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Physical Barriers Faced by People with Disabilities (PwDs) in Shopping Malls

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Abstract

This paper intends to discuss the issue of accessibility, connectivity and usability in the facilities that used by people with disabilities (PwDs) in shopping malls and the significance of the latest Malaysian standards (MS 1184:2014) Universal Design and Accessibility in the Built Environment-Code of Practice in evaluating shopping malls. Three case studies have been selected in Malaysia to evaluate accessibility for PwDs. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are applied in this study, Data were collected using semi structured interviews with PwDs to find out their perception on the level of accessibility of these buildings. Access audit and site observation were also carried out.

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Keywords: Universal design; accessibility; shopping malls; people with disabilities (PwDs)

1. Introduction

Universal design, seeks to provide improved accessibility and safety for all groups in the community. It recognizes that improved accessibility enhances the value of buildings, and its built environment. Thus, it creates

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cities that facilitate its people to have better life quality and opportunity to participate in all aspects of life. More studies, which highlight PwDs' satisfaction and perception on accessibility in built environment, need to be conducted in order to assess the buildings from the perspective of PwDs. Shopping malls are essential public buildings for all people which provide various services. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the level of accessibility among public facilities from three shopping malls in Putrajaya and Kuala Lumpur, as well as the faced inaccessible obstacles by PwDs regarding the building's current and future plan to provide better accessibility to visitors. Objectives of this study are to evaluate participants' level of satisfaction of the buildings' facilities and overall accessibility and to identify some of the problems on accessible issues at shopping malls in Malaysia. Through the findings, several recommendations are highlighted that could become a PwDs benchmark for a user-friendly environment in Malaysia.

2. Literature review

Universal design requires an understanding and consideration of the broad range of human abilities throughout the lifespan. Creative application of that knowledge results in products, buildings and facilities that are usable by most people regardless of their age, agility, or physical or sensory abilities (The Centre for Universal Design, 1991). According to Yiing, Yaacob, & Hussein (2013) built environment should be designed to cater for Persons with Disabilities to promote universal accessibility. PWDs are persons who have long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full participation in society. A brief History is defined in Table 1.

Table 1. Brief history of universal design

Time/ Period	Situation
Past	Attitudes to disability: Institutional, Patronizing, and medical model.
Recent	Attitudes to disability: designs for special needs and not inclusive.
Last	Universal Design: inclusive, "design for all" and "everyone/anywhere"

2.1. Current situation

Malaysia has also shown some developments in this catering the needs of PwDs. Nevertheless, as appealed by Kamal Malhotra, the United Nations Resident Coordinator, In the National Conference on "Accessibility and Universal Design: implications for Public Transport and the Built Environment", yet, there are the needs efficiently implement universal design in Malaysia, the needs for more professionals or researches in this area, and the need to revisit the current standards codes (Malhotra, 2010). Thus, this study is called to enhance and complement the precedent studies that have been done on Malaysia's accessibility issues and universal design implementation in public buildings (Syazwani Abdul Kadir and Mariam Jamaludin, 2012). The local authority must strive harder to create its own mechanisms and action plan to create a barrier free environment based on universal design values'. The statement above showed that the government has focused on the role of local authorities to spearhead the cause and motivation for a more accessible Malaysia. This view is commonly held by the local government officers but also with the MWFCDD Minister and the DSWM. A proposal paper to upgrade access and services of PwDs for a Barrier-Free Environment was tabled by the Minister concerned to the National Council for Local Government in order to address local authorities in the country to implement the laws, especially the Uniform Building By Law 34A. With reference to Kuala Lumpur City Hall, the creation of a special unit to handle issues pertaining to accessibility and universal design has been effective in getting Universal Design implemented (Hussein , Yaacob. 2012).

With the establishment of the Department of Standards Malaysia (DSM) under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, there is a shift in priorities, where DSM is 'mandated by the Government of Malaysia to function as the National Standards Body as well as the National Accreditation Body through the Standards of Malaysia Act 1996 (Act 549)' and it sets out The National Standards and Strategy Plan approved by the Cabinet in 13 October 2004 (Hussein & Yaacob. 2010). While in 2014, by launching the new Malaysian standards (MS

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