

Exploring the Perception of Lifestyle Housing Development in Malaysia

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Abstract

The concept of lifestyle has been the subject of interest in housing research. The emergence of lifestyle living environment can be seen in many real estate developments particularly in urban neighbourhood. Housing image in Malaysia has evolved significantly in the last decade due to changes in the purchasers' preference, socio-economic factors, and advancement of technology as well as increase in the level of education and income among the urbanites. Although many studies have been carried out in reviewing the design and architectural aspects in the contemporary houses in Malaysia, little is known about the house buyers' preferences and demand for lifestyle housing, and how property developers customized their products in meeting the purchasers' changing needs. The purpose of this study is to identify the unique property features that the house buyers looking for as a reflection of the change in their lifestyle and standards of living. A total of 117 responses were collected from potential house buyers in Kuala Lumpur, through questionnaire survey. The respondents were represented by those who are actively looking to buy a house and currently evaluating their housing options. The relationships between the lifestyle and their housing preferences were tested and the model of influences on housing choice was supported. The results show that house buyers' motives in housing choices are driven by a complex system of factors at the neighbourhood level and borne out across the narrative papers. The findings from this study can be applied to the design and management of lifestyle housing development and to marketing strategies that are pertinent to lifestyle concepts. It is recommended however that further research studies test the lifestyle housing with different groups in diverse markets.

Keywords: lifestyle housing; house buyers; housing preference; Malaysia

I. Introduction

1. Background and Aims of the Study

Housing image in Malaysia has evolved significantly over the years due to various factors. Changes in the purchasers' preference, socio-economic development, and advancement of technology as well as increase in the level of education and income among the people have all contributed to the evolution. The local demand for housing is huge with increasing number of up-graders and young families getting wealthier as well. Demand for better housing has also benefited from increasing purchasing power brought about by higher rates of economic growth in the country. With a growing upper middle class and household wealth, housing for the affluent has become a key niche market segment for property developers today.

Lifestyle housing development seems to be the catchword for property development these days. There are trends

where many developers building more luxury or high end property that incorporate some very interesting key features and unique selling propositions that promotes lifestyle living. In fact, property developers now are more willing to invest huge capital to put in beautiful landscapes and public infrastructures to integrate the components of modern living as they perceive the opportunities and that the value and catalyst will flow into the development.

From originally a basic shelter made of timber or bricks in the old days, houses now are far more advanced in design and construction whereby most housing developments come with additional features such as gated and guarded community, lush and green landscaping, state-of-the-art lifestyle clubhouse facilities, smart-home system, green building, etc. Today, housing forms the single largest investment among the households, and real estate has played a large part in driving the country's economic growth as well. The market trend now for property is housing development with lifestyle concept. This can be seen as most people are more preferred to buy properties of certain standards with key consideration being paid on the features available for lifestyle living.

Although a lot of studies have been carried out in reviewing the design evolution in the contemporary houses seen in Malaysia in terms of the architectural aspects, little is known from the purchasers' point of view with regards to house buyers' preferences and demand for lifestyle housing,

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and how property developers customized their products in meeting the purchasers' changing needs. This is essential for growth of the entire property development industry in Malaysia as it charts the current trend as well as the future potentials of lifestyle housing developments.

This paper describes lifestyle concept of housing in Malaysia, the housing typology and identifies the unique property features that the Malaysian house buyers look for as a reflection of the change in their lifestyle and standards of living.

II. Literature Review

1. Lifestyle and Housing in Malaysia

Lifestyle is a composite of motivations, needs, and wants of individuals. It is influenced by factors such as culture, family, reference groups, and social class. The analysis of consumer lifestyles is an important factor in determining how consumers make their purchase decisions, and in the context of this research, it is the house buyers' tastes and preferences that reflects individuals' requirements or standards of living and their demand for lifestyle housing.

Looking forward to 2020, Malaysia will be a developed nation where the housing industry will find itself at the centre of rapid economic and social changes. Housing these days is more than just a shelter. Marcus (1997) describes the needs fulfilled by one's home as "a place of self-expression, a vessel of memories, a refuge from the outside world, and a cocoon where we can feel nurtured and let down our guard. Wentling (1995) supported the fact by saying that "we no longer provide shelter, we are producers of lifestyle-oriented environments." The evolution in the housing image and improved quality of life in Malaysia is the result of the urbanization process that has successfully taken place.

Housing environment these days is not only about residential surroundings, but also presents the house buyers' attitudes towards lifestyles and also signifying the greatest impact on the housing choices. It is apparent that the people's demand now on housing is much higher than just a basic function of shelter and identifying lifestyles characteristics has become increasingly important to the property developers in marketing of their new housing products.

