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## FLEA MARKET TOURISM: A REVIEW OF MOTIVATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SPECIALISED TOURIST SEGMENTATION

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### ABSTRACT

This is a conceptual paper address the opportunity of flea market as a trend which begins to receive recognition as one of tourism product; or in other word so called flea market tourism. Nowadays, flea market capturing attention as one of the weekend activities for visitor and tourist either inbound or outbound region. One of the most establish flea market in Malaysia and listed in booklet titled Malaysia Flea Market Galore is an indoor flea market in Amcorp Mall, Petaling Jaya. It has been selling antique, collectibles and used goods from various era. However, while the rise of flea market tourism has been understood in developed country, the research in the developed country such as Malaysia is still limited. Therefore, this paper attended to examine the factors relevant to the motivation of this specialised tourism market. Understanding of the characteristics of flea market in Malaysia context is very vital to flourish the maximum experience in order to allow the activities to occurred. As a result, variable for flea market in creating demand and the need to capture the market can be fully understood. The variable of factor discussed in this paper involve uniqueness of the market, variety of products, leisure activities, treasure-hunting, affordable items and local cultures. Thus, the distinctive features of the flea market tourism will be able to be promoted as a complete tourism product.

*Keywords:* Flea market tourism, motivation, specialised tourism

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## 1. Introduction

In 2014, the 25th edition of the Malaysia Visitors Guide 2014 (25th edition of Malaysia Visitors Guide) has turned the flea market into one of the tourist destinations available in Malaysia. The most popular flea market and remains to this day is the flea market at Amcorp Shopping Center located in Petaling Jaya, Selangor. In July 2017, once again the flea market was introduced as a tourist destination in a booklet titled Malaysia Flea Market Galore published by the Ministry

of Tourism and Culture Malaysia. Malaysia has concentrated and aware that flea market can have a huge impact on Malaysia's development.

According to some researchers who have looked at the flea market in terms of marketing, they argue that flea market is categorized as second-class marketing system, where the flea market is a very attractive business to study especially when it comes to economic recession (Petrescu and Bhatli, 2013).

In Ha (2014), the flea market can be defined as a closed or open range where traders sell various items from non-partition booths. Sales activities can be described as informal due to lack of regulations and does not require large cash transactions. While most of flea markets have similarities to this definition, they are now in various forms, terms and regulations. It offers a variety of different products with different customer target groups, and is owned and operated by various types of organizations.

In July 2017, once again the flea market was introduced as a tourist destination in a booklet titled *Malaysia Flea Market Galore* published by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia. Malaysia Tourism Director Datuk Seri Mirza Mohammad Taiyab when opening the booklet *Malaysia Flea Market Galore* stated: "As the nation marks its 60th year of independence, Amcorp Mall is celebrating the occasion with the 'Collector's Pick', which aims to take 'flea market tourism' in Malaysia to the next level. Visitors will be able to savour, under one roof, all manner of oldies, oddities and rarities encompassing antiques, old Malaysian currency, collectible toys, books, vinyl records, and many more." (New Straits Times, 2017)

This means that Malaysia has concentrated and is aware that flea market can have a huge impact on Malaysia's development. With this launch, the flea market can become a new tourism product within the complex and potentially become a tourism product in Malaysia using the terms of Tourism Flea Market in the new field of tourism.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Characteristics of Flea Market

The visitor's intent to visit the flea market is due to factors of sale, social aspect and background factors of the buyer (Hyder and Nadzrol, 2015). Typically, in Malaysia, flea markets, night markets and car boot sales have the same concept. In most of the flea market products sold are the same as clothing, food, old items and handicrafts. However, the flea market has its own distinctive features as the sale of antiques makes the flea market a unique place to visit and shopping for middle- and low-income visitors. The flea market also

promotes interaction among local communities and provides opportunities to meet each other.

According to Sherry and John (1990), visitors come to the flea market as it provides a distinctly different experience when compared with other common market conditions in terms of the uniqueness of the product being sold and the atmosphere. The importance of studying expectations and perceptions needs to be refined in terms of motivation, concepts and characters in their activities. Flea market is also influenced by the economic, social and product aspects offered.

