85
	Indian	20	18.52
	Malay	48	44.44
	Others	11	10.18
Marital Status	Married	65	60.19
	Single	43	39.81
	Student	25	23.15
Employment	Worker (Government Sector)	39	36.11
	Worker (Private Sector)	44	40.74

Respondents from the residents who lived in Bandar Tasik Puteri were selected based on the convenience sampling and were approached via face-to-face. The objectives of the survey were well explained

before a set of questionnaires is handed to them. The survey took about 10 to 15 minutes to be completed. At the end of the field survey, a total of 105 valid questionnaires were obtained and usable for data analysis. This study also uses on-site observation as a supporting data to analyse the current conditions of the public space in the study area.

3. Data Analysis

The data gathered were analysed with descriptive statistics using SPSS software to obtain the result in the frequency tables. Finally, few recommendations were outlined, which are specific interventions or techniques to establish the potentials of street vending activities as a place making tool in Bandar Tasik Puteri.

Findings

This research aimed to obtain respondent's perceptions regarding the implementation of street vending in Bandar Tasik Puteri. Respondent were asked about their opinions on street vending as a place making tool, its significance to the local economy, and its effects on the area as well as its impact towards Bandar Tasik Puteri.

1. Condition of Public Space in Bandar Tasik Puteri

Based on the survey, 56.3% of the respondents usually visited Bandar Tasik Puteri on a weekly basis. 20% of the respondents visit monthly, 15% visit it daily, and 8.8% it occasionally. This indicates that most of the respondents have a frequent schedule of visiting the park, either weekly or daily.

The largest group of visitors (43.8%) came to Bandar Tasik Puteri to exercise, followed by walking (26.3%). Others engage in activities such as bike riding (8.8%), using the playground or other park facilities (12.5%) or simply appreciating nature (8.8%). This information provides insight into what activities people typically engage in when visiting the park. This suggests that the park is well equipped to accommodate fitness activities and is a popular destination for fitness enthusiasts. A smaller percentage of respondents engage in other activities like appreciation of nature, bike riding, and playgrounds or other facilities provided.

Analysis on the condition of the park shows that, majority (52.5%) of the respondents hold a positive view of the environment at Bandar Tasik, with only a small proportion rating it as "not good." This suggests that the park is well-maintained and provides a pleasant environment for visitors. However, the fact that a portion of respondents rated the environment as only "moderate" and "not good" highlights the importance of continued maintenance and improvement efforts to ensure that the park remains a desirable destination for visitors.

2. Implementation of Street Vending

Respondents were asked about the specific types of street vending that they believe could add to the character of the area. The results show that 62.5% of respondent, believe that food vendors contribute to the character of the area. Additionally, 37.5% of the respondent, believe that craft vendors contribute to the character of the area. These results indicate that most respondents believe that food vendors have a positive impact on the area's character. Most of the respondents believe that street vending is a viable economic opportunity for local entrepreneurs. By adopting the concept of street vending in the study area, it will improve the local economy and create a sense of place in the study area. Most of the respondents reflected positive feedbacks and support the street vendors' business activities in the study area.

The open-ended answers in the questionnaire provided a more comprehensive understanding on the street vending as a place making tool from the views of local community and street vendors. Generally, most of the respondents believed that street vending activities are influenced by local culture and behaviour of the street use. Based on the open-ended questions in the survey forms, respondents were asked what criteria of street vending activities they expect to have in the study area. Most of the respondents answered availability and variety of food choices, lively outdoor atmosphere, long business hours and encourage walkability as the main features in proposing street vending public space in the study area. Findings of this study reflected with the findings by G'-Ling and Aminuddin (2019) on the street activities in Chinatown, Kuala Lumpur. They identified six characteristics of the street trading activities in Chinatown, which includes high concentration

of business activities, extended business hours, promotes street walkability, lively outdoor environment, variety of choices and availability of food.

3. The Implications of Street Vending Activities

According to the survey, 88.7% of the respondents believe that implementing a street vending concept at the open parking space in Bandar Tasik Puteri is a good idea as it can liven up the vibrancy of the place and improve social interaction within the community. This suggests that majority of respondents see the potential benefits and positive impact of such an implementation on the area and support the idea of incorporating street vending into the park. However, some of the respondents (11.3%) may not feel comfortable with the suggestion of creating street vending in the study area. Some argued that it may lead crowdedness and uncleanliness if the public space is not properly maintained.

