



## **REVEALING URBAN MARKETPLACE IDENTITY: PUDU**

**Mohamad Asri Ibrahim<sup>1</sup>, Mohammad Hussaini Wahab<sup>2</sup> & Sharyzee Mohmad Shukri<sup>3</sup>**

*<sup>1,2</sup>UTM Razak School of Engineering and Advanced Technology*

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA KUALA LUMPUR

*<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Architecture and Built Environment*

INFRASTRUCTURE UNIVERSITY KUALA LUMPUR

### **Abstract**

The process of regenerating existing urban marketplaces should consider the components that make them special, as not to lose the delicate characters that give each marketplace distinctive identity and sense of place. This study focuses on identifying and evaluating urban marketplace by reviewing the definitions and concept of physical characters, and the experiential qualities of urban marketplace in Kuala Lumpur that contribute to the identity of a place. This study discovered that the marketplace physical surrounding and the activities that are happening are two of the elements which are associated with the place's identity. This study concludes that urban marketplace physical and experiential quality can be regenerated to reveal an identity with strong sense of place.

**Keyword:** urban marketplace, place-identity, physical & experiential quality

## INTRODUCTION

Rapid urban development has left Kuala Lumpur, in many respects, disjointed and lacked in visual and physical coherence. The street level has been neglected with inconsistency and piecemeal development has adversely affected the quality of streetscapes, which include the overall physical character and continuity of streets as represented by pavements, building frontages, street lighting and other forms of street furniture (KLCH, 20011). Consequently, there has been a decrease in the legibility of the city structure together with a certain loss of historical continuum and sense of identity.

The character and distinctiveness of districts and local precincts are important in providing interest, texture and structure to the urban form as well as increasing the sense of belonging. Urban marketplaces in Malaysia that have aged are vulnerable to the threats of modernization due to rapid development. At some point in time, the existing urban marketplaces will eventually be renovated or redeveloped in the course of the city growth. Recent development through urban regeneration has transformed places into new setting thus changing the meaning and identity of the area (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015).

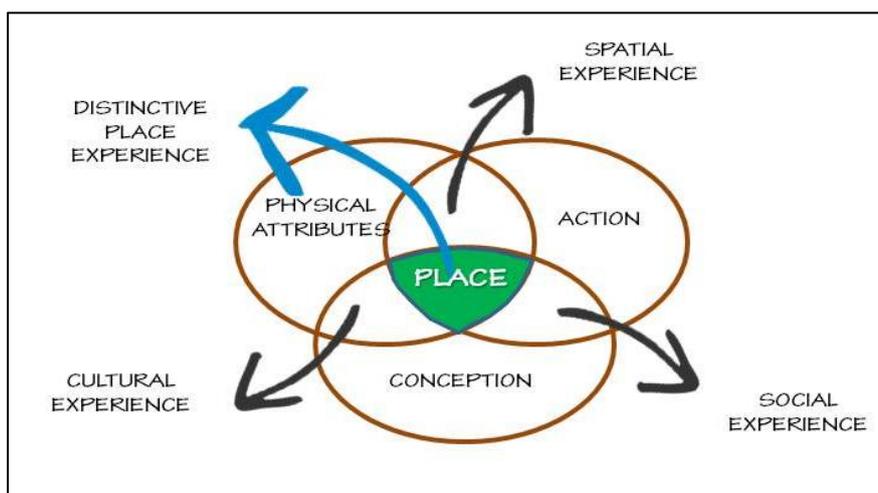
## RESEARCH BACKGROUND

This research focuses on evaluating urban marketplace in Kuala Lumpur by reviewing the definitions and concept of physical characters, and the experiential qualities that contribute to the identity of a place. Identity of a place is closely related to the presence of distinctive elements that must be identifiable, recognised and remembered by people (Shamsuddin, 2011). The objectives was to identify the physical characteristics and the experiential qualities that define urban marketplace and to outline the design criteria for a distinctive, recognisable and meaningful identity for an urban marketplace.