Over the years, there were tremendous changes in the housing image in Malaysia from the simple living to more modern and integrated townships today. In line with the rise in the living standards, people now demand "an environment of high quality that conveys a sense of well-being and satisfaction to its population through characteristics that may be physical (housing style and

condition, gated and guarded environment, landscaping and available facilities such as clubhouse), social (friendliness of neighbours, ethnic, racial, or economic composition), or symbolic (sense of identity, prestige values, etc.) (Lansing and Marans, 1969). At present, house buyers' purchasing decisions are very much determined by the lifestyles that they are leading with and very often, they are buying into the concept or lifestyle that the housing product can offer them and the "feel good" factor of owning the property.

Avraham and Ketter (2008) mentioned that place imaging is widely regarded to be the trend in the housing industry in the 21st century. Factors in the contemporary discourse on place imaging such as house design, value and identity as well as planning image strategy are the most sought after concepts in the marketing of property developments and presently, many developers in Malaysia are adopting these concepts to stay abreast of the latest trends in the industry.

The concept of lifestyle housing development was first introduced in Malaysia way back in early 1990's where the first gated and guarded community and master plan township developments are seen in Malaysia's property development landscape. In line with the changes of house buyers' preferences and their demand for lifestyle fulfilment, there was an evolution of the types of products being offered by the property developers over the years in the context of major cities in Malaysia.

2. Housing Typology in Malaysia

The evolution of housing typology in Malaysia from the traditional Malay houses and shop houses in the 1950's to today's lifestyle oriented developments (such as terrace houses, townhouses, semi-detached houses, bungalows as well as high-rise condominiums, service apartments, SOHO, SOFO, SOVO, serviced suites, etc.) resembles the great transformation that has taken place in the property development landscape in Malaysia over these years.

Through colonization and modernization, the British had brought in multiracial immigrants into Malaya which consisted of the Malays, Chinese and Indians. This phenomenon has brought a great impact on the history of Malaysian modernization. In the following sub-chapter, only traditional vernacular Malay houses will be discussed.

2.1 Traditional Vernacular Malay House

The traditional vernacular Malay houses define the richest components of Malaysia's cultural heritage. They were built to meet the basic housing needs of the people living in rural areas with a good understanding of the natural environment and tropical climate, utilization of

traditional technologies and the resources readily available for construction.

The most significant characteristics are the adaptation to the natural climate in Malaysia. Besides that, the Malays' traditions also greatly affected the design of the traditional Malay houses as well. Over time, there was a great development in the construction of Malay houses to suit their ever changing lifestyles and needs and many new styles and shape of the Malay vernacular architecture were born (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. A Traditional Vernacular Malay House

The design and materials used for traditional Malay house are highly influenced by socioeconomic, cultural and environmental needs. Most of the material used is readily available locally such as timber, bamboo and palm (Kamal, 2005). The traditional Malay house is almost near to perfection due to its unique design, multifunctional use of space, building temperature control, and the flexibility of extending the house with growing number of family members. That's the reasons why today the styles of the Malay vernacular architecture have inspired many young architects in designing Malaysia's contemporary houses that comprises the merits of the Malay vernacular and western designs (Lim, 2009).

2.2 Evolution of Terraced Housing

A popular residential concept, terrace houses were booming in the 1970s. The origin of the terrace houses in Malaysia can be traced back in the post-independence era of the late 50s and early 60s. It was actually originated from the Melaka townhouses dated back to the 17th century and the Chinese shop houses in the 19th century. The earliest types of townhouses or row houses were built in the 17th century during the Dutch occupation (Saji, 2012). In the early 20th century, most urban dwellers were still occupying shop houses in the town areas. As the rapid rise of urban development took place and major cities in Malaysia expanded whereby the levels of rural-urban migration increased during the 80s, there was a huge demand for housing and urban housing took on the form of the single or

double-storey terraced house, which are also known as the row house or link house (Fig. 2).

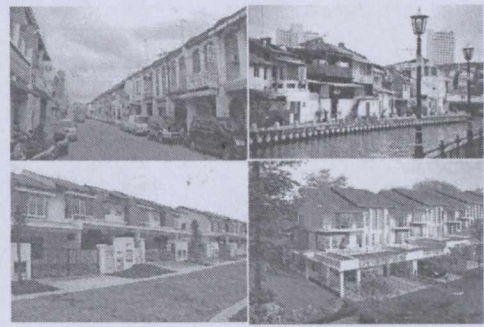


Fig. 2. Evolution of Terrace Housing

In fact, terrace houses became very popular to property developers as it offered quicker construction time at cheaper costs because of the batch construction methods, and also offered maximum efficiency in terms of the number of houses per unit area. Most importantly perhaps, they proved to be a desirable upgrade from the traditional "kampong" houses or even the shop houses that most people were living in back then. Different from traditional houses, terrace house was constructed systematically linked in rows, sharing common bearing walls and can be single or multiple stories without much consideration for both climatic and culture requirements as discussed in 2.1 (Saji, 2012).