Besides that, findings of this study indicate that 46.3% of respondents believed that street vending supports local economies. This demonstrates that most respondents think street vending benefits the local economy by giving entrepreneurs a chance to start their businesses and support their families. Street vending may give local communities a second source of income, which can help the economy grow and open job opportunities. Additionally, street vending can boost local companies' chances of success by bringing in additional tourists to the area. Finally, street vendors contribute to making streets truly "*public*." By extending the public realm, they serve as a transition between the street and its adjacent properties. Street vending encourages more pedestrian use on streets with heavy vehicular traffic. Street vendors serve as "eyes on the streets," attracting a larger number of people. They create platforms for people of various income levels, ages, communities, and genders to interact actively or passively. In addition, 50% of the respondents stated that street vending makes them feel safer and secure while walking around the neighbourhood. Street vending may have a mix of positive and negative effects on the perception of safety in the area among the respondents. It can be concluded that while street vending may provide a sense of security and community, it may also raise concerns about the potential for crime or other safety issues.

Discussion

This study aims to identify the potentials of street vending activities as a place making tool in Bandar Tasik Puteri, and further suggest suitable recommendations for better street vending management in this area. Based on the findings, most respondents agreed that street vending activities in Bandar Tasik Puteri help to create vibrant public spaces and improve social cohesion as they established services to the local residents. As the residents will share space and obtain services from the vendors, these people will have opportunities to learn mutual respect and local culture of each other. This finding is similar to the study conducted by (Piazzoni & Jamme, 2020) who argued that street vending activities contribute to the vibrancy of the street. Their research revealed the uses of public spaces bring people together and encourage diverse groups to learn mutual respect as they share space. Besides that, majority of respondents believed that street vending activities will help to generate local economy by providing opportunities for entrepreneurs to set up small businesses. Research by Zaman and Ahmed (2023) indicated similar results which street vendors in Khulna, Bangladesh improve informal economy and social sustainability of public areas. Despite the growing interest in the social sustainability of public spaces by street vending activities, some respondents raised several issues that might occur due to street vendors' activities. Some of them argued that street vendors may lead to congestion and uncleanliness if not well maintained. This finding indicated similar results by Otero and Fischer (2016) who found that street vending in Ghana created litter, congestion and several negative impacts on the public health and environment. These circumstances call attention to an established and equitable solution for any space conflicts. The local government and development stakeholders need to rethink on the best approach of accommodating street vending activities.

One of the recommendations that can be proposed is by creating foster partnerships between local authority and street vendors. It is possible to establish a mutually beneficial relationship between the local government and street vendors, which can help to support the growth and development of the street vending business in the area. This can help to ensure that both parties' needs and concerns are addressed, and that the partnership is effective. Local governments can collaborate with local organisations to develop training

programmes for street vendors. Topics such as food safety, hygiene, customer service, and marketing could be covered in these programmes. The programmes could be designed to assist vendors in running their businesses more efficiently and safely, as well as to improve the overall quality of the street vending environment. In addition, local authorities should collaborate with the street vendors to standardise the licensing and permitting process. This could be done by setting up an online portal where vendors can apply for and renew their business licenses and permits, as well as receive latest updates on regulations and guidelines in practicing street businesses. By making it easier for vendors to comply with regulations, local authorities can help to reduce the number of unlicensed vendors operating on the street. A collaboration between the local government and street vendors plays an important role to enhance the role of street vending as a place making tool in Bandar Tasik Puteri.

Other suitable recommendation that can be implement is to encourage community participation in street vending activities. Participation in street vending activities by the community can help to create a sense of ownership and pride among residents in the area, as well as a more cohesive community. This can be accomplished through community events and markets, where residents can actively participate in street vending activities and interact with street vendors and their products. Through the promotion of street vending activities, it is possible to promote the growth and development of the street vending business. Residents can engage with street vendors, sample their products, and learn more about the street vending market at community festivals and markets. This can contribute to a more positive and welcoming environment for street vendors, as well as a more liveable and vibrant community. Furthermore, community involvement in street vending activities can help to raise awareness of the importance of street vending as a place making tool in Bandar Tasik Puteri. Residents can learn more about the positive impact that street vending can have on the community and how it can be used to create a more diverse environment by participating in street vending activities. Finally, encouraging community participation in street vending activities is an important aspect of enhancing street vending's role. It is possible to create a more supportive community, raise awareness of the importance of street vending as a place making tool, and encourage the growth and development of the street vending in the study area.

Another recommendation is to develop a more comprehensive street vending guidelines and policy. A comprehensive street vending policy can provide a clear framework for the regulation and management of street vending activities in the area, ensuring that they are well regulated and controlled. Through the promotion of street vending activities, this can help to create a more socially inclusive and vibrant community. A thorough street vending policy should address all aspects of street vending, such as the location and management of street vending activities and the establishment of partnerships between local governments and street vendors. The policy should also address any potential issues that may arise in the regulation of street vending activities and provide clear guidance on how to deal with these issues. One of a few example of best practices can be seen in Copenhagen, Denmark. Designated vending zones have been established in Copenhagen to provide space for food trucks and other mobile vendors. Vendors can apply for a permit to operate in these zones, which are located in well-known public places such as parks and plazas. Another best practices from other countries is at Mumbai, India. Evening night markets in Mumbai called "bazaars" are very popular with both locals and visitors. Food, clothing, and household goods are just a few of the items that vendors sell. The bazaars are governed by the local government to guarantee their safety and that the vendors are paying the proper taxes. This strategy might be effective in encouraging economic growth and night-time activity in Bandar Tasik Puteri.

