

# Decision to visit night market from Malaysian customer perspective

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## Abstract

Night market is a street market which operates at night and commonly dedicated to more leisurely strolling, shopping and eating than more business-like day market. Customers who have been to the night market before may experience in buying products and services at cheaper prices, enjoying open-air shopping concept, and be able to choose varieties of food from different ethnicity. This study aims to identify and discuss the contributing factors that influence customers' selection decision to visit night market from Malaysian perspective. The study implies content analysis which allows the researcher to explore the conceptual and theoretical issues of the data gathered from the previous researches and others secondary sources. Overall result reveals that there are three contributing factors namely price perception, convenience, and concept that influence customers' selection decision to visit night market. The study concludes that the contributing factors may benefit the night market owners to focus on some good ways to attract more customers to visit night market regularly and consistently.

## Keywords:

Decision to visit, price perception, convenience, concept, night market, Malaysia

## **1 Introduction**

Night market or night bazaar is also known as a street market which operates at night, and it is dedicated to more leisurely strolling, shopping, and eating than more business-like day market. According to Aziz (2012), the night market is a small business that operates during the evening and consists of a variety of low-priced product and cooked food. It is increasingly becoming a preferred choice for customer attraction because it is usually well located near a residential area. Night market, also known as 'Pasar Malam' for Malaysian, is a form of traditional institution, popular with young and old alike (Chin & Harun, 2015). In Malaysia, hundreds of stalls at the night market are set up by the roadside, and all kinds of goods and foods are sold every day mostly during the weekend. Moreover, night market usually brings together a collection of stalls that usually sell goods such as fruits, vegetables, snacks, toys, clothes, movie discs, and ornaments at low or at least reasonable prices. The night market usually offers the best prices that customers may not get at the other places. Since the prices offered are not fixed enough, the customer can make a negotiation with the seller to get the best price of each item. Therefore, haggling over prices is a common practice at such markets (Fung, 2013).

Nowadays, the higher cost of living has caused a serious economic problem among the people with lower income. Food has been sold at high prices due to high costs of raw materials. A study by Huang, Liou, and Tzeng (2009), signify that a night market as a trading place during the evening where small businesses offered a variety of products and cooked food at lower prices. Additionally, night market is considered as temporary open markets which operate in public spaces and still have similar physical characteristics as other markets such as accessibility, the flow of people and traffic, infrastructures, parking facilities, safety and security features. Some night markets, especially those located in villages or small towns do offer local delicacies, local exotic plants, and fruits which can be directly supplied from the areas near the villages. The night market also represents as an alternative to mainstream supermarket shopping where customers may do their shopping in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere as they feel free to stroll through. Thus, a trip to these night markets could become an ultimate problem solver for customers who seek for convenience. Furthermore, with the existence of the night market that opens at night, people can buy their food after their working hours since most people nowadays faced a hectic work schedule. Night market also gives some benefits to those who do not have enough time to cook at home especially working mothers and wives. Also, more people do prefer to buy food at night market because the place offers varieties of food choices that cannot be seen at other places. Therefore, the concept of the night market obviously creates benefits to the customers as well as the consumers.

To date, many studies have been conducted related to night market (Au & Law, 2002; Aziz, 2012; Chin & Harun, 2015; Cohen & Aveili, 2004; Hsieh & Chang, 2004;

Huang, Liou & Tzeng, 2009; Kuo, Kuo & Chung, 2012; Lee, Chang, Hou, & Lin, 2008). However, there are limited studies on night market study conducted in Malaysian (Aziz, 2011; Ishak, 2012). Based on the facts discussed earlier, it is crucial to determine the reasons of why people go to the night market. Therefore, this study will identify the contributing factors that influence the customers' selection decision to visit the night market from Malaysian perspective including price perception, convenience, and concept.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Price perception**

Perception is the process by which the research is select, organize, and interpret all information inputs to create a meaningful picture of the world (Kolter & Keller, 2009). Therefore, perception is very important because it affects customers' actual behavior. Customer's perception is how your target market sees your product or service, and this can go a long way to determine whether success or failure of any business. When the customer makes their own buying decision, they will evaluate the benefits to be derived and compare it with the costs of a particular service or product. According to Vincenzo (2016), price perception can be identified as a marketing strategy used by the businesses to increase total sales. In this case, the success of this strategy will depend on a consumer psychology because the message must also convince every customer that expensive items are not that far away in price from less costly products. The price perception could work against an organization if a customer feels deceived.

Furthermore, Cochran (2001) study implies that perception will be influenced by a brand, personality, image, and description. As we know, the price is important or integral to the marketing mix that is congruent with the other aspects of the marketing mix and consistent with the target segments self-concept. In this situation, from the customer's point of view, the price is often used as a cue in the customer expectations of the product or service performances (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991). Night market, or "*Pasar Malam*" has played a major role in the public life of urban area for many years. Besides economic and social contribution, the unique price perception of the night market regenerates the traditional identity of the informal trading environment and street market in Malaysia. According to Zohre (2014), price perception is one of the factors that are deemed to be the most important by customers and provide marketers with awareness regarding the psychological elements of customers that influence their perception of night market image.