The concept of living in community as adapted in the Asian societies, has succumbed to the anonymous living of housing estates which still remain until today. In fact, it is one of the most prevalent housing typology in Malaysia. Over the years, terraced housing has developed into one of the most successful residential concepts in Malaysia, and has been recognized as the primary form of housing for the middle-income group and affluent class. Today, terrace houses are designed in various forms and layout, from small and compact starter houses to gated-guarded communities.

2.3 High-rise Residential Development

High-rise residential or vertical living has become a trend of living style among the urban professional community in Malaysia. The concept of high rise living is not new in the country. One of the first few high-rise residential has been introduced in Penang Island which is known as the "Rifle Range" in early 70s (Tiun, 2009). As the turn of the century, high-rise residential began to spring up in major urban areas such as Penang, Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Johor Bahru. This is mainly due to the increase in demand for housing and the scarcity of land for development of landed residential properties.

Facilities seem to be a major draw in high-rise residential

buildings. As the trend now is moving towards lifestyle living, house buyers do not merely buy a house but a home with complete housing amenities. Unlike before where the home was just a place to be with their family, but house buyers now want their homes to be a reflection of their lifestyles through the facilities that their living community or township offers, such as higher tier security, better privacy, sports facilities, lush and greenery and many others.

The upsurge of lifestyle housing demand has urged the property developers offer more attractive and innovative products to meet the house buyers' demand. Therefore, many types of high-rise residential buildings in the limelight range from serviced apartments to luxury condominiums and even branded residences are offered by the property developers in recent years. Few good examples are those in area like KLCC, Mont Kiara, Ampang and Bangsar.

2.4 Up-rise of Urban Townships

The trial to modernization of Malaysia's housing gave a significant implication to urban planning. In Klang Valley, the new township development concept started in Petaling Jaya (PJ) as the satellite town during pre-independence period. It was addressed to relieve the concentration of population resulting from economic recovery after the war and to resolve the problem of unauthorized squatters that grown rapidly in Kuala Lumpur (Seo and Omar, 2010).

In making living in cities a preferred choice, more recreational areas, parks and open spaces as well as public amenities such as hospitals, schools, and libraries have to be provided and built. Eves (2006) emphasized that the urban planning should be made for the community needs at the right time and in the right place. On the other hand, a variety of environmental attributes as well as services at a particular location are the factors that house buyers would consider before purchasing a house. These include the actual floor area of living space, an address, accessibility to employment, a neighbourhood environment, a set of neighbours, a diverse collection of services including schools, clinics and retails, and sense of belonging to the community of residence (Wu, 2010).

Hence, property developers play a key part in the country's urbanization process and they will need to become more innovative about how they plan, build and manage their developments in order to achieve a sustainable urban township. One of the most successful master-planned developments for urban living is Sunway Velocity by Sunway Property. The success of Sunway Velocity attributed to its strategic and vibrant location, excellent

accessibility to public transportation such as MRT and shuttle bus, and integrated components which include shopping mall, retail shops, office suites, healthcare centre and serviced apartments. Also, part of the master plan is the inclusion of a theme park, environmental deck and covered pedestrian link bridges that connecting the entire development with convenience in mind. Putting all these components together, practically this development mimics the functionality of a future city on its own.

3. Lifestyle Concepts Affecting House Buyers Preference

Choosing a place to live may seem to be a fairly simple decision but yet it varies from individuals due to the complexity of people's lives that makes housing preference a decision that is influenced by a variety of factors. Today, an individual or a family's lifestyles have the greatest impact on its housing preferences and if at all possible they will be seeking housing that matches their lifestyles.

Selecting housing is a process of knowing who the house buyers are and how the houses can express themselves. Due to the increase in the standards of living and the unique lifestyle requirements of the people, the property developers in Malaysia have been innovative and creative in meeting the market demands and try to differentiate their products and make it attractive to the house buyers.

In tandem with the rise in the purchasing power and growing demand for better living, the house buyers today are looking for additional facilities in housing to meet their needs. Besides that, the affluent and modern society now also prefers development projects that revolve around a master plan with convenience in mind that all major components i.e. living, learning, working and playing can all be reached within their doorstep. The house buyers are also more environmental conscious nowadays and starting to pay greater emphasis and priority on sustainability and eco-friendly housing features than before.

