



***USER PREFERENCE ON FAÇADE OF SHOPHOUSES BUILT BETWEEN
1900-1945 IN PETALING STREET, KUALA LUMPUR***

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By

TOONG YONG SENG

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti
Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science**

January 2016

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in
fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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January 2016

Chair: Nangkula Utaberta, PhD

Faculty: Design and Architecture

The research in regards to the user's preference on façade of shophouses built 1900 – 1945 in Kuala Lumpur Chinatown (KLC). There were four main issues identified in KLC heritage building of old shophouse facades. The issues identified were I) Problem of heritage facade deterioration; II) Problem of heritage facade modification without sympathetic to neighbours; III) Problem of add-on elements to heritage facade and, IV) Problem of permanent and non-permanent street structures obstruct the shophouses' facade. In view of the issues mentioned, there is a need to evaluate users' preference for heritage buildings of old shophouse facades in KLC. KLC referred as a unique heritage and historic site within the modern city of Kuala Lumpur. The old shophouses formed the major built component in those old towns in accordance to city growth morphological study and their facades contribute to the city image. Besides, the heritage buildings of heritage shophouse facades represent tangible (physical old buildings) and intangible (cultures) heritage elements. The objective of this research is to evaluate user's (owner/s & tenant/s) preference towards heritage buildings of old shophouse façades in KLC as to assist in urban conservation improvement. Site visit conducted and literature reviews were carried out to identify the problem of the old shophouses in KLC. The thesis uses qualitative research design method for source of data. The study was based on a case study carried out in KLC with interview the user's (owner/s & tenant/s). The interview entails more structured questions, along the line of a formal survey. Interviews conducted would be jotted and some were recorded digitally should it be agreed by the interviewee. The interviews in verbal data form would be transcribed into the text format by the end of the day. The research findings shown that there were 90% of the users having preference on the heritage shopfront facades as compare to 10% of the users prefer the contemporary façade in KLC. The heritage buildings of old shophouse facades preferred by the users due to the complexity of façade

elements composition as human perception has reckoned. The study results were expected could effectively to improve existing conservation guidelines within urban settings and generalised. Last but not least, the study will further leading towards the enhancement quality of conservation to protect shophouse facades stock in KLC and avoid social phenomenon of dissonance and gentrification under the term of urbanisation.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**KEUTAMAAN PENGGUNA TERHADAP FASAD-FASAD RUMAH KEDAI
YANG DIBINA PADA 1900 – 1945 DI JALAN PETALING, KUALA LUMPUR**

Oleh

TOONG YONG SENG

Januari 2016

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Penyelidikan ini berkenaan dengan keutamaan pengguna terhadap fasad-fasad rumah kedai yang dibina pada 1900 – 1945 di '*Chinatown*' Kuala Lumpur (KLC). Empat isu utama dikenalpasti terhadap fasad-fasad rumah kedai berwarisan di KLC. I) Masalah fasad warisan merosot; II) Masalah ubahsuaian fasad warisan tanpa bersimpati terhadap jiran-jiran; III) Masalah penambahan elemen-elemen terhadap fasad warisan; IV) Masalah struktur awam di jalan raya yang mengganggu fasad-fasad rumah kedai secara kekal dan secara sementara. Memandangkan isu-isu yang tersebut, keutamaan pengguna rumah kedai lama berwarisan terhadap fasadnya di KLC perlu dinilai. KLC dirujukkan suatu kawasan bersejarah dan mempunyai keunikan pada bandar moden Kuala Lumpur. Rumah-rumah kedai lama membentuk kebanyakan komponen pembinaan terhadap bandar-bandar lama dengan menurut kajian morfologi pembangunan bandar dan fasad-fasad rumah kedai berwarisan tersebut menyumbangkan kepada imej bandar. Selain itu, fasad-fasad rumah kedai berwarisan mewakili elemen-elemen warisan secara nyata (bangunan fizikal) dan secara tidak nyata (budaya). Objektif penyelidikan ini adalah menilai keutamaan pengguna (pemilik and penyewa) terhadap fasad-fasad rumah kedai berwarisan di KLC supaya tahap pemuliharaan bandar dipertingkatkan. Lawatan tapak dan kajian literatur dilaksanakan untuk mengenalpasti masalah-masalah rumah kedai di KLC. Tesis ini dilakukan dengan kaedah penyelidikan secara kualitatif untuk memperoleh data. Kajian ini berdasar pada kajian kes yang dilaksanakan secara temuduga dengan pengguna rumah kedai berwarisan di KLC. Soalan-soalan berstruktur diperlukan sebagaimana kajian rasmi dilakukan. Temuduga-temuduga yang dilaksanakan dicatat dan sesetengah telah direkod secara digital dengan persetujuan calon temuduga. Temuduga dalam bentuk lisan disalin dalam bentuk teks pada akhir hari. Kajian ini telah menunjukkan 90% pengguna yang mempunyai keutamaan terhadap fasad-fasad berwarisan berbanding dengan

