



How Urban Community Perceived Nighttime Public Park for Leisure Activities

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Abstract

The design of urban public park is an important factor which influence urban community leisure. The objective of this study is to investigate the community perceptions on nighttime leisure activities in urban public park. The questionnaire survey is done in Padang (green field) located in the urban center of Shah Alam and Putrajaya using random stratifies technique. There are four types of variable studied related to nighttime leisure in an urban public park namely comforts, conveniences, safety and nighttime leisure. The findings from this study are expected to show a positive perception of nighttime leisure in urban public park towards urban community.

Keywords: Image; urban public park; place identity; nighttime leisure activities

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1.0 Introduction

Urban public parks form areas of separation between neighbourhood adjacent to them. However, the same park may also act as a link between the urban residents of several neighbourhood, offering common service and facilities such as playground, areas for rest, and passageways for different age of the group. As such, the urban public park serves as a meeting place for urban community in the city. The sociocultural function of urban public parks can be especially important for lower income groups. While the living conditions in such area are much inferior to those of the higher income area, the urban public park can provide to the lower income residents opportunities for recreation and entertainment within an area with environmental quality equal to those of other urban residents forming sustainable of urban community. Givoni (1998) stated that, success in fulfilling the social functions by urban public park may be measured by the frequency of visitation by urban community. However, the degree of participation depends also upon the existence of proper condition. It is reasonable to assume that the more interesting and convenience opportunities there are to enjoy in open public space, the higher degree of participation will. It was argued by Jacobs (1961) that the most efficient way to prevent crime in public parks in the present of as many people in the park as possible, during all hours of the day and evening. If this point of view is correct, there will be a need for a directed planning policy concerning urban public parks, which aims to maximize the times and intensity of their use. Such planning should determine the location of facilities and roads in the urban network, as well as planning details of the surrounding urban area, such as land use around the park, institution to attract persons into the area during various hours of the day and others. Cheshmehzangi (2012) mentions that, social behaviorism of a place is either controlled by design or developed with it. Therefore, environmental perception of any place has a mutual relationship with its social behaviorism termed as 'socio-environmental values' and 'spatial inter-relations'. This will include if the place is experienced during nighttime. It definitely offers a different environment and experience of place throughout the whole day. Moreover, nighttime activities in public-park are part leisure and part recreation that has become an urban trend (Ngesan and Karim, 2012).

2.0 Literature Review

According to Project for Public Space (2005), the used of parks have changed from quiet activities during the day to more socializing activities in the evening and extend up until the night. The users also seem to distribute throughout the park during the day, while evenings until night the area become more vibrant with community leisure activities focused on the center of the park. Zaki and Ngesan (2011) postulate that the agglomeration of nighttime activity is able to created different activity to attract people. They also confirm that the creative arrangement of urban components can increase the urbanites movement in urban outdoor spaces (Zaki and Ngesan, 2012). The artificial light has emerged as a powerful instrument to live a place, providing visibility and protection. It helps to promote nighttime leisure activities supporting urban well-being and gives people the perception of night territory appropriation

and domination (Alves, 2009). In the design of urban spaces, managing light is associated with generating quality of life for its citizens. Night becomes a palette of landscapes that have never been seen before, transforming the landscape and image that triggers a living atmosphere of cities at night. Light can give sense to a place, giving new uses and new values (Hennessy, 2010). Social and cultural changes of the recent decades have increased the importance of space-time relations at night. The cities concerned have generated artificial day into the night, in order to continue the sunlight hours activities that are unable to get during the day (Alves, 2007). This dichotomy separates day and night very clearly, in which night was associated with the unknown, provoking fears, mystery, curiosity and contradiction (Gwiazdzinski, 2005).

3.0 Methodology

The goal of this study is to explore the urban community perception of nighttime leisure activities in urban public park. The aspects that will study are comforts, conveniences and safety which expected to give an idea for designing vibrant urban public outdoor spaces for community during nighttime. The survey were done in Section 14, Shah Alam and Precinct 3, Putrajaya. The urban public parks in both of case study are green field known as *Padang*. During nighttime, the thermal properties such as green surface in the open area with less trees cover are more cooling due to the increasing of the SVF that realize the effect of Urban Heat Island (Emmanuel, 2005). Both case study areas also represent a quite similar of physical characters, located in the city center of the urban area, surrounded by buildings which light up at night, and located next to the beautiful mosque.