3.1 Gated and Guarded Community

'Gated and Guarded' often invokes images of an exclusive enclave of the rich and wealthy in the past. However, the gated and guarded community schemes are getting more popular these days and the number of gated and guarded communities in Malaysia has been on the rise over the years. The house buyers now demand their residential community to be equipped with exceptional security features such as 24-hour patrol services, guardhouses with sentry guards on the alert, and gates or high fences at the entrance of the area with strict rules and stringent regulations for entry and exit systems (Fig. 3).

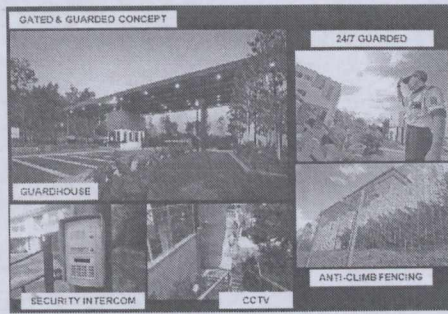


Fig. 3. Gated and Guarded Community Features

In fact, the development of residential properties under the Gated and Guarded community concept is being considered as one of the most effective methods to ensure the personal safety of the residents and promote the concept of 'Safe Township' that is based on the principle of "crime prevention is better than crime eradication" as safe environment is believed to be the solution to crime reduction.

As defined by the Department of Town and Country Planning Peninsular Malaysia (JPBD) under the Guidelines of Gated Community and Guarded Neighbourhood, "Gated Community" refers to a gated and guarded residential community, either in high-rise or landed properties. These properties in a Gated Community need to have a strata title (including landed strata) and is only allowed in limited locations in the urban area. On the other hand, "Guarded Neighbourhood" refers to residential community properties with individual land title which has security service either with or without security guard house and can be of "guarded only" (without fence) and "guarded and gated" (with fence).

In recent years, the development of gated and guarded communities in Malaysia has shown tremendous growth in the residential property industry thanks to the growing of safety consciousness among the Malaysians. Also, the most important underlying reasons why house buyers now want the gated and guarded property is possibly because of the status and representation that goes along with a house that is protected and highly secured.

3.2 Clubhouse Facilities

Nowadays, in a "people-focused" development, there is also an increasing trend for housing developments that incorporate clubhouse facilities which emphasized on the exclusivity and symbolization of upper class, wealth and luxury living. The recreational and sporting facilities such as swimming pool, gymnasium, sauna and Jacuzzi, badminton, basketball, tennis or squash courts, yoga room or patio, barbeque corner, café or bar lounge, function hall,

celebrity kitchen and dining for entertaining, karaoke room, library, children's playground, and many more state-of-the-art facilities and amenities that property developers have been introducing in promoting lifestyle living as well as providing the house buyers with their day-to-day social activity requirements.

According to Hui *et al.* (2006), the availability of a private clubhouse with facilities within the housing community could also increase the value of the property by about 3.5% as compared with the normal housing estates without such facilities. Although by having these facilities add to the marketability of the development, but it is also because the property developers have all actually given meticulous thoughts to what today's house buyers really want and to build around their needs.

Johnson (2008) stated that each development or residential area could contain different recreational facilities depending on the market segment as it would be more likely to design different recreational facilities for various user groups within each residential area whom may have different lifestyles. Hence, it is important for the property developer to provide the right proportions of clubhouse facilities to meet the house buyers' genuine needs based on the lifestyles of their target house buyers.

"Lifestyle living" has been the latest and most talked-about term in property development industry, and to meet the house buyers' demand and preferences, housing products need to have integrated facilities and living spaces that cater for every contemporary lifestyle need and aspiration. In other words, the affluent and educated house buyers these days are not merely buying just a "house", but they are buying into the overall package the development offers, and one very important determinant is clubhouse with facilities and recreational functions that weave around their real needs.

3.3 Lush Landscaping Features

Environmental quality within and around a neighbourhood is undoubtedly a very important element that influence the house buyers' purchasing decisions as people these days demand quality living that embraces the natural environment and mother nature. According to Said (2001), landscape refers to an expression of people's work and an idea to illustrate the intrinsic understanding and relationship of residents towards their living environment and community. Landscaping is also defined as activity to transform the visible features of a land which includes the flora and fauna and natural or human elements like bodies of water, structures and fences created either naturally or

human-made that enhance the environmental qualities (Sullivan, 2002).

Generally, house buyers now are more willing to pay more to live in neighbourhood with lush landscaping and lots of greeneries as good environmental elements carry significance property values, such as green space provision, proximity to urban parks, and views of green space, landscaping and water (Tan, 2010). For example, view of green space and proximity to water bodies could raise price of property by 7% and 13%, respectively (Jim and Chen, 2006), and accessible green spaces near homes could raise house price by 5-6% (Tyrvaïnen and Mitettinen, 2000; Tajima, 2003). Besides, a garden bordering on water could attract a premium 28% higher than one without this attraction (Luttik, 2000).

