

THE IMPACT OF INTERIOR DESIGN ELEMENTS ON VISITOR ATTRACTION AT CIHAPIT MARKET'S WET MARKET ZONE

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Abstract

Traditional markets play a vital role in Indonesia's economic and socio-cultural landscape but continue to face challenges related to comfort and spatial appeal. This study aims to analyze the influence of interior elements on visitor perception in the wet market area of Cihapit Market, Bandung, with particular attention to gender-based differences through the lens of multisensory theory. A mixed-method approach was employed, combining field observations grounded in Environmental Behavior Studies (EBS) with questionnaires involving 100 respondents. The findings reveal that male visitors tend to be more critical of functional aspects, particularly spatial circulation, which is perceived as ineffective due to narrow pathways and faded floor markings. In contrast, female visitors are more sensitive to multisensory aspects, such as dim lighting, low cleanliness caused by stagnant water and organic waste, and poor air quality due to pervasive fishy odors. These results highlight that spatial experience in traditional markets is shaped by complex multisensory interactions in which visual, tactile, kinesthetic, and olfactory stimuli collectively influence perceptions of comfort and safety. Therefore, interior design strategies for traditional markets should focus on integrating inclusive multisensory experiences to enhance comfort, attractiveness, and competitiveness amid changing modern consumer behaviors.

Keywords: Traditional Market, Interior Elements, Visitor Perception, Gender, Multisensory Theory.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional markets possess distinctive characteristics and exert a significant influence on Indonesia's socio-economic life. While they were once primarily recognized as spaces for daily commodity transactions, their roles have evolved into social arenas that foster intergenerational and intercultural interactions (Novianti et al., 2023). For many communities, the presence of traditional markets not only fulfills consumption needs but also facilitates social relationships, strengthens communal solidarity, and preserves local traditions (Adjie & Nurasa, 2024). This underscores that

traditional markets are not merely centers of distribution but also culturally rooted public spaces with enduring social value (Yuni Saputri & Sari Islami, 2021).

From an interior design perspective, revitalizing traditional markets poses a challenge in balancing functional efficiency with enhanced comfort and visual appeal (Arianti et al., 2022). Interior elements such as spatial circulation, lighting quality, flooring materials, and signage systems play a crucial role in shaping visitor perception. As urban lifestyles evolve, public expectations for markets that are clean, organized, and comfortable have increased significantly. Consequently, interior design strategies must not only emphasize practical function but also preserve the cultural identity of the market (Elang et al., 2020).

Despite the continued importance of traditional markets totaling 17,443 across Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024), their existence faces mounting pressure. Competition from modern retail centers, lifestyle shifts emphasizing efficiency, and the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly affected public visitation patterns (Claudia et al., 2025). Additionally, negative stigmas such as perceptions of dirtiness, narrow layouts, poor hygiene, and unappealing aesthetics have further marginalized traditional markets. Previous studies have identified key barriers including inadequate lighting, unpleasant odors, narrow circulation paths, unclear signage, monotonous color palettes, and disorganized product displays (Muthiah et al., 2018).

These issues are particularly evident in Cihapit Market, one of Bandung's historic markets with strong cultural value. Although revitalized in 2014, the outcome remains uneven: the culinary zone has been redesigned with warm lighting, informative signage, and modern tenant concepts, while the wet market zone remains neglected, featuring dim illumination, narrow aisles, and poorly organized product arrangements (Alyya et al., 2021; Dwindi et al., 2024). This imbalance has shifted visitor interest toward the culinary area, leaving the wet market increasingly deserted.