The background and literature study have been carried out to gather information and findings from previous researches regarding the leisure in urban public parks. The researcher also had conducted an early observation survey in urban public park in case study areas to explore the situation of nighttime leisure. The results served very well in formulating the variable and attributes for structuring questionnaire to examine the user's perception on nighttime leisure activities in urban public park. The strategy chosen for the research design was based on a questionnaire survey using disproportionate stratified random sampling which required 383 samples of respondents from the total population of Shah Alam and Putrajaya which is 511,583 (Department Malaysia Statistics, 2010). The survey has been done at 7.30pm until 12.00 midnight by taking a user's of nighttime urban public parks. To answer the questionnaire, the respondents are insist upon to state their preference of priority on a rating Likert scale of 1 to 7; where 1 represent as very poor, 2 represent as poor, 3 represent slightly poor, 4 represent as moderate, 5 represent as slightly good, 6 represent as good, and 7 represent as very good. The analyses of questionnaire surveyed data are shown in the form of *Mean* value. Measurable Indicator Scoring Technique (Karim, 2008) is used to show the processed data taken from each indicator within the aspects of comfort, convenient, safety and nighttime leisure perception and assessed by giving scores based on the *Mean* value (1= 0.00-1.00 (Very bad); 2= 1.01-2.00 (Bad); 3= 2.01-3.00 (Slightly bad); 4= 3.01-4.00 (Moderate); 5= 4.01-5.00 (Slightly good); 6= 5.01-6.00 (Good); 7= 6.01-7.00 (Very

good)). There are three types of variable that will study regarding perception of urban public parks users while carry out leisure activities during nighttime namely: (1) Comforts; (2) Conveniences; and (3) Safety. The study of perception also has been extended to include the of reasons community utilize nighttime leisure activities in urban public park.

4.0 Results and Discussions

The results from the survey of perception on nighttime leisure activities illustrated that Putrajaya received higher *Mean* value with 5.48 (Score 6=Good) then Shah Alam's *Mean* value with 4.94 (Score 5=Slightly good) (refer Table 1.). Meanwhile, results from the observation survey showed that Shah Alam's urban public park is more crowded, high intensity used for nighttime leisure activities and more vital than Putrajaya's urban public park. It indicated that Shah Alam's urban public park seem more successful in fulfilling the social function of urban community than Putrajaya's urban public park if it measured by the frequency of visitation (Givoni, 1998). Meantime, the high intensity of Shah Alam's urban public park usage has implicated the respondents to give a lower perception score regarding comfort, convenience and safety on nighttime leisure than Putrajaya's respondents. According to Montano and Adamopoulos (1984), the effect of crowded in environmental psychology can exists in three modes namely (1) situational -such as feeling constrained or having expectations dashed, (2) emotional- usually negative, but positive emotions can occur, and (3) behavioral- such as activity completion or assertiveness. Thus, the crowd of usage urban public park has contributed to the lack conduciveness nighttime leisure activities. Besides that, there are 86.3 percent samples in Putrajaya stayed in the case study area than 68.7 percent sample of Shah Alam which influences their sense of attachment to the urban public park.

Table 1. Summary of perception on nighttime leisure activities in Shah Alam and Putrajaya

Label Item	Attribute items of perception on leisure activities	Shah Alam		Putrajaya	
		Mean	'Score	Mean	'Score
V1	Comfort	5.03	6	5.62	6
V2	Convenience	4.62	5	5.08	6
V3	Safety	4.88	5	5.54	6
V4	Nighttime leisure	5.24	6	5.68	6
Total		4.94	22	5.48	24

Perception of Comfort on Leisure Activities

The variable of comfort studies for nighttime leisure activities are classified into the aspect of physical, environment and social (refer Table. 2).

Table 2. Perception of comfort on leisure activities in Shah Alam and Putrajaya

Label Item	Attribute items of comfort on leisure activities	Shah Alam		Putrajaya	
		Mean	'Score	Mean	'Score
CMP1	Cleanliness of urban public park	5.39	6	5.78	6
CMP2	Space to sit on ground	4.78	5	5.71	6
CMP3	Space to play	5.61	6	5.88	6
CME4	Sermon/ <i>azan</i> from the <i>Masjid</i> (Mosque)	5.97	6	5.82	6
CME5	Noise from vehicle	4.09	5	4.94	5
CME6	Smoke/ Dust/ Gases	4.40	5	5.41	6
CME7	Air temperature	5.09	6	5.80	6
CME8	Wind speed/ Ventilation	5.30	6	5.88	6
CME9	Humidity	5.23	6	5.86	6
CME10	Pest/ Insect/ Mosquito threat	4.36	5	5.25	6
CMS11	To communicate with others friends and families	5.67	6	6.10	7
CMS12	To communicate with others visitor (stranger)	4.97	5	5.25	6
CMS13	Present of visitor from outsider	4.58	5	5.35	6
Total		5.03	72	5.62	78

The highest *Mean* values item for an aspect of comforts perception while carried out nighttime leisure activities in Shah Alam is an item 'Sermon/ *azan* from the Mosque' while in Putrajaya is an item 'To communicate with friends and families'. The items ranked as the lowest *Mean* value are same in both of case study which is 'Noise from vehicle'. Overall, Putrajaya received higher *Mean* value with 5.62 (Score 6=Comfort) and 78 of total score than Shah Alam which is *Mean* value 5.03 (Score 6=Comfort) and 72 of total score. Based on observation survey, the majority of nighttime users of urban public park in Shah Alam and Putrajaya is Malay and Islam community. Therefore, the users are comfort with the sermon/ *azan* from the *Masjid* and able to socialize with the other users. Meanwhile, since both of the urban public parks are located beside from the main road, it gives a negative perception on the users comfort.