According to Maria and Dhruv (2013), questionnaire analysis of flea market visitors has identified the keywords most often called visitors throughout the questionnaire are the words 'people' mentioned 40 times, while the word 'price' has been mentioned 35 times and followed with the words 'different', 'find' and 'used'. The word 'people' proves that the social aspect is an important aspect to be studied in addition to the economic and product aspects as well as the profile of visitors and traders. While the word 'price' is referred to the economy as it promises a bargaining process, while the word 'different', 'finds' and 'used' is referred to products offered in terms of varieties of products and products that are rarely found. As such, social, economic and product aspects need to be examined to prove and reinforce the statements made by previous researchers.

Dhruba (2013) stated that the flea market means an unconventional (informal) business entity and it is particularly interesting to operate in a unique way compared to traditional retailers. In the flea market, traders rented tables and spaces or small places to sell most of their products of the type used. In Malaysia generally, flea markets have similarities with existing definitions. Nevertheless, based on observations and visits to some flea markets it can be defined as a second-hand goods market or second-hand item where people are looking for goods that are circulated to buy. It consists of antiques or vintage items and collectibles that are no longer available at this time.

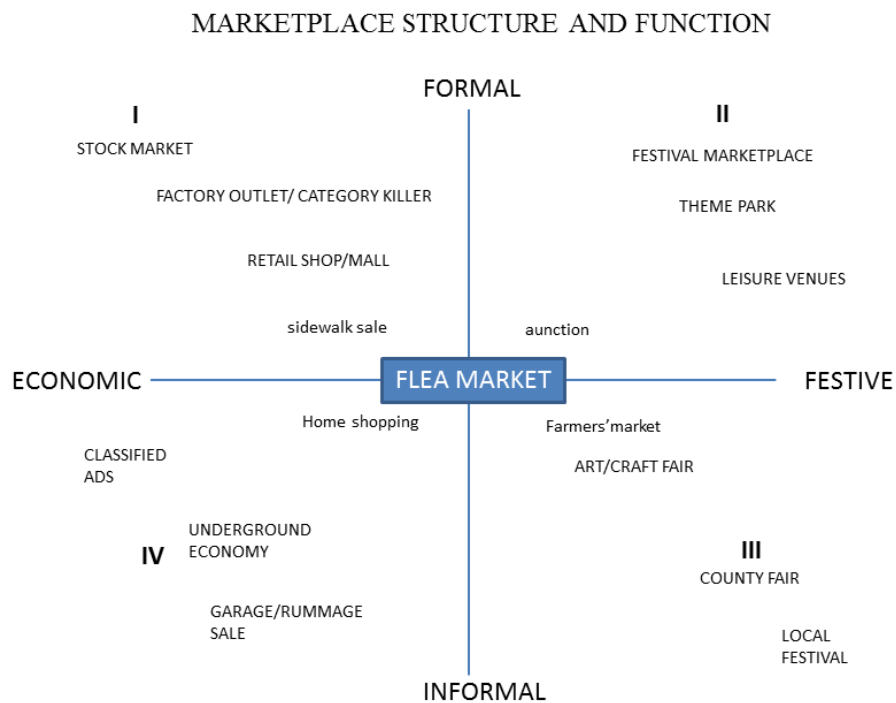
In addition, there is a flea market characteristic according to a study by Ha (2014) which is a physical feature that is divided into 3 which is the flea market

business environment is usually created in open and closed spaces, where traders and visitors interact with ease and create an atmosphere where community communication activities take place. Activities in this flea market will affect the community on the site. Second, the flea market is comprised entirely of local community-owned businesses. It is an independent business operated by its owner or dealer and is not the same as the franchise business concept that dominates today's retail business.

This helps generate business income and unique business experience. The flea market is able to create successful local entrepreneurs and traders and offer alternatives to common retail business practices. Last but not least, flea markets often offer different items of different origin, unique handicrafts and antique items from different states and regions. It does not belong to a category of bulk-produced goods. In this way, the products found in the flea market often have no similarity to what is usually offered in formal retail businesses.