This study seeks to examine female visitors' perceptions of interior elements in the wet market area of Cihapit Market. The focus on women is based on research indicating that females exhibit higher sensory sensitivity to stimuli such as aroma, lighting, visual details, and cleanliness compared to males (Septianto et al., 2025). Using the Environmental Behavior Studies (EBS) framework, this research analyzes the interaction between the physical market environment and visitor behavior and applies multisensory theory to interpret how visual, olfactory, and material qualities collectively shape spatial experiences (Hassan et al., 2018).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a mixed-method approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of how interior elements influence visitor attraction, with a particular focus on female experiences in the wet market area of Cihapit Market. Field

observations were conducted using the Environmental Behavior Studies (EBS) framework, applying behavioral mapping and place-centered mapping techniques to document visitor activities, circulation patterns, and interactions. This approach enables the analysis of correlations between interior elements such as lighting, circulation, cleanliness, and visual organization and the behavioral and perceptual responses of female visitors.

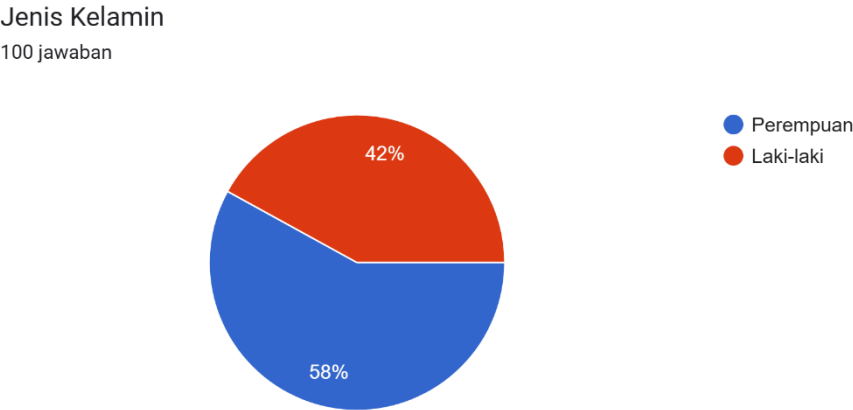


Figure 1. Questionnaire Respondents
Source: Author’s Data




An online questionnaire was distributed via Google Form using random sampling, consisting of closed-ended questions for demographic and visitation data and open-ended questions to explore visitor experiences, impressions, and expectations regarding the market’s condition. Of the 100 respondents, 58% were female, dominated by the Millennial Generation (58%), followed by Generation X (23%) and Generation Z (18%). This demographic distribution allows for cross-generational insights into female perceptions, particularly regarding visual sensitivity, hygiene awareness, and spatial comfort.


Questionnaire data were analyzed using JMP software through three coding stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The open coding stage involved identifying key words from narrative responses for example, “the corridor feels narrow due to stacked goods” was categorized under circulation and clutter. Axial coding then grouped these keywords into broader categories such as spatial circulation, lighting, cleanliness, and ventilation. Finally, selective coding interpreted inter-category relationships using JMP visual mapping, revealing patterns between interior elements and female perceptions for instance, dim lighting influencing perceptions of cleanliness, or narrow circulation routes leading to reluctance to linger.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Analysis of Cihapit Market Conditions and Questionnaire Findings

Picture	Category	Field Observation	Questionnaire
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		Findings
	Spatial Circulation	Narrow corridors, faded floor markings, and overlapping movement between visitors and vendors create a high risk of congestion during peak hours.
	Lighting	The wet market area appears dim, dominated by limited natural light and insufficient artificial lighting.
	Cleanliness	Standing water often appears in wet zones, with organic waste sticking to the floor and reducing overall comfort.
		26 respondents highlighted circulation issues. Most male respondents considered the circulation ineffective, indicating the need for clearer and more organized pathways.
		51 respondents, mostly female, expected brighter lighting to improve visibility and enhance their sense of safety.
		37 respondents, predominantly female, emphasized cleanliness as the primary factor influencing shopping comfort.

	Air Circulation	Ineffective ventilation causes the fishy odor of meat and seafood to spread throughout the area.	38 respondents, mostly female, expected better air circulation to minimize unpleasant odors.
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Source: Author's Analysis

The analysis revealed that visitors' experiences in the wet market area of Cihapit Market are not determined by a single interior element but rather emerge from the interaction of multiple sensory stimuli. This finding aligns with multisensory theory (Septianto et al., 2025) which posits that spatial perception results from the combined influence of visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, and kinesthetic inputs. Consequently, the problems identified in circulation, lighting, cleanliness, and air quality can be interpreted as the accumulation of multisensory discomfort experienced by users.

