



**PUBLIC SEATING IN ONE UTAMA SHOPPING
CENTRE, MALAYSIA**

BY

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degree of Master of Science in Built Environment**

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, there has been tremendous growth in shopping mall development in Malaysia, particularly in Kuala Lumpur. A large shopping centre attracts many customers because of its greater variety of shops and layout. The bigger the shopping complex, the more likely that customers will spend longer hours in wandering around the mall. Convenient shopping and adequate resting place were the major factors in influencing mall goers. Seating facilities at big shopping complexes also became an important factor for shop goers. The objective of this research was the identification of the importance of seating facilities in shopping malls, as well as to analyse the aesthetics, comfort and accessibility for convenience of seating facilities being preferred by shopping mall goers, and to investigate mall goers level of satisfaction on the different aspects of public seating in shopping malls, namely; location, number, design and comfort. The research highlights the significance of public seating facilities being provided by shopping malls in Malaysia. Public seating facilities are regarded as one of the main considerations for shopping malls in Malaysia. One Utama Shopping Centre, a superregional mall, became the subject of this research and made to answer questions on how significant public seating facilities are, including the practical design for the public seating and the user's level of satisfaction on provided seating facilities through the questionnaire survey method. Approximately 102 participants participated in the survey. The results showed that majority of the participants agreed that public seating facilities in shopping malls are important (88.3%), while the bench type (65.7%) design and its arrangement along corridors (74.5%) are more preferred by shop goers. Shop goers in One Utama Shopping Centre agreed that comfort is the most important factor to be considered in public seating facilities.

ملخص البحث

على مدى العقد الماضي، شهد تطوير مراكز التسوق التجارية في ماليزيا نمواً هائلاً، خصوصاً في العاصمة كوالالمبور. يجذب مركز التسوق الكبير العديد من العملاء بسبب التنوع الكبير في المتاجر والمحال وفي كذلك بسبب التخطيط والتصميم المعماري. وبقدر ما تكون مساحة مجمع التسوق واسعة، بقدر ما يرتفع احتمال قضاء العملاء وقتاً أطول في التجول. يعتبر التسوق المريح وتوفر أماكن الراحة المناسبة من أبرز العوامل المؤثرة في رواد مركز التسوق. فقد أصبحت زيارة مراكز التسوق متكررة وبذلك صارت الراحة تمثل جانباً مهماً ومؤثراً. كما أصبحت مرافق الجلوس في مجمعات التسوق الكبيرة دافعاً مهماً لروادها. إن الهدف من هذا البحث هو التعرف على أهمية مرافق الجلوس في مراكز التسوق، فضلاً عن تحليل النواحي الجمالية، والراحة وسهولة جعل مرافق الجلوس المفضلة من قبل رواد مركز التسوق في أعلى درجات الملاءمة، كما يتناول البحث مدى ارتياح رواد مركز التسوق بخصوص جوانب مختلفة من المقاعد العامة في مراكز التسوق أهمها؛ الموقع، والعدد، والتصميم، والراحة. يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على أهمية مرافق الجلوس العامة التي توفرها مراكز التسوق في ماليزيا والتي هي من الاعتبارات الرئيسية لهذه المراكز وباعتبار "وان أوتاما" مجمعاً تجارياً إقليمياً فوق المعتاد، فقد تم اختياره موضوعاً لهذه الدراسة وذلك من خلال الإجابة عن تساؤلات حول أهمية مرافق الجلوس العامة بما في ذلك التصميم العملي للمقاعد العامة ومدى ارتياح المستخدم تجاه خدمات مرافق الجلوس المتوفرة، واستخدم الباحث في كل ذلك المنهج الاستنباطي في الإحصاء. فقد شارك ما يقرب عن 102 مشاركاً في الاستطلاع، وأظهرت النتائج أن غالبية المشاركين اتفقوا بنسبة (88.3 %) على أهمية مرافق الجلوس العامة في مراكز التسوق، في حين صوت ما نسبته (65.7 %) على أهمية شكل تصميم المقاعد، و(74.5 %) منهم لقي إعجاباً أكبر بنوعية وترتيب المقاعد على طول الممرات. واتفق رواد مركز "وان أوتاما" التجاري على أن أهم عامل يجب أن يؤخذ بعين الاعتبار في تصميم مقاعد الجلوس العامة هو توفير الراحة للمستخدمين.