Flea markets are seen as similar to other business venues such as peasant markets, night markets, uptown bazaars and night markets. They point out that the flea market has little in common with the characteristics of retail and formal businesses. They also look at the dimensions of the flea market structure as formal rather than informal, and in dimensions of function as an economy compared to the types of festival concept businesses. (Maisel 1974; Sherry et. al 1990)

For example, a formal structure has been deemed to be a controlled institution while the informal structure of the flea market has been seen as less controllable and non-permanent. Similarly, where the flea market is characterized by the function of the festival it is actually a place for the hedonic (desires) and experiments as illustrated by Sherry & John (1990) in Figure 1 on the flea market position within the market structure.



**Figure 1** Marketplace Structure and Function by Shery (1990) that explains the setting in flea market.

The researcher also viewed the structural dimensions of a flea market as informal versus formal, and functional dimensions as the economic versus festive. For example, a formal structure (retail shop, mall) was characterized as institutional, controlled, and official, while the informal structure (flea market) was viewed as less controlled, official, and transient in nature. As to the functional dimensions, a flea market was characterized by a festive function, which implied that it was a place for hedonic and experimental experience.

## 2.2 *Visitors Motivation on Flea Market*

According to McCabe (2000), travel motivation is characterized by two dimensions: the behavioral “needs,” which are intrinsic to the individual, and the more constraint-based decisions influenced by situational and cognitive motivations. According to this approach, tourist motivations are influenced by the specific situations and unique settings of the event (Yuan et al., 2005). Recent recognition of special events as one of the fastest growing sectors in the field of tourism has encouraged researchers to explore the motivation for attending special events (Mohr, Backman, Gahan, & Backman, 1993; Uysal, Gahan & Martin, 1993; Backman, Backman, Uysal, & Sunshine, 1995; Scott, 1996; Crompton & McKay, 1997; Lee, Lee & Wicks, 2004)

According to Tauber (1972), motives of shoppers can be classified into personal and social. Personal motives include role playing, diversion, self-gratification, learning about new products and new trends, physical activity, and sensory stimulations. Social motives are social experiences outside the home, communications with others having a similar interest, peer group attractions, status and authority, and pleasure in bargaining.

Some shopping motives, which are hypothesized by Tauber (1972), can be directly related to the motivations for attending special events. For example, like seeking social experiences appears to be a very important motivation for visiting festivals as well as for attending retail venues. According to Tauber (1972), the marketplace has traditionally been a center of social activity.

In a study conducted by Petrescu and Bhatli (2013), the visitor's intent to visit the flea market is due to factors of sale, social aspect and background factors of the buyer. Typically, in Malaysia flea markets, night markets and car boot sales have the same concept. In most of the flea market products sold are the same as clothing, food, old items and handicrafts. However, the Flea market has its own distinctive features as the sale of antiques makes the flea market a unique place to visit and shopping for low-paying visitors. The flea market also promotes interaction among local communities and provides opportunities to meet each other. As a result of the sale of old or antique items, it helps to meet their daily needs at lower prices although the sales are not so much.

The categories of “adventure shopping,” “social shopping,” and “value shopping” relate most to the entertaining aspects of the shopping experience at flea and craft markets. The category of “adventure shopping” describes the shopping experience in terms of adventure, thrills, stimulations, excitement, and entering a different world (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003). “Social shopping” refers to shopping as a way to spend time with family and friends, and a way to meet new people. “Value shopping” refers to shopping for sales, looking for a good deal, and hunting for a bargain. Visitors attend rural flea and craft markets because this type of event provides an opportunity for socializing (social shopping) in a different environment (adventure shopping), while offering an opportunity to purchase one-of-a-kind items at a good price (value shopping).

In addition, motivations for visiting flea markets can be influenced by the unique environment of the event as shown in Table 1. According to Sherry (1990), the flea market environment can be characterized as “festive and lucid.” Visitors to flea markets describe their experience as an adventure and often mention the excitement and enjoyment of bargaining and haggling at the flea market (Sherry, 1990). Flea markets provide an experience that contrasts vividly with other market places. The environment and entertainment of a flea market are important to the event’s visitors. Sherry concludes (1990) that seeking such an experience is often far more significant than the mere acquisition of products.