In a lushly landscaped compound neighbourhood, the native tree species are normally planted within buffer zones, green reserves and pocket green spaces and all utilities are usually built underground so that the natural landscape is being protected and the view are not blocked (Tan, 2010). Due to the increasing demand and preferences of house buyers on landscaped neighbourhood that upholds green living lifestyle, the property developers are transforming the residential estate areas that do not possess these natural attributes by providing artificial landscapes, lakes, waterways, or greeneries which are not available in that particular location (Eves, 2007).

3.4 Master Planned Development

One of the most recent forms of residential neighbourhood seen in Malaysia's property development and becoming increasingly popular is master-planned development. Today, there has been an increasing trend for various population groups to live in master-planned communities where the main attractions that drawn house buyers' interests are security, recreation, location and availability of goods and services such as retails, schools or transportation system.

In land-use planning, "master plan" is generally defined as a long-range planned urban community concept designed for self-sufficiency and providing housing, educational, commercial, and recreational facilities for its residents. Nowadays, it appears that master-planned developments are also increasingly accepted in everyday suburban life, meeting an apparently burgeoning consumer demands (Minnery & Bajracharya, 1999).

A good example is Setia Alam, a Gold Winner of FIABCI Prix d'Excellence Awards 2013 under the Master Plan Category, was a story that began as an impossible dream in

transforming a 2,500 acre oil palm plantation into an award-winning township with a wholesome nature-inspired sanctuary and a vibrant urban hub that exemplifies the *Live, Learn, Work and Play* philosophy. Comprehensive amenities are provided to cater for all residents' lifestyles needs – excellent schools, an award-winning shopping mall, state-of-the-art club house and facilities, parks, F&B retails, banks, etc. It is also a testament of the developer's accomplishment in creating and executing a visionary development master plan that provided not just housing for the broad demographic spectrum, but also the economic opportunities that came along and where all needs in living are fulfilled.

As a matter of fact, the purchasing decision or preference of the house buyers are not only determined solely by the property itself, but they are also looking at the overall picture of the entire master-planned development as to what the community can offer them and the development components that meet their lifestyle and ways of living.

3.5 Sustainable and Green Development

Malaysia's desire to achieve the status of a developed country by the year 2020 will require rapid economic growth and expansion, especially in the urban, industrial and commercial sectors. Economic growth is guided by the principles of sustainable development. With the growing concern of global warming and climate change, building professionals are advised to look again at the environmental factor in designing buildings in the tropical climates as part of the global citizens' responsibility (PMO, 2014).

By 2020, it's likely that all buildings in advanced economies will need to have sustainability ratings. What's more, the concept of sustainability is generally understood to mean creating "places" where people enjoy living and working. Therefore, new developments will be designed with green spaces, better air quality, and better access to environmental friendly transportation system and so forth. There is already a push towards building more energy efficient buildings in the world. It began in the 1990 by introducing green building rating called BREEAM (UK: 1990) and followed by LEED (US: 1996). Asia countries are also catching up with this trend such as Singapore's GREENMARK and Malaysia's Green Building Index (GBI) are designed for the tropical climate.

In Malaysia, GBI has been introduced for all types of buildings to encourage the construction of green buildings (GBI, 2014). The government has taken several pro-active actions in promoting energy efficiency through the demonstration of Low Energy Office (LEO) building of the

Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water in 2004 and also the Green Energy Office (GEO) of Malaysia Green Technology Corporation (MGTC) in 2008. These buildings demonstrated the government's aspirations and hoping to encourage the private sectors to also construct and design low energy buildings in the ever increasing importance of a green environment.

According to SPREAD (2010), green and sustainability marketing is a growing field that aims to green the market by promoting environmentally and socially sound products and services. An important aspect of sustainability marketing is the provision of sustainability-related information to consumers, typically through eco and social labels. These aim to create trust among consumers in the environmental and social viability of products, devices and appliances. Undoubtedly, there is certainly a growing demand to go green in the property development industry as house buyers are more environmental-conscious now, thus making green and sustainable features in housing an important determinant in the house buyers' purchasing decision today.

3.6 Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS)

Fully aware of the fact that house buyers today are becoming increasingly sophisticated in their choice of properties including key criteria such as contemporary and eco-friendly design and an environmentally-friendly neighbourhood, LOHAS concept has just entered the fray in Malaysia the last couple of years and already received overwhelming response whereby many LOHAS developments are coming up in the neighbourhoods across major cities in Malaysia such as Klang Valley, Penang and Johor Bahru.