APPROVAL PAGE

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents;

Hj. Che Hasim Bin Hj. Ishak & Hjh. Pauziah Binti Hj. Zainuddin

Who introduced me to the joy of reading from the birth and to write from
the heart.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ICSC	International Council of Shopping Centre
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
et al.	(et alia) ; and others
n.d	no date
sq ft	square feet

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Over the years, shopping malls in Malaysia have undergone tremendous changes due to rapid economic growth. Shopping mall has grown larger as the demand from people increase due to the many activities it accommodates. In a study conducted by Downie, Fisher and Williamson (2002); Connie, Sutoto and Lenny (2002) and Banerjee (2012), shopping mall acts as a centre of activities for people to socialize with family and friends, relieving boredom, making purchase of goods and services or either browsing to gather information on possible future purchases. Although there are many reasons for people to visit the shopping mall, shopping mall always known and remained as a place for shopping. According to International Council of Shopping Centres (1999), there are different types of shopping mall. The most common one are regional and superregional mall. In Malaysia especially in Klang Valley area, this type of shopping mall mushroomed from year to year such as Mid Valley Megamall, Suria KLCC, Pavillion and Sunway Pyramid. The other types of shopping mall are the neighbourhoodcentre, community centre, fashion centre, power centre, theme centre and outlet centre.

At present, shopping mall is also a place for entertainment. A survey conducted by Sit & Merrilees (2005) identifies different types of entertainments that can be found in the shopping mall as ways to attract different kind of visitors. There are several entertainment facilities provided in a shopping mall such as cinemas, indoor theme park, game centres, cafes, restaurants and retail outlets. Indeed, analysis

byKok (2004) indicates that as the mall is providing more facilities and shops, the malls are becoming better in offering different activities for users with different needs. Apart from the stores and services provided, supporting facilities are important in making successful shopping mall such as seating, signage, toilets, auto teller machines (atm), temporary childcare centre, locker room, luggage repository, parking area, food court, and landscaping area (Banerjee, 2012).

Shopping malls have become an inviting place to go since they can offer many activities and facilities to the users. Users of shopping malls may be accompanied by friends, family, spouse or their officemates when visiting the shopping mall. Different types of people from different background including the young and teenagers, adult or older people go to shopping mall for different reasons. For example, a family visits the shopping mall during weekends to do activities together as a family. Corporate workers sometimes meet together for an informal meeting after work in the shopping mall in order to strengthen working relationship in a relaxing environment. A study by Banerjee (2012) found that youngsters constitute the biggest group of shopping mall visitors. They normally go to shopping malls for entertainment such as watching movies at cinema other than shopping.

There is a tendency of users to spend more time in shopping mall depends on what it offers. Most of the time, users are in walking or standing position as they go through the shops. The users may or may not realize the distance they walked in the shopping malls as the bigger the shopping mall, the longer the walking distance. As highlighted by McKenzie (2011), they tend to walk or stand longer as they move from one shop to another or from one facility to another resulting in the need to rest or seat as they move around. Longer walking distance uses more energy and resting in between walking during shopping becomes desirable. Therefore resting area where

users can sit, rest their feet and reenergize become an important element in shopping. Seating area which consists of benches or couches will be an alternate for them to rest up their feet (McKenzie, 2011) and thus influence users' shopping experience (Banerjee, 2012).

1.2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

This research examines the provision of public seating in One Utama Shopping Centre Malaysia. This section will elaborate about the shopping mall in Malaysia and relationship between seating in shopping mall, behaviour and the usage of seating. Shopping mall is relatively new in Malaysia. It was first introduced in 1970's and mushroomed at the peak of construction boom between 1980's and early 90's (Mohd. Nizar, 2004). That was the time when Kuala Lumpur, the capital city of Malaysia experienced rapid development and growth in infrastructure due to urbanisation and modernisation. Shopping mall eventually developed into a place for leisure for Malaysians. Shopping malls with restaurants, cinemas and open air lifestyles centre with upscale national specialty stores growth rapidly and became a trend.

According to Shopping and High rise Complex Management, (2004), the mega shopping malls in Malaysia are usually located in the sub-urban area such as Sunway Pyramid which opened in 1996 and One Utama Shopping Centre opened in 1995. The location of shopping centre which is located well within the city is Suria KLCC. In the southern region, Johor Baru City Square and DangaBay have monopolized the market. Meanwhile in the northern region, there are medium to mega-sized centres such as Megamall Penang, Gurney Plaza and Queensbay Mall.

Shopping for leisure becomes a phenomenon for Malaysians. Due to that the management of shopping malls always tries to improve the strategies in order to

attract more users to visit their malls and have a healthy competition among other malls (Stanley, 2004). Satisfaction from shopping is not necessarily derived from acquiring goods. Studies by Yap, Lin and Lo (2004); Stanley (2004); Richard (2004) and Banerjee (2012), indicate that shopping mall facilities can attract and enhance users visit other than the mall location, tenant mix and accessibility. The studies indirectly shows that users prefer malls with well-organized and variation of facilities such as ATM, musolla, wash room, baby room, information counter, locker room and smoking area. In the case of Malaysia, the users who come from various age groups visit shopping mall for different reasons other than shopping such as watching movies, parks, playground, kids fun area, galleries, eating places and many more. Based on observation, shopping malls are crowded especially during weekend, public holidays and festivity seasons as it becomes a place of shopping and leisure for many.