**Marketplace:** Throughout history, cities have been founded and exist for many reasons. Cities have expanded around marketplaces such as the *agora*. This is considered as one of the fundamental of urban typologies. A city without a marketplace might function, but still lacking in the platform where layers of the community could gather and socialise where tangible and intangible culture could be felt in its sense of place (Qamaruz-Zaman, Shaberi, Bakri, & Ahmad, 2014). Urban marketplaces can be described as spaces where goods, merchandise or products of the local community are traded in and often have a strong root to the local people (Ghapar, Zakariya, Harun, & Zen, 2016). As such, the market is also a place where localness is shown by the community lifestyle, culture and heritage. It is vital, healthy, diverse place where all of the most valued dynamics of an urban life are untold. A successful and vibrant marketplace is the heart and soul of the city itself, as it infused new energy, and social and economic activity, and it has more to offer to the urban environments (Shamsuddin, 2011). Marketplace

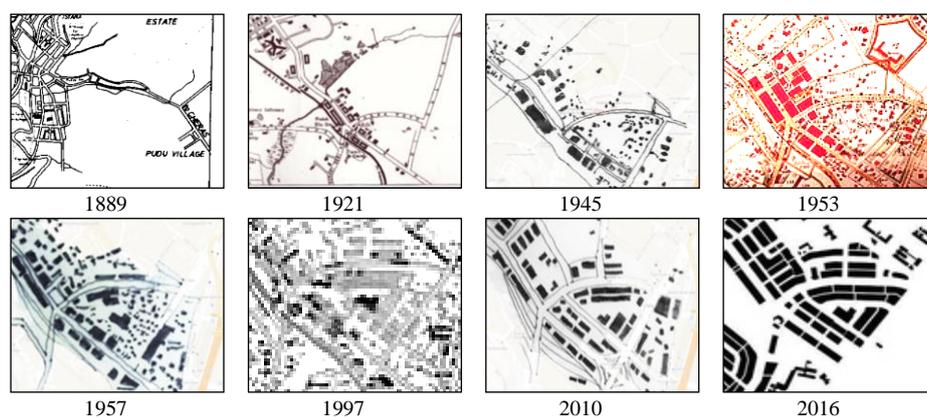
reveals that a successful urban place is more than its building, but the bottom line is the interaction between people and a place (Pottie-Sherman, 2011).

**Place Identity:** A place can be described as where a measurement shaped by people's relationship with physical settings, individual and group activities, along with meanings. Place attachment, place image and identity, and place dependence are the elements that define the value of people's relationships with a place, which is also known as the sense of place (Lekagul, 2002). Identity means to distinguish an object from other objects and accept that one as a part object (Lynch, 1960). The identity of a place is closely related to the presence of distinct elements, and the character is recognised and remembered by people (Shamsuddin, 2011). Place identity is defined as a component of personal and social identity, a "process by which, through interaction with places, people describe themselves regarding belonging to a specific place" (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2016). A place plays vital role in developing and maintaining self-identity and group identity of the people as its experiential process forms the identity and distinctive place character (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015). A place must have its identity as meaning to create a sense of attachment (Ujang, 2012). Sulaiman and Shamsuddin (2007) assert that a place (city/town) must have a strong character and identity so that it is known to the people. Thus, place identity can be grasped from its multiple components (spatial-physical and social) and the multi-place nature of individual and social place experience (individual and social meanings, feelings and experiences) as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** The proposed model for assessing the experience of place  
Source: Adapted from Bernardo and Palma-Oliveira (2016)

**Case Study Area:** The selected case study area was based on one of the oldest surviving marketplaces in Kuala Lumpur city centre. Pudu, or previously known as Pudo, is one of the earliest districts which began as a small village that was linked to the mining areas in Kuala Lumpur. In 1890, Kuala Lumpur had three markets, namely Central Market, Pudo Market and North Market Street (Mohd Rus, 2005). The marketplace activities in the study area have been around for more than a decade as it started as a small outdoor open market in Jalan Sayur (PuduCAP, 2010) until the existing market building was constructed in 1956. The construction of the market building was completed on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1957 and was identified as Pasar Road Municipal Market. Morphology maps indicating the formation of Pudu Marketplace from 1889 to 2016 is shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2:** The morphology of Pudu Marketplace  
Source: Sidhu (1978), Jabatan Pemetaan Negara, Authors (2016)