LOHAS, an acronym for 'Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability', is a concept that focused on health, the environment, social justice, personal development and sustainable living. In fact, there is a growing number of property developers in the country are doing their best to build in greener ways by incorporating ecologically friendly designs and innovations into their developments to create an environment that is in harmony with nature and where families can truly enjoy a sustainable and well-balanced lifestyle.

III. Research Methodology

This research is aimed to explore the shift in the house buyers' preferences on housing features and the evolution in property products with the concept of lifestyle housing. This concept is introduced by property developers in meeting the

demand and standards of living of the modern society in the property development industry in Malaysia.

A questionnaire survey was administered among the potential or existing house buyers in Malaysia, primarily based in Kuala Lumpur or Selangor. The main purpose is to gather the responses of the house buyers in understanding their preferences and priorities on housing features. A total of 117 respondents have taken part in the survey. The questionnaire was targeted primarily the younger age group of 25 to 40 years old who potentially are the biggest end-users of today's lifestyle oriented environments. This age group also represents the majority of Malaysia house buyers' attitudes and demands towards lifestyle living.

There are five main aspects looked into in this study: gated and guarded community, clubhouse facilities, lush landscaping features, master planned development, and sustainable development. The questionnaire was designed to understand the house buyers' preferences and their priorities on the facilities and housing features that support their daily living requirements and lifestyles. The questionnaire survey consisted of two sections. The first section looks into the demographic profile of the respondents that required them to provide broad information about themselves and their background - gender, age group, race, marital status, household size, and whether they currently own a house or not. The second section which is the core part of the questionnaire, aimed at gathering the feedback of the respondents on the types of facilities and housing features that they prefer in making the decision of purchasing a property or house.

The questions designed in section 2 are generally using 5-points ordinal scale which rank orders the categories in meaningful way to determine the most preferred choices to the least desired options: Rank 1 = Highest priority, 5 = Lowest priority, with the exception to question 10 where 10-points ordinal scale was being used with Rank 1 = Highest priority, 10 = Lowest priority. Besides that, ratio scale was also used to gauge the respondent's willingness on the range of premium in price that house buyers are willing to pay for properties with the additional facilities and features in percentage figures.

The results of the questionnaire survey were cut-off after a week's time of data collection period whereby a total of 117 responses were taken to be analyzed and where statistical techniques were then employed to evaluate the data collected from the survey. The reliability of the responses is essential and this concern has been addressed as all respondents are presented with the same standardised questions to confirm the accuracy of the findings. The

descriptive data analysis approach is employed where a set of brief descriptive coefficients that summarizes a given data set, primarily the categorical data, are effectively presented in the form of charts.

IV. Results and Findings

This chapter provides tabulating and analyzing the data collected from the survey conducted and to discuss in detailed the analytical results of the study. Lifestyle in relation to housing is influenced by age, marital status, household type, as well as the size of household. All these factors determine the stage in life cycle that impacts one's lifestyle.

4.1 Profile of Respondent

The results on profile of respondents are summarized and presented in Table 1.0:

Table 1. Profile of Respondent

Item	Attributes	Percentage (%)	n
Gender	Male	44	117
	Female	56	
Age (years)	less than 25	10	
	26-40	81	
	41-55	7	
	56 and over	2	
Status	Single	65	
	Married	35	
Household size	less than 3	30	
	4-6	60	
	7-9	10	
Homeowner	Yes	54	
	No	46	
Type of homeownership	Landed	80	
	Strata	20	

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Respondent

Out of the 117 respondents, 54% own a house (see Table 1) and 90% of them own either one or two houses. Remarkably, the survey also shown that majority of the respondents prefer landed properties i.e. double storey terrace, semi-d or bungalows more and only 20% chosen high-rise condominium or service apartment as their preferred type of property.

Age is an important household aspect that influences the house buyers' preferences on the housing features. A huge number of respondents (81%) are in the age group of between 26 and 40 years old that correspond to the affluent buyers for lifestyle living. As a matter of fact, those age group are primarily the target market for the property developers for lifestyle housing as they are the young professionals who are looking for their first house as well as those early and mid-thirties who have acquired job stability and resources and wanting a house that they can own to meet their lifestyle and social needs as well as a home that matches their identity.

Another important aspect that determines the lifestyle of an individual or family would be the marital status and household size. Majority of the respondents (65%) are single while the remaining (35%) is married. The size of the family or household has great influence on the housing choices as different household size with different life cycle may have different lifestyles altogether, whether it should be an apartment or a landed property, what type of feature that is more important, gated and guarded or clubhouse facilities, etc. In this survey, 60% of the respondents are having a household size of between 4 to 6 persons, 30% is with less than or equal to, 3 persons, and 10% with a household size of between 7 to 9 persons.

