

# Dependency and Readiness of Urban Youth to Utilize Public Transportations as Their Premier Mode of Transport

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## Abstract

The usage of public transportations in Malaysia declined from 34% at 1985 to 20% at 1997 and now only left 10-12% (JICA, 1999). The government has targeted an increment of 2.5 times the number of users of public transportation in the Klang Valley, from estimated 240,000 passengers per day to 600,000 passengers in 2012. Such declination raises the question to which extent users really need public transportations? At the same time, to what extent targeting increment in statistic endeavor the readiness of users to utilize public transportations as their premier mode of transport? Secondary data analysis found that youth are potential user group to be significant contributors to achieve national statistical target. Hence, this paper discusses conceptually about to which extent dependency and readiness of urban youth to utilize public transportations as their premier mode of transport. This paper also implies that scientific exploration should be carry out to understand the dependency and readiness of urban youth to utilize public transportations as their premier mode of transportation.

**Keywords:** dependency and readiness, urban youth, public transportation, premier mode

## 1. Introduction

The issue of public transportations in major cities of Malaysia should be viewed in wider spectrum. Avoiding the discussion on related issues even though there are trivial, still public transportation services will not reach the expected level of quality. It doesn't make any sense if the country has a superior public transportation system, but at the same time did not contribute to the economic growth and social well being. All aspects have to be studied to ensure that the public transportation in Malaysia and its relation to economic growth and social well-being is in a win-win situation.

When Malaysia is actively providing effective and efficient public transport infrastructure, one aspect that must be resolve immediately is to increase the use of public transportations as users' mode of choice especially among urban youth. Based on statistics, youth is the dominant group who live in town since more career opportunities are provided compared to rural areas. One of the platforms to increase public transport usage statistics in the city is to provide these urban working youth group to utilize public transports as their premier mode of transportation. This is because the usage of transportation is highly dependent on acculturation and attitudes that posses within the community.

### 1.1 Problem Statement

Increment in standards of living among the youth particularly in urban areas contributes to the increment in the ownership of private transports. Study found that majority of the youth in Malaysia has their own vehicles in every age group (The Malaysian Institute for Research in Youth Development, 2011). The study also found that only about 6.3% of Malaysian youths require for additional public transportation around the area of their residence and place of work (The Malaysian Institute for Research in Youth Development, 2011).

Within 1985-1997, composition of public transportations mode in Kuala Lumpur have been declined from 34.3% to 19.7% due to alteration of users from public to private transportation (DBKL, 2004). Home Interview Survey

conducted by JICA in 1998 shows that the estimated ratio of vehicles ownership is about 211 cars every 1000 residents and 164 motorcycles every 1000 residents. The study concluded that private vehicles accounted for 56.6% of all vehicles traveling within Kuala Lumpur.

Increased level of usage of private transportations in the city is causing burden to the road network. Crowded problem especially during peak hours is difficult to resolve. Construction of highway network to disperse the crowded traffic as solution also seems to be tough. In addition, high traveling demand by private transport also effect the quality of the environment (Aiken et al., 1982). JICA (1999) reported that in Kuala Lumpur alone, the amount of thermal pollution is from 653,300 in 1978 to 1,643,300 in 1997, by the differences of 15%. Exposure to unhealthy environment quality also can affect the well-being and health of urban residents.

Use of public transport seems to be an alternative solution to the complexities that occur. However, why the optimal use of public transport hasn't happened among users in the city? Whether users prefer to use private vehicles over public transport? What are the reasons that prevent the readiness of users to use public transport? What are the level of awareness among users regarding the implications of increment of usage of private transportations in the city impact their health and social well-being? Who are the users who significantly contributed to the increment of public transport usage statistics in the city thus able to lessen some derangements that occurs?

In short, a large displacement from using private vehicles to public transport is a necessity. Therefore, based on residents' strata in urban areas in Malaysia which will be presented in the findings and the discussion of this paper, authors look at the youth, which is target group that can be optimum as the main users of public transportations.

## 2. Method

This concept paper is written based on qualitative methods. This paper includes analysis of secondary data and selected research articles related to youth and public transportation issues in Malaysia. This paper is also based on selective observation by the authors on the scenarios which high rate in ownership of private vehicles among urban youth that anticipated to threatening the public transport usage statistics in town against the premier mode of transportation.