### **2.2 Convenience**

Convenience is referring to anything that adds to one's comfort or saves work: useful, handy or helpful device, procedure, products or service. Convenience procedures, products and services are those intended to increase ease in accessibility,

save resources such as time, effort and energy and decrease frustration. It has been proved that convenience plays a prominent role in the selection of choices of today's consumers. Consumer demand for convenience foods is now on the rise around the globe. The growing presence of drive-thru windows, microwave dinners, take-out meals, home delivery for groceries and internet shopping, all demonstrate the importance of convenience in determining food choices (Jaeger & Cardello, 2007).

Convenience has an immense impact on the food choices of today's consumers. This suggests that food products offering less convenience will be deemed less preferable to consumers. Therefore, night market can be categorized as the convenient one; since customers can get everything in the one-stop center. Moreover, visiting night market remains as a popular leisure activity among local people where they can stroll through the night market, look and stop now and then to survey for products, ask for the best prices, haggle for discounts, purchase the products and go home. Night markets are also considered as temporary open markets which operate in public spaces and have similar physical characteristics as other markets such as accessibility, the flow of people and traffic, infrastructures, parking facilities, safety and security features. The accessibility of location also considered as one of the convenience features at night market.

### **2.3 Concept**

The concept is an abstract idea that exists in mind as a representation or as a plan. It is also being defined as an idea of what something is or how it works. A concept exists in material or physical form, real or solid, not abstract such as a person, a place or a thing. It is important to realize that a concept is merely a symbol, a representation of the abstraction. According to Rigos (1979), the importance of concepts for sociology needs no emphasis. To identify those concepts, it may need contextual definitions and need to state clearly in detail; leaving no room for confusion or doubt. Once the concepts are identified, a simple term that is easy to remember is essential to represent the concept. According to Klara (2001), to increase the restaurant business revenue, the restaurant concept selection considerations are important. Furthermore, the concept of the night market is a grouping of temporary outdoors stalls operated by petty traders where products are displayed for selling purposes.

In addition, the friendly and relaxed atmosphere in the night market is allowing the customers to enjoy the diverse and wide choices of freshly cooked food and fresh vegetables at affordable prices (Aziz, 2012). Also, the Malaysian night market is also based on the open-air shopping concepts, where the streets hawkers and petty traders occupied designated parts of a street to set up their stores. The designated street, a normally busy one during the day, would be closed off to traffic from early evening until late night (Aziz, 2012).

### 3 Methodology

This study is based on the secondary sources that consist of data that has already been produced and also known as the data that already exist from previous researches, journals, articles, books, web information and statistical data. In this study, the contributing factors that influence customers' selection decision to visit night market have been identified. The content analysis has been done manually by undertaking a thorough reading of past articles, journals or opinions and has been proved by primary sources. According to Krippendorff (1969), content analysis can be defined as a valid method for making specific inferences from text to other states of its source and the use of replicable. All the information and data have been collected from the previous researchers with regard to the research topics from 1969 to 2016.

### 4 Findings

This section examined the factors that influence customers' selection decision to visit night market from Malaysian perspective. The analysis involved a thorough reading on past journals, articles, books, statistical data and manually. Based on the content analysis, four categories have been classified as in Table 1.

Table 1: Content analysis

| Category             | Definition  | Example  |
|----------------------|---|--|
| C1: Price Perception | Haggling over prices.<br>A marketing strategy used by the businesses to increase total sales.                             | Price perception can be identified as a marketing strategy used by the businesses to increase total sales (Vincenzo, 2016).<br>The price perception could work against an organization if a customer feels deceived (Vincenzo, 2016).<br>Haggling over prices is a common practice at such markets (Fung, 2013).   |
| C2: Convenience      | People are using their informal attire because of the relaxing and comfortable area.<br>Nearer the public transport area. | Some night markets, especially those located in villages or small towns did offer local delicacies, local exotic plants and fruits. The customers can take their leisure time while hunting for food at the night market (Jaeger & Cardello, 2007).<br>Customers can do their shopping in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere as they stroll through the night markets (Jaeger & Cardello, 2007). |
| C3: Concept          | The grouping of temporary outdoors stalls operated by petty   | The friendly and relaxed atmosphere in the night market is allowing the  |

|                        |  |   |
|------------------------|--|---|
|                        | traders where products are displayed for selling. Leisurely strolling, shopping, and eating than more businesslike day markets.<br>Open-air markets.   | customers to enjoy the diverse and wide choices of freshly cooked food and fresh vegetables at affordable price (Aziz, 2012). |
| C4: Selection Decision | An intention of a person in buying or purchasing something that they need or want.<br>People who are made to a decision in selecting an item without intention but has been pushed by the business owner.<br>A sudden purchase can occur because of the price factor and others. | Customers are willing to pay a premium for customized products because their needs are better met (Huang & Dang, 2014).       |