## METHODOLOGY

There are three elements that contribute to the main city form, which are the structure of the city, the urban morphology and the townscape as the appearance of the city (Sulaiman & Shamsuddin, 2007). The elements of path, edge, district, nodes and landmark were also used to determine the structure of the place through visual survey method. Visual study through townscape appraisal technique is an art in establishing links between the elements that make up the urban fabric (Cullen, 1961).

The methodological framework of this study is shown in Figure 3. The distinctiveness of physical qualities was determined by analysing the urban structure identified through visual survey and townscape appraisal technique, while the meaning and association of experiential qualities were measured through behavioural observation.

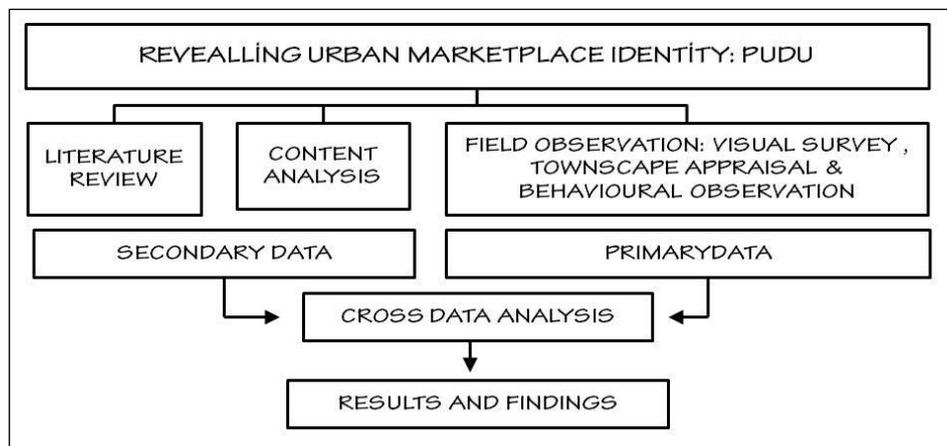
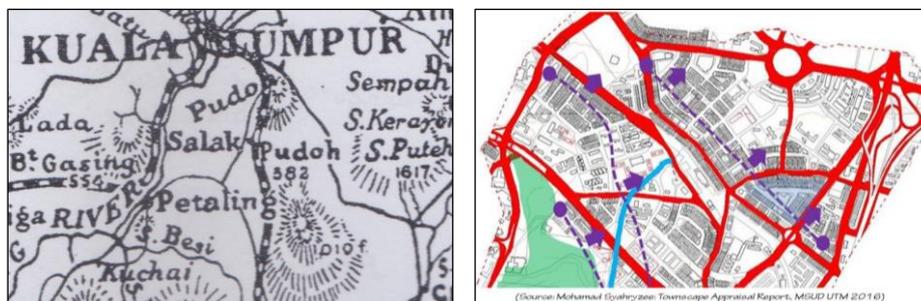


Figure 3: Study methodological framework

## FINDINGS AND ARGUMENT

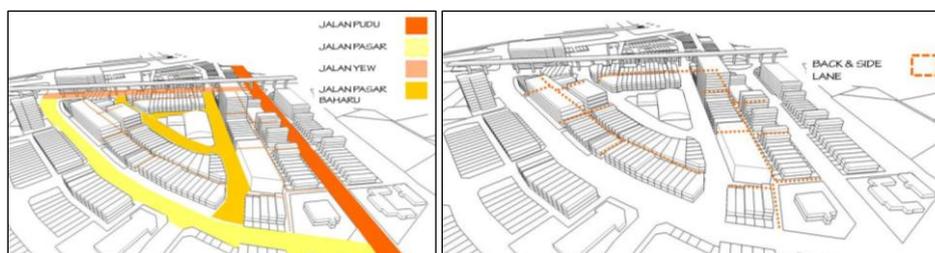
**Urban Structure:** The urban structure is the spatial arrangement of the major features common to all cities and how they influence the in place cognition that make up the identity of place (Shamsuddin, 2011). This element basically, contributes towards the concept of imageability that consists of identity, structure and meaning (Lynch, 1960).