Final recommendation for this study is to develop a street vending hub at Bandar Tasik Puteri. This proposal aims to provide a centralised location for street vendors to sell their products and interact with the community. Street vending hub would provide a stable and secure location for street vendors to operate their businesses, as well as a platform for them to showcase their goods and grow their businesses. The space allocation should respond to the needs, scale and context of the local community. Particularly, all street vendors must have access to basic services such as proper lighting, portable water and shade protection from the street elements. Street vendors in Bandar Tasik Puteri can benefit from a more organised and controlled environment for their activities by developing a street vending hub, which can help to improve the quality and safety of their products. The hub could be equipped with basic amenities like restrooms, electricity, and storage

space, making street vending more convenient and accessible for vendors. A street vending hub can also serve as a hub of activity and a community gathering place. It can serve as a gathering place for people to interact, socialise, and experiencing the unique offerings from the street vendors.

Finally, a street vending hub can be a new popular tourist attraction as well as a source of revenue for the local government. The street vending hub can help Bandar Tasik Puteri's overall economic development by attracting tourists and visitors to the area. A street vending hub can help to create a livelier community while also supporting the growth and development of the street vending industry by providing street vendors with a centralized and controlled location to operate their businesses and also by nurturing interaction and activity within the community.

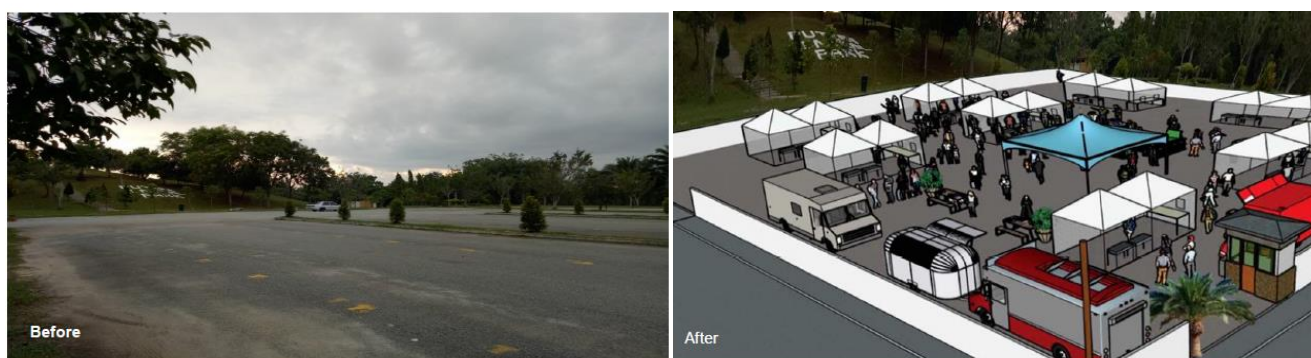


Figure 1. Propose design of street vending hub in Bandar Tasik Puteri

Conclusion

Finally, this study has shown that street vending has the potential to be a significant place making tool in Bandar Tasik Puteri. The findings suggest that street vending can have a good impact on the urban environment by revitalising urban places, increasing social and cultural variety, and providing income for street vendors. The study's objectives were achieved by identifying current issues in public space provision, evaluating people's perspectives of public space in Bandar Tasik Puteri, and proposing strategies for promoting street vending as a place making tool in public spaces.

According to the findings, street vendors can act as "*eyes on the streets*," resulting in a more lively and active environment that draws a greater number of people. Furthermore, by offering a variety of food selections as well as other goods and services, street vendors contribute to the area's social and cultural diversity. Meanwhile, the recommendations in this chapter are provided to assist in the growth and development of street vending as a place making tool in Bandar Tasik Puteri. It is hoped that by fostering partnerships between local authorities and street vendors, encouraging community participation in street vending activities, developing a more comprehensive street vending policy, and developing a street vending hub, street vending activities in the area will be enhanced and made more sustainable.

Future research may focus on investigating the impacts of street vending activities on local economic growth and its potential to support sustainable and inclusive urban development. Additional research that might be useful for future research is to explore the typologies of street vendors and social-economic significance to design contextualised interventions for improving their economic wellbeing. Overall, this research has shown that street vending can be a valuable tool for place making in Bandar Tasik Puteri, with the ability to contribute to urban revitalization, improve social and cultural diversity, and provide a source of income for street vendors. By acknowledging and supporting the benefits of street vending in public areas, local authorities can enhance the vibrancy and liveability of their communities while providing economic opportunities for the street vendors.

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Informed Consent Statement: Any research article describing a study involving humans should contain this statement: ‘Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study. For studies not involving humans, please exclude this statement.

Conflicts of Interest: Declare conflicts of interest or state: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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