The narrow pathways and faded floor signage created an uncomfortable kinesthetic experience, especially when visitor movement overlapped with vendor activities. Such conditions intensified the sense of crowding and congestion, leading to both physical and psychological stress. The unclear visual orientation of the pathways further contributed to spatial disorientation, illustrating the connection between visual and kinesthetic perception in shaping negative spatial experiences. These findings underscore the need for spatial reconfiguration to improve navigability and reduce congestion in high-traffic zones.

The dim lighting and limited natural illumination significantly affected visitors' visual perception. Low light intensity not only reduced product visibility but was also associated with feelings of insecurity and poor hygiene. Multisensory theory suggests that lighting extends beyond visual function it also influences psychological comfort, emotional calmness, and spatial trust. This explains why most female respondents identified bright and evenly distributed lighting as a fundamental requirement for a comfortable and safe shopping environment.

Cleanliness emerged as a dominant multisensory dimension. The presence of standing water, slippery floors, and organic waste created both visual and tactile discomfort, increasing the risk of slipping and reducing the perception of hygiene. In addition, the olfactory stimulus of unpleasant odors amplified the sense of uncleanness. This multisensory accumulation generated a strong negative impression of the environment. The emphasis placed on cleanliness by female respondents demonstrates the strong connection between sensory cues and emotional well-being in market spaces.

Poor air quality, characterized by strong fishy odors from meat and seafood, dominated the olfactory experience of visitors. Odor plays a critical role in shaping spatial comfort and even influences perceptions of product freshness. In this case, overpowering smells tended to override visual cues even when products appeared fresh, unpleasant odors reduced visitors' trust in the market's hygiene and environmental quality. Improved air ventilation and localized exhaust systems are therefore essential to mitigate olfactory discomfort.

Overall, the discomfort experienced in the wet market area of Cihapit Market cannot be attributed to a single interior element but rather to the overlapping and cumulative nature of multisensory experiences. This indicates that effective design intervention requires an integrated sensory approach, combining improvements in visual (lighting and cleanliness), kinesthetic (spatial circulation), tactile (floor material), and olfactory (ventilation) aspects. By integrating these elements, traditional markets can provide a more comfortable, hygienic, and attractive environment, thereby enhancing both visitor satisfaction and market competitiveness in the context of modern urban lifestyles.