**Profile:** The quality that provides the first overall impression of a townscape is known as the profile (Shamsuddin, 2011). It is about the setting of a town in relation to the overall landscape. Identity of the townscape will become more prominent if the profile was clearly established by the influence of the topography. Based on the visual survey, the profile of Pudu was influenced by the geographical setting of Kuala Lumpur. It has a very interesting landform of a basin-shaped valley due to the existing hills. The finding on the figure-ground analysis in 2016 revealed that Pudu skirted and meandered along the edges of the river and the slopes of the two nearby hills that influenced in forming the urban fabric. The profile of this natural setting was identified as affecting the development of Pudu as shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4:** Profile of Pudu in forming the urban fabric that can be traced from the Map of Kuala Lumpur circa 1881  
Source: Gullick (1955), Authors (2016)

**Physical and Experiential Qualities:** Visual analysis through field survey and recorded photograph of the *path* around the marketplace was undertaken. The series of main pathways, and numerous long and narrow sides and back lanes of the building blocks that intertwined the marketplace create accessibility to the marketplace as shown in Figure 5.



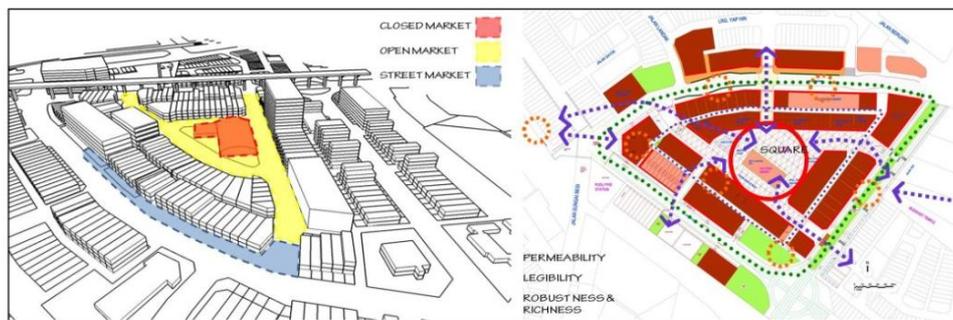
**Figure 5:** The accessibility and permeability of Pudu Marketplace  
Source: Authors (2016)

The curvature of the Jalan Pasar creates a sense of deflection and the serial vision created by the series of existing *Angsana* trees with five-meter canopy diameter and ten-meter height had given the different quality of street views. This sameness of character of the streetscapes produced by the *Angsana* trees has resulted in a distinctive physical identity to the area as shown in Figure 6.



**Figure 6:** The sense of deflection and distinctive elements of the path  
Source: Townscape Appraisal (2016)

The physical setting of the marketplace, which is the nodes, needs to be improved as the robustness of the place will support the main activities and increases the vibrancy and vitality of the marketplace. The legibility of the existing landmark needs to be increased as it will enhance the marketplace identity. Installation of portals to clarify the legibility of the marketplace can also help in structuring the area by increasing the visibility and create a sense of welcoming as shown in Figure 7.



**Figure 7:** The Pudu Marketplace's identity is defined by regenerating the structure of the area.  
Source: Author (2016)

The legibility of the marketplace will be influenced by the solid and void characters. By introducing a square as new public space will increase the vitality of the area in supporting the alternate activities. Nevertheless, new activities within the different time frame will add vibrancy to the marketplace. The new activity will create a new small node in supporting activities on a temporal pattern that can give a distinctive character to the marketplace.