4.3 Lifestyle Housing Preferences

We ranked the preferences chose by respondents with regards to their lifestyle housing features (Fig. 4). Out of the five main aspects of lifestyle housing concept discussed in this study, 33% respondents have selected gated and guarded community as their most important feature in their housing preferences.



Fig. 4. Priority on Key Features for Housing Purchase Decision

This is followed by 29% respondents who have given top priority to a good master planned development as house buyers are drawn to the advantages and convenience of having all their major needs being fulfilled within the neighbourhood they live. However, it is surprising to note sustainable living features ranked third whereby 22% respondents selected it as their priority features in purchasing a house. This shows that there is growing demand for houses that incorporates sustainable features as people are more environmental conscious these days. Lush landscaping seems to be the fourth most important feature while 50% respondents have chosen clubhouse facilities as their lowest priority in purchasing a house. This could largely be attributed to the fact that nowadays, most people prefer to take up memberships in fitness centre where the gym facilities are more complete. Besides, there are more varieties to the equipment offered, coupled with trainer's assistance and not forgetting other facilities that come along the way such as sauna, Jacuzzi, swimming pool, yoga/dance

studios, etc. as compared to the ordinary clubhouse within a neighbourhood.

Based on the findings of the survey conducted, 51% respondents think that 24-7 security guard control and patrol system is the most important feature for a gated and guarded community (Fig. 5). This is commonly seen in almost every neighbourhood and housing estates in Malaysia today as security becomes the top priority for all house buyers to the extent where some neighbourhoods even employed armed guards for the added protection in case of criminal incidents happening.

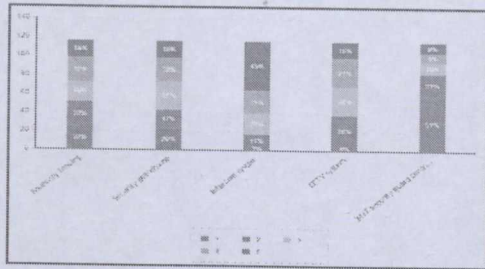


Fig. 5. Priority Features for Gated and Guarded Community

Second in line would be boundary security fencing where unauthorized access into the neighbourhood is being restricted and also making it easier for the security guards to control and monitor the activities. This is followed by security guardhouse ranked at third as any access into the neighbourhood will be controlled at the main entry point of a security guardhouse where identity of the visitors will be verified before they are allowed to enter into the neighbourhood. However, for an effective security guardhouse system, the guards play a very important role as they are the scrutiniser who allows the access in and out from the neighbourhood.

With regards to house buyers' preference for the type of clubhouse facilities, it is apparent that majority of the respondents (47%) selected swimming pool as their top priority, followed by gymnasium and yoga room (17%); sauna, Jacuzzi and sports facility (8%); and children's playground (4%). The other half of the table rankings of the clubhouse facilities are barbeque facility, café/bar lounge, a function hall and karaoke room, celebrity kitchen and dining hall, and the least preferred facility is library.

People these days pay great emphasis on good landscaping features, not only for greenery but could potentially enhance their property values. Most house buyers (38%) preferred to have urban park and large green spaces within their neighbourhood, while 37% preferred lakes and waterways. The increased number of property development projects that themed around lakes and waterways revealed the strong house buyers' demand

Ranked at the third is theme garden such as aroma garden, maze garden, herb and spices garden, etc.

According to the survey, 37% of the respondents selected forest environment with tranquil green surroundings as their fourth most preferred landscaping feature. Finally, 53% of the respondents selected flora and fauna sanctuary as the lowest priority on landscaping feature. In an effort to promote modern living amid a healthy natural environment, developers these days specially created tropical landscape with a diversity of flora and fauna and creating a truly sustainable landscape that will serve as an ideal habitat for fish, butterflies, birds, and other friendly creatures.

Sustainable living is a lifestyle that attempts to reduce an individual's or society's use of the earth's natural resources in reducing the amount of environmental damages for the future generations.

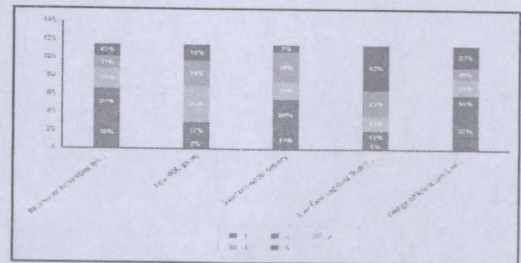


Fig. 6. Priority Features for Sustainable Living

From Fig. 6 above, 37% respondents selected energy efficient low energy windows and glass as their top priority for sustainable living housing feature. These features are proven to be able to reduce energy consumption and in keeping the sun's heat out, increasing the overall comfort in one's home. The second top priority (30%) is rain water and harvesting system to conserve resources for toilet and irrigation purposes. The rank is followed by solar hot water system, low VOC paint, and lastly, the least preferred is low flow and dual flush toilet system that uses significantly less water.