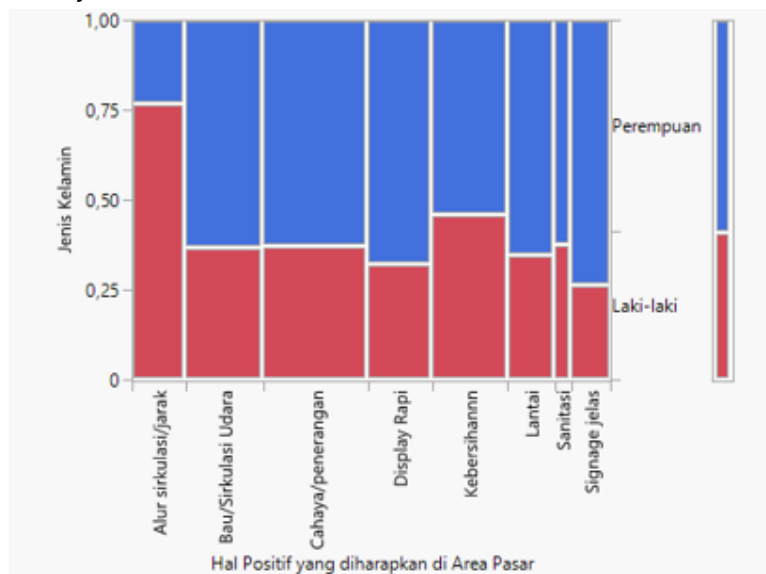


Figure 1. JMP Analysis Result

Source: Author's Analysis

The contingency analysis between gender and visitor expectations regarding positive interior elements in Cihapit Market revealed a significant difference. Based on the Chi-Square test (Pearson = 17.862; $p = 0.0126$), visitor preferences differed notably by gender. In terms of spatial circulation, 26 respondents (11.16%) reported that movement within the market was inefficient. The majority were male (76.92%), emphasizing the narrow walkways and faded floor markings that frequently caused congestion during peak hours.

Lighting emerged as the most frequently mentioned factor, cited by 51 respondents (21.89%), most of whom were female (62.75%), who desired brighter illumination to enhance visibility and a sense of safety. The cleanliness aspect was also significant, noted by 37 respondents (15.88%), with a higher proportion of female participants (54.05%). Standing water and residual organic waste on the floor were identified as key contributors to discomfort and perceived unhygienic conditions.

Meanwhile, air circulation was criticized by 38 respondents (16.31%), predominantly female (63.16%), who complained about the pervasive fish and meat odor throughout the wet market area. Additional factors such as organized display layouts (13.30%), floor conditions (9.87%), signage clarity (8.15%), and sanitation facilities (3.43%) though smaller in percentage were still considered influential in shaping the overall shopping experience.

These findings indicate that perceptual differences between genders play a crucial role in how visitors evaluate interior conditions. Male visitors tend to prioritize functional and spatial efficiency, particularly the clarity of circulation paths and movement flow, which directly affect orientation and spatial legibility. Conversely, female visitors place greater emphasis on multisensory comfort, including lighting quality (visual perception), cleanliness (tactile and visual perception), and ventilation (olfactory comfort).

According to multisensory theory in spatial design, spatial experience emerges through the integration of multiple sensory stimuli visual, olfactory, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic. Within the context of Cihapit Market, dim lighting, pervasive odors, and unclean flooring create negative sensory experiences, particularly for female visitors who exhibit higher sensitivity toward environmental cues. For male visitors, unclear circulation paths dominate discomfort due to their effect on movement efficiency and spatial orientation.

Therefore, the interior design strategy for Cihapit Market should aim to balance spatial functionality (clear and organized circulation) with multisensory comfort (adequate lighting, continuous cleanliness, and improved air quality). Following multisensory theory, spatial perception should not rely solely on visual elements but must also consider olfactory, tactile, and kinesthetic dimensions.

An integrated design strategy is thus recommended incorporating restructured circulation routes, evenly distributed artificial lighting, the use of hygienic, non-slip floor materials, and optimized natural ventilation or exhaust systems. This holistic approach is expected to enhance both functional efficiency and multisensory well-being, ultimately improving visitors' overall shopping experience at Cihapit Market.

CONCLUSION

The results indicate that the most influential interior elements affecting user experience in Cihapit Market's wet area include lighting (21.89%), air circulation

(16.31%), cleanliness (15.88%), and spatial circulation (11.16%). Female respondents were more concerned with lighting, cleanliness, and air circulation factors directly related to multisensory comfort such as visibility, aroma, and hygiene while male respondents focused on circulation efficiency and spatial organization.

These findings suggest that lighting, cleanliness, and ventilation are key determinants of multisensory comfort, while circulation is essential for functional performance. Accordingly, design strategies should include the reorganization of movement paths, uniform artificial lighting, enhanced ventilation through exhaust systems, and the application of clean, slip-resistant flooring materials.

Overall, the observed discomfort in Cihapit Market is a multisensory phenomenon, shaped by the interaction of visual, olfactory, tactile, and kinesthetic experiences. An integrated interior design approach grounded in multisensory perception is therefore essential to create a traditional market environment that is comfortable, hygienic, safe, and appealing, particularly for female visitors who are more sensitive to environmental quality.

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