Power Query Hawker Visit Planner

1 Most working adults simply treat hawker food as a convenient and cheap source of sustenance near their workplaces. They usually wouldn’t venture far for hawker food nor spend time and effort on their off days to go to a particular stall just to fill their stomach.

2 During my sabbatical starting from mid-2021, I decided to try the food at various famous hawkers around Singapore. One reason for is because some of these hawkers have operating hours that are not possible for the 9 to 5 office worker to visit. As hawkers age, many of them want to take it easy too hence they open for shorter hours than expected. When I was planning my visits, I realised there was a gap. There is no current resource that assists one in grouping hawkers by location and allows one to make decisions based on their opening days and hours. I had to plan my visits manually using pen and paper and it was frustrating process when it had to be done multiple times.

3 Thus, I decided to go ahead and built a solution in Excel to meet my needs. Using the information on Google Maps for hawker stalls, I created a file with worksheets containing the stalls’ operating days and opening hours:

* “Hawker Days” contains the stalls’ name, their general location and whether they are open or closed on each day of the week. There is conditional formatting applied to show “Open” as green and “Closed” as red.
* “Hawker Hours” contains the same stall names from “Hawker Days” and one column representing 30 minutes block each from 5am to 10.30pm to capture whether the stall is open or closed at a particular time.

4 Power Query was then used to link the data and display it as a dashboard using Pivot Table in “Selection”. Bins for morning, afternoon and evening based on the stalls’ opening hours were set up and DAX to calculate how long they were opened in each session. Slicers based on the day of the week and general location were linked to the dashboard to allow interactive selection and narrowing of stalls to visit.

5 The dashboard was then enhanced with an additional sheet “Status” to capture whether I had made a visit to a particular stall. This would then serve as an additional slicer in “Selection” to filter stalls based on whether I had visited them or not.

6 While the current solution serves my needs, I still have to manually enter a stall’s operating days and hours. One possible solution that I am looking at when I have further developed my skill set is to link it to Google Maps’ API to automatically retrieve the stalls’ operating hours and days instead of me entering the data manually.