Today, one of the most popular forms of development seen in Malaysia is master-planned developments. Most house buyers are now looking for convenience and prefer a self-contained neighbourhood with different development components that fulfil all their basic living needs.

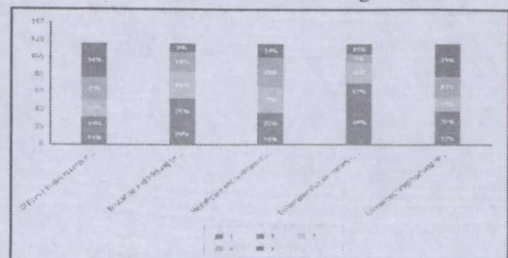


Fig. 7. Priority Components for a Good Master Planned Development

Fig. 7 shown that 44% respondents are of the opinion that comprehensive amenities such as shopping mall, F&B retails, banks, grocery, etc. are the most important component in a good master planned development. Next would be proximity to education and lifelong learning centres (20%) such as the likes of kindergarten, school, college, university, etc.

Ranked at third is healthcare and wellness centre (14%) where medical facilities such as clinic, dental, hospital, etc. are at the door step in case of emergencies. The fourth priority component of a master plan development is a connected neighbourhood (12%) with safe pedestrian walkways that allow the community of all ages to walk to school, work, leisure, retail shopping mall and shops in a secured environment and reduce the dependency on automobiles.

The survey also garnered feedbacks from the respondents with regards to the price premium that the house buyers are willing to pay for the additional housing features and facilities. Fig. 8 shows that 46% respondents are willing to pay a price premium of between 6% and 10% for a property with these added features, followed by 37% respondents (for a premium of less than or equal to 5%), 11% respondents (for a premium of between 11% to 15%), 4% respondents (for a premium of between 16% and 20%), and 2% respondents are willing to pay for a premium of more than 20% for these additional facilities or housing features that promote lifestyle living.

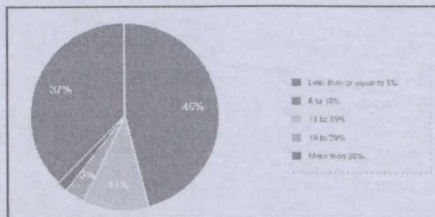


Fig. 8. Price Premium Acceptability for Additional Housing Features

In the last section of the questionnaire survey, apart from the five main aspects being discussed in this study, we also looked into the other features that the discerning house buyers are looking for in a house that meets their lifestyle and day-to-day living requirements. Some of the other important features that are commonly shared by the survey respondents are good transportation system, proximity to public transportation hub and accessibility to major highways, modern building façade design and functional unit layout, smart home system and high-tech home gadgets, high-speed wireless internet broadband and good IT infrastructure, jogging path and cycling lane within the township, pet-friendly urban park, and many more.

In a nutshell, houses these days have evolved according to the lifestyles of the people. The features incorporated by property developers are much tailored based on the consumers' preferences and changes and driven by the demand in the property market.

V. Conclusion

In this paper, we have identified the priority housing features aspired by the property purchasers. We also explored the typology of housing development in Malaysia with regards to the rise and increasing popularity of lifestyle housing in property development scene. Lifestyle development are undoubtedly on the rising trend in Malaysia, with most property developers today competing to develop the most innovative lifestyle housing products in creating a truly comfortable living experience for the house buyers. In fact, the Malaysian housing industry has come a long way of evolution since the days of traditional vernacular Malay houses and shop houses during the 1960s to today's contemporary luxury high-end residences.

Due to the rapid change of lifestyles and higher standards of living among the society, houses these days have evolved significantly in terms of size, design, concept and features which were all determined by the escalated demands and lifestyle needs of the affluent and discerning house buyers.

The variety of unique housing features and concepts that we have seen in the property market today such as lush greenery development, self-contained community living through well master-plan with amenities at doorstep, sustainable and green living, gated and guarded community for safe living environment, state-of-the-art clubhouse facilities, etc. are enough to prove that today house buyers' demand are much higher and sophisticated compared to before. Undoubtedly, the rise in lifestyle housing development has also uplifted the overall landscape of property development in Malaysia due to the increasing house buyers' expectations. This has successfully brought the best out of the property developers in Malaysia who continuously innovates and tries their best to craft property products that are marketable and at the same time able to fulfil the house buyers' demands and lifestyle needs.

In conclusion, the trend of lifestyle housing development is here to stay and certainly will be taken to even greater heights in near future, and the property development industry is looking good and without a doubt will be more promising than ever in near future.

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