## 3. Result

Study by The Malaysian Institute for Research in Youth Development (2011) involved 4132 youth found that 60.6% of the respondents have their own transport, 37% of them have motorcycles and 34.5% have cars (Table 1). Only 39.4% of the respondents do not have their own vehicle. The same study also found that most of the youth that possess private vehicles are in the age 26-40 category. Findings from The Malaysian Institute for Research in Youth Development (2011) also showed that only about 6.3% of Malaysian youths require additional public transport throughout their home areas and workplace.

Table 1. Status of ownership of vehicles among Malaysia youth

| Private Vehicle Ownership | Respondent (Youth) | %          | Type of Vehicle         | Respondent (Youth) | %    | Vehicles Power Cylinder | Respondent (Youth) | %    |
|---------------------------|--------------------|------------|-------------------------|--------------------|------|-------------------------|--------------------|------|
| Yes                       | 2502               | 60.6       | Motorcycle              | 1528               | 37   | Motorcycle below 201cc  | 149                | 36.2 |
|                           |                    |            |                         |                    |      | Motorcycle above 202cc  | 33                 | 0.8  |
|                           |                    |            |                         |                    |      | Car below 1300cc        | 574                | 13.9 |
|                           |                    |            | Car between 1300-1500cc | 527                | 12.8 |                         |                    |      |
|                           |                    |            | Car between 1501-2000cc | 303                | 7.3  |                         |                    |      |
|                           |                    |            | Car above 2100cc        | 20                 | 0.5  |                         |                    |      |
| No                        | 1630               | 39.4       |                         |                    |      |                         |                    |      |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>4132</b>        | <b>100</b> |                         |                    |      |                         |                    |      |

Source: The Malaysian Institute for Research in Youth Development (2011)

The scenario of high rate of vehicles ownership among Malaysian youth, in addition to the low perception

towards the needs in upgrading public transportations, reflects an important symbolic and requires in-depth study in the context of youth dependency and readiness to make public transport as their premier mode of transportation. Previous studies clearly depicted that youth seems to be 'not rely' on public transport services. This situation immediately affects their willingness to make public transport as their premier transportation mode.

When launching the Train 4-*Gerabak 1Malaysia* for the route of Kelana Jaya in 2010, Prime Minister of Malaysia Datuk Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak quoted as saying:

“Sometimes I smiled on my own when thinking about some people to not having any problem to access public transport when they are overseas, but when they are in their own country they are not willing to get into LRT or buses because of perspectives that it is less glamorous or not prestige.” [Bernama, 2010]

At the same time, he raises the question "if these things can be ignored, is there any willingness from the community to migrate to public transport from their own vehicles?" He explained that in reality, the increment in use of public transportations is highly dependent on acculturation and attitudes that held by the community, besides government efforts.

It is clear that the increment in public transport usage statistics is highly depends on users' readiness to make public transportations as premier mode of transportation. Even though a country's public transportation system is great, however if people are not ready to 'support' the public transport, the situation will remain unchanged.

In Malaysia, the projection of statistics for the year 2000 reflecting the increment of youth under the age of 40 years is high enough to reach 50% (Azimi and Zanariah, 2007). This means that the youth will be representing two thirds of 31 million of Malaysia's population while the proportions of youth aged 15 to 24 years is about one third, that is about 10 million and 75% that under the age of 40 years is about 16.5 million of 22 million people Malaysia. According to the Director of National Population and Family Development Division (LPPKN), the population of youth aged between 15 and 40 years in Kuala Lumpur are half or 800.708 of the total population. He said this figure could be caused by many youth started their careers in the city and choose to live in the city.

Projection of statistics shows that Malaysia youth population is the most dominant group in 2020. In the context of major cities in Malaysia, the choice of public transportations as premier mode by the youth can reduce traffic jams issue in the city. In addition, quality of well-being among the urban citizens also can be improved if the city youth are ready to migrate from using private vehicles to public transportations. Question arises is under what circumstances urban youth can choose to use public transport? Authors see that at least commuting to work which is a daily routine can be the basis platform option for public transportation in the city among the youth.

There is no doubt, the question of dependency and readiness of users to choose public transport as their premier mode of transportation is also closely related with the implications of the issue of efficiency of public service itself. According to Malaysian Transport Ministry sources, taking the public transportation system in the Klang Valley as example, found that the issues happening are that services are not efficient (with delay and cancellation of regular travels), network services and continuity of between public transportation is limited, and serious overcrowding issues (particularly major rail lines of KTM-commuter and LRT Kelana Jaya). This problem according to the Ministry among the others has resulted in less favorable in the use of public transport system and lead to the traffic issue more seriously.