Perception of Convenience on Leisure Activities

The variable of convenience studies for nighttime leisure activities are classified into the aspect of physical only (refer Table. 3). The highest *Mean* values item for an aspect of convenience's perception while carried out nighttime leisure activities in Shah Alam is an item 'Accessibility of pedestrian spaces' while in Putrajaya is an item 'Bench'. The items ranked as the lowest *Mean* value are same in both of case study areas which is 'Food and games vendors'. Overall, Putrajaya received higher *Mean* value with 5.62 (Score 6=Convenience)

and 78 of total score than Shah Alam which is mean value 4.62 (Score 5= Slightly convenience) and 72 of total score. Based on observation survey, the food and vendor in Shah Alam' urban public park during nighttime is informal while in urban public parks Putrajaya the food and vendor a close in the early evening. Therefore, the respondents perceived this situation as a slightly convenience. The lack of nighttime users in Putrajaya's urban public park provides a convenience for visitors to use the bench. Although there are crowded nighttime users in Shah Alam's urban public park, the respondents feel convenience to access the place by walking. This shows that, the nighttime leisure activity are not interfered with the others visitors entering the urban public park.

Table 3. Perception of convenience on leisure activities in Shah Alam and Putrajaya

Label Item	Attribute items of convenience on leisure activities	Shah Alam		Putrajaya	
		Mean	'Score	Mean	'Score
CVP1	Accessibility of vehicle	4.82	5	5.39	6
CVP2	Accessibility of pedestrian spaces	5.08	6	5.45	6
CVP3	Variety of park facilities	4.63	5	4.65	5
CVP4	Parking vehicle area	4.54	5	4.96	5
CVP5	Dust bin	4.72	5	5.45	6
CVP6	Bench	4.41	5	5.49	6
CVP7	Food and games vendors	4.16	5	4.18	5
Total		4.62	36	5.08	39

Perception of Safety on Leisure Activities

Refer to the Table. 4, the variable of safety studies for nighttime leisure activities are classified into the aspect of physical and social. The items ranked as the highest mean value for an aspect of safety's perception while carried out nighttime leisure activities are same which is 'Presence of families groups' in both of case study areas. The items ranked as the lowest mean value are also same in both of case study areas which is 'Police patrol'. Overall, Putrajaya received higher *Mean* value with 5.54 (Score 6=Safe) and 54 of total score than Shah Alam which is *Mean* value 4.88 (Score 5=Slightly safe) and 48 of total score. Based on observation survey, there is lack of police patron in urban public park in both of case study areas during nighttime. This reflects to the slightly safe perception while carried out nighttime leisure activities because the crowded environment tends to give a negative feeling to the users. Meanwhile, the present of the group's families and their children improve the sense of safety. Project for Public Space (2005) argues that, nighttime park users rarely noted safety as a concern. Most people felt the presence of "undesirables" and drug dealers, but the vibrant and heavily use space by small children and their parents around them tend to marginalize this negative activity, or at least make people feel relatively comfortable. Ozcan (2006) states that compared to adults, children are known to be more sensitive in their

perception of the physical environment; hence it has a greater effect on the way they conduct themselves. Safety according to Marcus and Francis (1998) refers to the personal security of park users and covers both as a perceived and an objective measure, where perceived safety refers to people's perceptions and feelings of safety while objective safety refers to actual incidents of crime. Distinguishing the two concepts is important in order to adequately address the safety concern.

