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Satisfaction Level of Gated and Guarded Community Residents (Case Study: Meru Hills, Ipoh)

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Abstract

Emphasis of this study is assessing the satisfaction level of residents in Gated and Guarded Community (GACOS) housing on 4 main characteristics: security and safety; social and the environment; status; and exclusivity; and recommending ways of improving them. The study presents data collected through a survey conducted on the GACOS residents as respondents in the form of descriptive statistic comprising frequency and percentage analyses. Findings are that majority of respondents are satisfied with overall levels of the 3 main characteristics; social and environment, image and exclusivity but were dissatisfied with the security and safety provided in the case study area.

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Keywords: Gated and guarded; residential satisfaction; security and safety; social and the environment

1. Introduction

This study is an expansion of an empirical study conducted earlier on factors influencing residents' decision to reside in GACOS areas in the case study area of Meru Hills, Ipoh, Perak. Findings of the study indicated five (5) factors influencing residents' choice to stay in GACOS areas namely security; improved environmental control and

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maintenance; privacy; exclusive lifestyle; and community ties (Thuraiya, Noraini, Rohaya, 2014). The future of GACOS developments depends among others on residents' satisfaction with GACOS (Mayra C., Valky. R., Kathryn. H., 1997). If residents are satisfied with GACOS, this trend is likely to continue. This study emphasizes on assessing the satisfaction level of Gated and Guarded residents on four (4) characteristics, namely security and safety; social and environment; status; and exclusivity. Results of these studies will be used to enhance the quality of features provided in GACOS and its environment; promote the housing market; improve the quality of life; and provide suggestions to policy makers (Song, Yan; 2006). In addition, this study also helps in addressing and proposing appropriate ways to improve the features offered at the GACOS area itself.

2. Literature review

2.1. Gated and guarded community concept development

Gated and guarded communities (GACOS) may be defined as residential areas for upper-class families looking for security; comfort; a better quality of life; and social homogeneity. They consist of neighborhoods closed by walls, barriers, fences and gates (Roitman, 2003). The concept includes residential areas with restricted access and defines a self-sufficient environment with swimming pools, private bars, children's play areas and a full accompaniment of care-taking staff and security forces (Landman, 2000). GACOS was first introduced in the United States in the 1960s aimed at protecting pensioner house residents from violence and crime (Nicholls, 2006). GACOS lifestyle is mainly inspired by the historical golden-ghettos found in industrial-era cities in New York, London and Paris. Those enclaves are now mainly suburban neighborhoods emphasizing on "community lifestyles" and security features (Le Goix, 2003). Within private neighborhoods, there is a difference between the type of access restrictions: defensible and defended (Sanchez and Lang, 2002). Defensible space has spatial barriers (simple walled, gated, fenced) surrounding the community. Defended space (guarded entrances) is a defensible space that includes an active neighborhood access control system. GACOS have greatly developed since the 1970s, thus becoming one of the symbols of the metropolitan fragmentation and increasing social segregation (Blakely and Snyder, 1997). Different causes signal the arrival of gated communities which can be divided into two groups: structural and subjective ones. Most important within the first group are rising insecurity and fear of crime; failure of the state to provide basic services to citizens; increasing social inequalities; an advancing process of social polarization and international trends encouraged by developers (Roitman, 2003, Xavier, 2008). Urban violence and fear of crime are mentioned as the main reasons for moving to a gated community (Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Caldeira et al., 2000). Salleh Buang (2004) reported that privacy is one of the factors supporting GACOS developments as well as buyers' demand for security control; landscaped grounds and various facilities (Clarke, 2004).

2.2. Residential satisfaction in housing area

The main purpose of this study is to determine the satisfaction level of residents living in Gated and Guarded Communities. User satisfaction has been discussed in various empirical studies which examine personal characteristics (cognitive, affective or behavioural); or physical and social features of residential environments (Amerigo, 2002). In the definitions underlining effective component, user satisfaction in housing means reflecting the sentiments of satisfaction and happiness on the housing which also creates these feelings (Gold, 1980; Weidemann and Anderson, 1985). The future of GACOS developments will be determined by a number of factors: the political and economic situations; urbanization; social and cultural practices; and satisfaction with GACOS (Mayra C., Valky. R., Kathryn. H., 1997). Housing satisfaction is recognized as an important component of home owners' general quality of life (Adam 1984). The degree to which home owners' needs and aspirations are met by their housing conditions is a concern for housing developers. Measures of housing satisfaction provide necessary information

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