Warlop and Ratneshwar (1993) stated that the situations of consumers consist of three main sets of reason. First is the time and place where the activity occurs. Second is the explanation why such activity occurs, and third is about long-term and acculturation influences. Loudon and Bitta (1994) define consumer behavior as the process of decision making and physical activity that involves a process of evaluating, acquiring and using the goods and services. Howard (1992) recognized that time is an important variable in altering consumer's perception. In fact, time might be the most important factor since time played important role in most theory. Time is considered as the source and method for consumers to choose their sources.

So, what are the external factors which is public transport issues that actually affect the readiness of the youth or their own internal factors that influence the willingness of youth to choose public transportations as their premier mode of transportation? Although the focus of this paper proposed a scientific study on the internal factors that influence the willingness of youth, the author did not reserve the possibility that the issue of public transport (external factors) also has a great influence on the willingness of youth to use public transports. This assumption is premised on the fact of authorities in Malaysia which raise the issue of public transport as one of the reasons that caused public transport less favorable among consumers.

In Kuala Lumpur for example, various initiatives have been taken by the government to reduce traffic flow under an integrated transport system. Among the steps taken are:

- 1) Adjustment on the system capacity which already reaches its limits. Under this system, a number of initiatives were undertaken, for instance, the increase of the capacity of commuter and light rail transit system (LRT) from 1.7 to four times (depending on each routes), addition of 22 new four-car train sets at LRT Kelana Jaya, as well as a special space for wheel chair equipped with safety belts, and warning lights at the door for people with disabilities (OKU) and the emergency windows, construction of the Integrated Transport Terminal Bandar Tasik Selatan (TPBBTS) besides 12 bus routes across major corridors in the Klang Valley that will be introduced gradually in levels;
- 2) Stimulating demand to attract people to use public transport. Among the introduced are the concept "1 ticket 1 travel", adding of 6.800 new car park at 14 major rail stations at suburban areas by 2012, increasing the shuttle bus to rail stations and terminal stations that is high traffic travelling, besides providing comprehensive integrated-IT systems as well as the implementation across all enforcement agencies, including local authorities (PBT), Land Public Transport Commision (SPAD), Road Transport Department (JPJ) dan Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM);
- 3) Do not allow heavy vehicles entering the business centre districts. To carry out this mission, three main integrated transport terminals (ITT) was developed based at rural areas, starting at Bandar Tasik Selatan ITT. While in urban areas two types of centers for public transport will be develop which are Between the City Terminal at Pasarama City, Terminal Putra and Pudu to facilitate the traffic flow from the suburban into the city center;
- 4) Manage demand through deduction. When the use of public transport exceed 25 percent then the public transport system be improved, accuracy of travel time met, comfort improved and initiatives to increase the relative attractiveness of public transport from private car users will be accelerated.

As a conclusion, based on the report of the Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020, only 20% of the population of Kuala Lumpur is using public transport. These statements once again clearly proved that most citizens do not need public transport. In the context of youth, this situation also confirmed the findings from previous studies which found that only about 6.3% of Malaysian youths require additional public transports thorough their home areas and workplace. If the youth consider public transportation is not a need, this means their readiness to make public transportation as premier mode of transportation is very low.

#### 4. Discussion

It appears to the authors that time had come for city youth, as the major population, to use public transportations as their choice at least in the context of a commuting to work as the over-crowding traffic problems is acute in the city. What are happenings is that the use of private vehicles to commute to work comes with side effects such as use for vehicle fuel increased, besides individual productivity at the workplace might be affected due to fatigue by getting through overcrowding traffic during travelling to work everyday. From the social perspective, the youth then have limited time to spend at home and recreation because a lot of time has been spent on the road.

Analysis of secondary data in the literature requires further study on the issue to what extent to urban youth dependence on public transport. In other words, what is the climax that could change their dependency to use public services needed to be study. Authors see a dependency on public transportation as a serious factor that could urge youth readiness to use such service. In addition, the attitude among the youth should also be investigated. For example, the extent to which they support government's populist policies relating to public transport? What are their views on solutions for traffic jams problem in terms of choice of public transport?

What is the view of Malaysia youth whether traffic jams problem is a common scenario faced by the world and there are nothing to worries about. As the public transport network is capable to support the economic growth, population growth and diversify urban activities, the authors recommended in-depth study on urban youth dependency and readiness to use public transports as their premier mode of transportation should be conducted.

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