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## Comfort of Walking in the City Center of Kuala Lumpur

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### Abstract

A walkable place allows people to experience the city on foot pleasantly. The environmental qualities which facilitate walking determine a pedestrian's sense of comfort. This paper focuses on walkability of urban places in the city center of Kuala Lumpur. The objective of this study is to determine pedestrians' satisfaction of comfort based on their walking experience. The findings indicated that most of the respondents were fairly satisfied with the level of comfort particularly in terms of pedestrian facilities provided. In contrast, field observation revealed that the city center had poor maintenance of facilities reflected in improper condition of walkways and street furniture

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**Keywords:** Pedestrian comfort; walking; accessibility; safety

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### 1. Introduction

Walkability is essential for a sustainable city. A city is walkable if the entire system of public corridors is walkable and people can live without dependency on the automobile. The provision of well-connected pedestrian network and accessible public transit can increase opportunities for tourism activities where visitors can have enjoyable walking experience strolling through the places within the city on foot. In the case of Kuala Lumpur, the city center has many attractive places to visit. However, the attraction spots are segregated from each other and their specific functions or uses are not diverse (Wong, 2011). A study by Seranta Awam shows that Greater Kuala Lumpur/Klang Valley is not pedestrian-friendly as it currently has inefficient design, inadequate maintenance and poor accessibility and linkages. The attraction areas are also not easily accessible, inadequate of pedestrian facilities and segmented (DBKL,

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2004). These problems may hinder the opportunity for visitors to experience the city with a greater sense of enjoyment and ease by walking. However, providing a comfortable pedestrian environment in the city center is a challenge due to the problems of traffic congestion and limited spaces for pedestrian movement. Although there have been many studies on pedestrian-friendly environment on the city of Kuala Lumpur in recent years, there is limited study on the aspect of comfort of walking for visitors as pedestrian. Thus, the aim of this paper is to assess pedestrian's comfort with reference to connectivity, accessibility and safety of the places. These aspects have been identified as the main indicators for a walkable environment. Pedestrian's comfort was determined by identifying the pedestrian's satisfaction on comfort based on their walking experience.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1. Walkability*

Walkability refers to the built environment that is friendly with the presence of diverse activity (Abley, 2005). Others define walkability as the level of pedestrians' comfort and safety such as the existence of casual surveillance, spaces between pedestrians and vehicles as well as high quality connected pedestrian pathways (Llewelyn-Davies 2000 in Shamsuddin et al., 2004). On similar notes, Steve (2005) stated that walkability is the extent to which walking is readily available as safe, connected, accessible, and pleasant mode of transport. Walking activity can be a pleasant mode of travel if the area provides the quality of walking conditions, safe, comfort and convenience (Litman, 2004).

Walkability relates to the ability of the places to connect people with varied destinations within a reasonable amount of time and effort, and to offer visual interest in journeys throughout the network (Southworth, 2005). The urban form and the structure of the built environment shape the pedestrian surrounding. Streetscape, sidewalk, walkway and adjacent building facades form the street network characteristics. The layout and arrangement of walkway and sidewalk appear to be more crucial in supporting walking activities. Previous study implied that an environment perceived to be walkable when it has more walkable features (Brown et al., 2007) and environment that could increase the use of public transportation facilities, therefore, supports walking activity Griffin (2000).

Southworth (2005) suggested the types of walkable environments that are significant in providing walkable place. A walkable place has a short distance to the destination. It provides proximity, connectivity and accessibility for pedestrian to reach their destinations.

In most Asian cities including Kuala Lumpur, it is expected that people prefer to drive than to walk. The quality of the pedestrian networks discourages walking despite places could be reached by foot. It will be possible to change this pattern if the city provides a friendly and safe pedestrian environment.

### *2.2. Comfort of walking*

Alfonzo (2005) defines comfort as the person's level of ease, convenience and contentment. Likewise, Sarkar (2002) describes comfort as the pleasant state of physiological, psychological and physical harmony between the human body and the environment. Both scholars refer to the pleasant feeling that people feel when they interact with the environment. The environmental qualities that facilitate walking and support walking activities influence a person's level of comfort (Alfonzo, 2005). The buildings and spaces designed to human scale, good design, materials, space for walking and good surfaces to walk are determinants of pedestrian comfort (Kumar, 2010).

The built environment gives a greater impact on the trip lengths than trip frequencies (Handy, Xinyu & Mokhtarian, 2005). In this regards, the level of comfort could be determined by the length of time people

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