**Table 1** Characteristics of Flea Market

Author	Element in characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sherman et al. (1985)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treasure hunt</li> <li>• Exciting</li> <li>• Negotiable</li> <li>• New experience</li> <li>• Interesting location</li> <li>• Diversity of goods</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ackerman and Walker (2012)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interesting environment</li> <li>• The unique feature of a market</li> <li>• Diversity of goods</li> <li>• Negotiable</li> <li>• The goods sold are unique and attractive</li> <li>• Gathering with friends and family</li> <li>• Have interactions between buyers and sellers</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Petrescu and Bhatli (2013)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goods :</li> <li>• Cheap items.</li> <li>• Agreements and offers (deals and bargain)</li> <li>• Variety products.</li> <li>• Antique and unique items.</li>   <li>• Social Aspects :</li> <li>• Be able to negotiate with traders.</li> <li>• Variety of culture.</li> <li>• Spending time with friends.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ha (2014)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interesting environment</li> <li>• Treasure-hunting</li> <li>• Exciting and Surprising</li> <li>• Goods have an attractive offer.</li> <li>• Window-shopping.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jaleel and Nasir (2015)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attractive place and unique.</li> <li>• Place for middle group</li> <li>• Open air market</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zakaryiah et al. (2016)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local products.</li> <li>• Attractive and famous.</li> <li>• Local cultures.</li> <li>• Affordable items.</li> <li>• Quality products.</li> <li>• Interested in local residents.</li> <li>• Provide specific facilities.</li> </ul>

### 3. Flea Market as Tourism in Malaysia

Based on the precious research of the flea market, many researchers point out about social, product and environment aspects. Among the visitors, in the social aspects, they like to interact with the seller and other visitors who share the same interests and experiences. The products that offered in the flea market have their own uniqueness and antique features.

The environment also plays an important role in visiting the flea market because of the interesting, fun and convenience place. It is also providing the enjoyment of activities to visitors, friends and family members.

These three aspects are the main motivation for visitors visiting the flea market. The writer can see that Malaysia is not widely studied about flea market in the field of tourism which can give a true picture of the similarities and differences of flea market in Malaysia and globally. Flea market can also be seen as a process for the urban regeneration of an area where diversity of sell activities can be seen in the flea market.

Nowadays, flea market from a classic vintage market to trendy bazaars and offer something for everyone which is the best bargain for buyers. Malaysia's diverse flea markets across the country like in cool air-conditioned shopping malls, outdoor street markets, warehouse spaces, back alleys and uniquely in a fruit orchard. This is the thrills and spills make for a stimulating way to hit the road on a junking trip.

The flea market scene here can depict enthusiasts collector's start turning wanted trash into treasure while operating their own galleries and private museums and inviting visitors to come and view by appointment. Some said the roots of flea market in Malaysia at the back lane of Petaling Street known as Lorong Petaling. The vendors sells a variety of goods like household items, watches and gadgets, used books, old photographs and some collectibles.

In Malaysia, flea market can be seen as open-air weekend street market. The curve shopping mall in Damansara offers a variety of goods. Colourful setup along this street facing both sides of cafes and

eateries. It is a big hit among the younger crowd though the whole family can have fun sifting through bargains.

The most famous flea market is Amcorp Mall flea market has remained for 19 years the largest with over two hundred vendors. The uniqueness of this flea market is can experience an advanced level flea market that will appeal to true lovers of the hunt. It became a gathering place to sell vintage, rarities, oddities and collectibles of all kinds of everything found and kept in the recent past as vintage Malaysia.

Typical flea market activities within shopping malls are carried out in courtyards like courtyards. The definition of space for this activity is classified as a public space where there are people who carry out various functions and rituals that impose agreements in the community, either on regular routines of daily living or celebrations. In addition, it can also be understood as a public space that allows everyone to have access to it and the activities therein. The flea market can have the effect of urban regeneration as there is a placemaking that attracts visitors to come and create a social interaction space within it. It can also create sense of place, physical and non-physical qualities that give unique to flea market activities that differentiate from other places.

### 4. Conclusion

In Malaysia, flea market has become one of the tourist attractions over the weekend. It is also a compulsory activity for the weekend for those who like antiques and used. The flea market can be a new tourism product in the complex and potentially a tourism product in Malaysia using the terms of Flea Market Tourism in the new field of tourism. This is because previous researchers study the flea market as a business area, but do not see it as an innovative tourism product to assist in regenerate the city.

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