The legibility of the streets around the market square needs to be increased by having a distinctive character as it contributes in helping people to recognise and remember the area of the marketplace. The hierarchy of the street

layout also needs to be improved by having distinctive unifying character of streetscapes. The unique “*kaki-lima*” (five-foot way) element should be one of the unifying elements for the marketplace.

The building facade of the marketplace helps in creating visual appropriateness and distinctive character in creating the identity. The differences of building frontage will create variety and redefined the grain. The building height must be improved to compose the visual quality focusing on the market square. The roofscapes, façade treatment and material usage of the existing building can be used to increase the harmonic visual experiences by applying the sense of rhythm and pattern.

Visual orientation can be used to achieve a visual balance of the elements within the marketplace. Colours are one of the syntheses of unifying elements that increase distinctive visual identity. Unity within variety needs to be addressed in identifying the sameness in character. The effect of visual experience of place recognition is very important for identification of an area. A visual stop should be introduced within the marketplace area by promoting vista on architectural detailing. The selected building will be the visual stop for cultural, place of worship and community function and these buildings carry meaning and association to the place.

The sense of enclosure of marketplace area needs to be increased as to enhance the spatial volume of the square which can determine the quality of perspective view of the area. Distinctive unifying streetscapes elements and landscaping of the “*Angsana*” will enhance the deflection effect of Jalan Pasar, increasing the imageability of the street, improving the visual continuity and also contributing to the tropical setting.

The results of interviews show that the familiarity of people’s perception regarding Pudu is related to the marketplace activities. The old market building and its surrounding places act as a frequent sighting of physical elements and carry along the historical significance strata. Familiarity with physical elements in the area is closely related to the historical significance of the surrounding building within the marketplace being considered distinctive. The distinctiveness of streets is increased with the presence of old buildings where these buildings are a reminder of old and past time even though not because of its physical characters, but simply their presence evoke nostalgic memories as people tend to have an affinity towards those places due to their special roles in the past lives. As meaning is evoked by the physical form, the visual simulation in experiencing the place needs to be highlighted in the design. The creation of vista and emphasising on visual stimulation and appreciation will increase the visual memory of the place. The visual continuity of the activities between buildings and spaces will increase the sensory experience.

Name also has a strong influence on identity as change of name can lead to the loss of identity. When names and cognitive schemata coincide with their

physical equivalents, the environment becomes particularly clear and forceful (Shamsuddin, 2011). The original name of *Pudu* was *Pudoh*; in Hokkien dialect means “is a practice describing the ancestral worship of the Chinese”, while in Cantonese dialect it describes the fruit of *Artocarpus integer* or locally known as *chempedak*. The usage of indigenous planting that relates to the origin of the place name will add the sensory experience and create historical linkage.

## CONCLUSION

This study, through the townscape appraisal, historical, morphology and content analysis, has acknowledged that the presence of the old market building and the square created around the building as among the elements that can foster and strengthen the identity of Pudu Marketplace.

In defining the identity of a place, the social value of urban public spaces makes them significant within the cities due to people needs (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015). Identity is the sameness of character that can be seen from the physical and experiential qualities of a place. As the identity of a place carries the image of what people perceived; the visual and other senses stimulation through the physical and experiential qualities of the place is being evaluated to create meaning and association to the place. Without an identity, the place is “*placelessness*” (Relph, 2016). Therefore, the identity of the marketplace can be emphasised through the quality of physical and experiential elements. A strong image and identity of a place depend on the careful design and interactions between the three elements; districts, streets & square and that space, where life occurs, are places and these places are the result of relationships between actions, conceptions and physical attributes.

Pudu Marketplace, which is located in one of the earliest settlements and directly involved in the making of “Kuala Lumpur” is presently locked with attractive characters and a strong sense of identity. The urban marketplace is waiting to be enhanced by increasing the legibility and knitted together into a vibrant, coherent and highly imageable city form through the regeneration of its identity.

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