Seating is important to provide comfort after having long walking distances (McKenzie, 2011). According to Sadeghi and Bijandi (2011), behavioural habits or purposes of users' visits influenced and affected by shopping mall's environment. Shopping mall with large scale of floor area encourages users to stay longer in mall as there are more shops and facilities. Users may be encouraged to go through more shops and therefore tend to walk longer distance and therefore the need to provide seating become important to provide comfort and convenience for users. Given the size and facilities provided in shopping mall, there is a need to provide seating area consistent with users needs to enhance the activity of shopping and other activities in shopping mall.

The act of seating may be temporary but important to give respite to the users. Comfortable and appropriately located seating provides much needed rest for the long walking and standing position of users particularly users from certain age group or

special needs such as older people, pregnant ladies, young children and people with disabilities. McKenzie (2011) noted that the provision of variety of seating in shopping mall with arm and back rest may accommodate some of the users who have limited stamina such as old people by supporting their back bones and comforting their arm while resting.

Seating also acts as waiting area. Waiting takes place in many circumstances such as a person waiting for a friend or family member to join him/her for the activities in the shopping mall, a husband with young children waiting for his wife shopping, a person with many shopping bags waiting for his/her companion who is still shopping, a person waiting for his/her family members who went to different shops and etc. Seung-Eun, (n.d.) found that seating is needed especially for male companion when their partner went in to women's apparel shop or at lingerie section. From observation, users who did a lot of shopping with many bags carried would normally need a place to rest before continue his/ her shopping activities.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENTS

The discussions presented have shown shopping mall is a place of leisure for many Malaysians especially in the urban areas. The development in shopping mall has resulted in bigger shopping malls with a lot more shops and facilities which attracted different type of users. Study on shopping mall's seating in other countries as indicated by McKenzie (2011) have shown that the importance of seating in shopping mall was to enhance shopping experience and indirectly gives positive return to the shopping mall itself.

1.3.1 The Problems or Issues of the Public Seating in One Utama Shopping Centre

Observations on shopping malls in Malaysia have shown similarities in terms of factors which influenced the need for seating to accommodate and enhance shopping experience such as the sheer size of shopping mall today, the activities, the reasons for going to shopping and the different type of users visiting shopping mall. Consideration for seating such as provision, design and types of seating, location and frequency of seating are important elements in a shopping mall and should be based on the said factors and incorporated in to the design of shopping mall from design development. This is because when the satisfaction of seating aspects meets the need of users, they will experience and attracted to do their next visit to the particular mall. However, review of literature indicates there are only few studies done on seating in shopping mall. Yet observation indicates that despite its importance, seating in shopping malls in Malaysia lacks consideration in some aspects such as adequacy, number, suitability of location and frequency of seating and design consistent with users' comfort.

Adequacy of Public Seating

Observation by the author indicates that the provision of seating is necessary especially during peak season such as weekends and public holidays. According to One Utama Website (2013), visitors used to stopover the mall with roughly about 60 000 to 90 000 visitors per week and the occupancy rate of visitors is 98% during weekends or festivities season (approximately 120 000 visitors). There are a lot of people from different age group visit One Utama Shopping Centre. Some people might come to the mall in groups to fulfill their intention of visits. People used to visit

shopping mall for doing lots of activities such as shopping for necessity, gathering purpose, leisure or dining (Patrick, 2012). A research done by Rajagopal (2009) indicates that the excitement in shopping mall encourages people to stay longer in stores, to experience the pleasure of products while making buying decisions. Most of the time, people used to move from one tenant to other tenant while searching for their necessity (Zafar, Morry&Zainurin, 2007). They may carry lots of shopping bags or plastic bags bought from other stores. Some users who came with family members and kids used to have a short break after walking in a period of time. One of the best ways to encourage users to stay longer and release their tiredness is to provide suitable opportunities to sit down (Henry, 2009). The number of seating provided seems to be very important to shopping mall users thus it may affect the usage of seating place which should also be consistent with the number of visitors. From the observation made by the researcher, most of the people buy their necessity or groceries in the anchor tenants. However, anchor tenant have less seating area as compared to the other area. For example, more seating are required in front of anchor stores as there are more users in this stores. Sometimes, people used to sit on a medium which is not meant to be used as seating which is called as 'accidental seating' (Henry, 2009).

Location and Distance between One to another Seating

KhairulAnuar&Ong (2010) noted that shopping mall was a spot not just for shopping but also as a place for other activities such as gathering, meeting or other leisure purpose. Meeting or gathering needs a specific place such as restaurant or seating area which facing inwards to promote good conversation between each other. Good location of seating gives privacy for both parties. Many people wandering around the meeting area may distract important discussions. Seating in a straight row also is