Table 4. Perception of safety on leisure activities in Shah Alam and Putrajaya

Label Item	Attribute items of safety on leisure activities	Shah Alam		Putrajaya	
		Mean	*Score	Mean	*Score
SFP1	Sufficient of lighting	4.95	5	5.63	6
SFP2	Location of lighting	4.98	5	5.59	6
SFS3	Present of children and senior	5.31	6	5.75	6
SFS4	Presence of women groups	5.18	6	5.69	6
SFS5	Presence of families groups	5.41	6	5.82	6
SFS6	Security of visitor belonging	4.93	5	5.31	6
SFS7	Social and moral problem	4.42	5	5.29	6
SFS8	Criminal activities	4.61	5	5.47	6
SFS9	Police patrol	4.13	5	5.27	6
Total		4.88	48	5.54	54

Perception of Nighttime Leisure Activities

The variable of nighttime leisure activities' perception in urban public park are studies to identify the upbringing trends urban community leisure in public outdoor spaces. These variables have been classified into the aspect of physical, environment and social (Table 5.). The highest *Mean* value for an aspect of nighttime leisure's perception in urban public park in Shah Alam are 'Availability of urban public park at nighttime offer an alternative/ opportunity for leisure' while in Putrajaya is an item 'Hot climatic during the day influences leisure at night in urban public park'. The items ranked as the lowest *Mean* value are same in both of case study areas which is 'Having a good sleep after doing night-time leisure activities in urban public park'. The item 'Leisure at night in urban public park should have a time limitation' also received the lowest *Mean* value in Putrajaya. Overall, Putrajaya received higher *Mean* value with 5.68 (Score 6=Agree) and 78 of total score than Shah Alam which is *Mean* value 5.24 (Score 6=Agree) and 75 of total score. The finding from this study support the argument by Ngesan and Karim (2012) stated that the accessibility of urban public park during nighttime has an offer an opportunity for urban community to perform their outdoor leisure activity during their preference time. The hot climate during the day also implicates an outdoor thermal comfort in urban public park which change their leisure time at night. Meanwhile,

nighttime leisure activities in urban public park do not lead to the quality of sleep because the respondents perceived that the nighttime activities should not have time limitation.

Table 5. Perception of nighttime leisure activities in Shah Alam and Putrajaya

Label Item	Attribute items of nighttime leisure perception	Shah Alam		Putrajaya	
		Mean	'Score	Mean	'Score
NLP1	Physical setting of urban public park influence the type of leisure activities.	5.14	6	5.69	6
NLP2	The condition of ground surface influences the site preferences to do leisure at nighttime.	5.37	6	5.65	6
NLP3	Leisure at night in outdoor space is more fun than indoor spaces.	5.48	6	5.59	6
NLP4	Availability of urban public park at nighttime offer an alternative/ opportunity for leisure.	5.50	6	5.73	6
NLE5	The urban public park environment at nighttime is positive.	5.43	6	5.73	6
NLE6	Hot climatic during the day influences leisure at night in urban public park.	5.06	6	5.90	6
NLS7	Busy lifestyle during the day influence leisure at night in urban public park.	5.34	6	5.82	6
NLS8	Having a good sleep after doing night-time leisure activities in urban public park.	4.77	5	5.37	6
NLS9	Leisure in urban public park at night improved physical and mental health.	5.00	5	5.59	6
NLS10	Nighttime leisure in urban public park improved social relationship among families/friends.	5.45	6	5.73	6
NLS11	Nighttime offer a unique leisure experience in urban public park.	5.33	6	5.80	6
NLS12	Not required a high cost to do nighttime leisure in urban public park.	5.45	6	5.90	6
NLS13	Leisure at night in urban public park should have a time limitation	4.78	5	5.37	6
Total		5.24	75	5.68	78

5.0 Conclusion

This study reveals that the communities are satisfied with the existing of nighttime urban public park design in the case study areas for the place for families' leisure which helps to rejuvenate urban community lifestyle and act as socializing tools. The result also showed that the nighttime leisure in urban public park has a potential to be explored as a future community leisure activities offering cooling and winding outdoor leisure environment with unique experiences of night scenery. Urban public park during nighttime would promote a local

nocturnal flora and fauna while optimizing the use of urban green spaces. Such evidence may contribute to novel knowledge in the field of environmental behavior studies, urban planning and urban landscape to create a sustainable urban public park design for urban communities while promoting vibrant urban public outdoor spaces during nighttime. The findings may also be used to improve the local authority policies and guidelines regarding future urban public park design. This study has identified the items related to nighttime leisure activities in urban public park to ensure the user's comfort, convenience and safety. The urban public park should provide a buffer zone to overcome the noise from vehicle in the road to improve the comfort of nighttime users. Moreover, the location of urban public park also should be placed closed to mosque if the population area are among Malays community. The proper kiosk for food and games vendor and well pedestrian facilities also should be provided to encourage the urban community to walks. Besides the frequency of police of security patrol, the urban public park is also should be oriented design for family's leisure to enhance the sense of safety during nighttime. Nowadays, urban public park during nighttime are not only enjoys by the urban community from the catchment area but also peoples from outsiders who need a nighttime leisure. Therefore, the future urban public park development should consider the variables and items to ensure that urban public parks are not only used during the day but also friendly accessible during nighttime to satisfied the social need of urban community leisure.

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