## 5 Discussion

Based on the findings above, all the contributing factors that influence customers' selection decision to visit night market have been identified. Many factors have been found that might influence customers' selection decision to visit night market such as economy, destination identity, culture and lifestyle, hygiene, concept, price perception, convenience, images, brand perspective, customers' behavior, and opportunity (O'leary & Deegan, 2005; Simon, 1998; Long, 2004; Lin, Pearson, & Cai, 2009). All of these factors play important roles to attract customers to purchase at night market.

However, there are three contributing factors that mostly influence the customers' selection decision to visit night market from Malaysian perspective have been identified. The factors are price perception, convenience, and concept. Kolter and Keller (2009) stated that perception as the process by which is to select, organize, and interpret information inputs to create a meaningful picture of the world. Therefore, perception is very important because it affects customers' actual behavior; as a result, lower prices are offered to the customers of these night markets. This is supported by Huang, Liou and Tzeng (2009) since night market is a trading place during the evening where small businesses offered a variety of products and cooked food at lower prices. The prices offered are not fixed that the customers can negotiate with the sellers to get the best prices. In this study, it is believed that price perception is one of the important factors that contribute to the customers to visit the night markets.

Fung (2013) also stated that haggling over prices is a common practice at such markets. At the night market, customers can negotiate over the offered price so that the product is worth to buy. Thus, the owner of each stall or kiosk is highly recommended to offer the best prices to their customers. Other than that, night market can be categorized as a convenience one, where all the customers can get all things they

need and want at only one stop center. The customers can stroll through the night market, look and stop now and then to survey for some products. This study strongly indicates that convenience does play a prominent role for today's consumers in making their own selection decision at night market. For example, the growing presence of drive-thru windows, microwave dinners, take-out meals, home delivery for groceries and internet shopping, all demonstrate the importance of convenience in determining food choices (Jaeger & Cardello, 2007). Apart from that, the night market concept is also considered important and unique whereby it groups the temporary outdoors stalls operated by petty traders by displaying some products to be sold. Moreover, the Malaysian night market is based on the open-air shopping concept, where the street hawkers and petty traders occupied designated parts of a street to set up their stores.

All these concepts are applied to Malaysian night market, and most customers enjoy the concepts as they come to visit the night market. As for this study, all the above-stated concepts also play a crucial role to attract customers while visiting the night market. In Malaysia, night market can be found almost in every place, districts, and states. Aziz (2012) stated that the designated street for the night market business, a normally busy one during the day, and closed off to traffic from early evening until late night for night market business. Hence, the target customers are at ease to stop at the places and buy something because the places are normally set up along the main roads and on their way home.

Among all the three factors discussed earlier, the factor that most influences customers' selection decision to visit night market is the price perception. The cost of modern living style has alarmed the customer to wisely spend their money, and the pricing matter will be as their top priority subject to be considered. They prefer buying products that are offered at low prices and valuable for their money.

## **6 Conclusion**

Nowadays, night market has become one of the trends in Malaysian foodservice industry. Night market in Malaysia is a popular destination for local people and foreigners because it can easily be found in almost every state, small town, city and village and this nature of the market are becoming a popular trend as many countries are developing it too. In a nutshell, eating out is a common occurrence in the lives of most people. Customer who has come to the night market may experience on buying products and services at lower prices, open-air shopping concept, and they can choose a variety of food from every ethnicity.

From the practical perspective, night market also helps fight unemployment crisis. A jobless person can run his night market business because the place is highly considered as business incubators for aspiring entrepreneurs since they would need to put in an opportunity to earn a big income. From this study, it is hoped that more people are willing to join the night market businesses so that they can generate their positive

income for their use. This will somehow encourage the nation economic growth as well. Meanwhile, from the academic perspective, students can gain more knowledge about night market such as the experience on how to negotiate the price from the business owner and enjoy the relaxing atmosphere of the night market. However, from a consumer perspective, a night market is a business opportunity to be grabbed by local people to sell some products or offer some services to their selected target market. This place can be commercialized as one of the attractions and features for foreigners to come and visit Malaysia.

The existence of the night markets can be properly advertised via mass communication mediums to attract visitors. The Internet is the fastest medium to promote the night market. By doing this, perhaps it can promote Malaysia's night market widely and also expose Malaysia to be known globally. As a recommendation, it is suggested that future studies should focus on other factors that can influence customers' selection decision to visit night market. A detailed study based on primary data should be conducted so that the appropriate result can be identified.

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