10% pengguna yang mengutamakan terhadap fasad kontemporari di KLC. Fasad-fasad rumah kedai berwarisan adalah diutamakan oleh pengguna disebabkan oleh elemen-elemen fasad warisan yang berkomposisi kompleks dan terus mempengaruhi persepsi pengguna. Keputusan-keputusan kajian ini dijangka supaya mempertingkatkan garis paduan pemuliharaan di persekitaran bandar dengan efektif dan benar. Akhir sekali, kajian ini menuju ke arah peningkatan kualiti pemuliharaan yang sanggup melindungi stok fasad-fasad rumah kedai berwarisan dengan mengelakkan fenomena percanggahan dan gentrifikasi di bawah urbanisasi.



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

The study of this section discussed on deterioration conditions of heritage buildings of old shophouse facades built in between 1900 – 1945 in Kuala Lumpur Chinatown (KLC) as the problem. Deterioration of KLC heritage buildings of old shophouse facades were caused by the users' devaluation. Therefore, the objective of the study was to evaluate user's preference on façade of shophouses built 1900 – 1945 in KLC. KLC referred as one of the unique heritage and historic sites within the modern city of Kuala Lumpur as it has considered a representation of the "tradition and authentic" of the street as modern city element concerned Yeoh (2014). The old shophouses formed the major built component in the old towns in accordance to city growth morphological study. Today, old shophouses that found in the town centres in Malaysia are having unique character Ismail (2005). Although some old shophouses' built forma can be found related to "Southern Chinese" eclectic style as Malaysia was visited by Zheng He and in 16th to 19th century with the colonial rule of European countries Han (2014) Figure 1.1 . However, KLC old shophouses stock evidently was distinguished by its local context. One of the KLC shophouses' unique characters is due to their five-foot-way or verandah which was added after 1884 Yeoh (2014) as shown in Figure 1.2. KLC characterises local identity due the stock of old shophouses within the region. However, through the site visit carried out, such historical importance and heritage old shophouses were found deteriorating and possibly diminish soon due to urbanisation, city modernisation and economy pressures (Figure 1.3). The study focuses on why and how the heritage buildings of old shophouse deteriorating in KLC. KLC lies within the heart of the Kuala Lumpur city centre. The proposed KLC study site is demarcated by the main road of Tun Tan Cheng Lock, Sultan Street and partial Hang Kasturi Street. Within the heart of KLC, there are Tun H. S. Lee Street, Petaling Street (*Jalan Petaling*), Panggong Street, Balai Polis Street and some small lanes whilst Petaling Street remains the 'spine' of Chinatown (Figure 1.4).



Figure 1.1 – Old utilitarian shophouses in Kunming, China. Image Source: <http://www.greatmirror.com>



Figure 1.2 – KLC utilitarian shophouses with corridor.



Figure 1.3 – KLC shophouses deterioration in today modern era

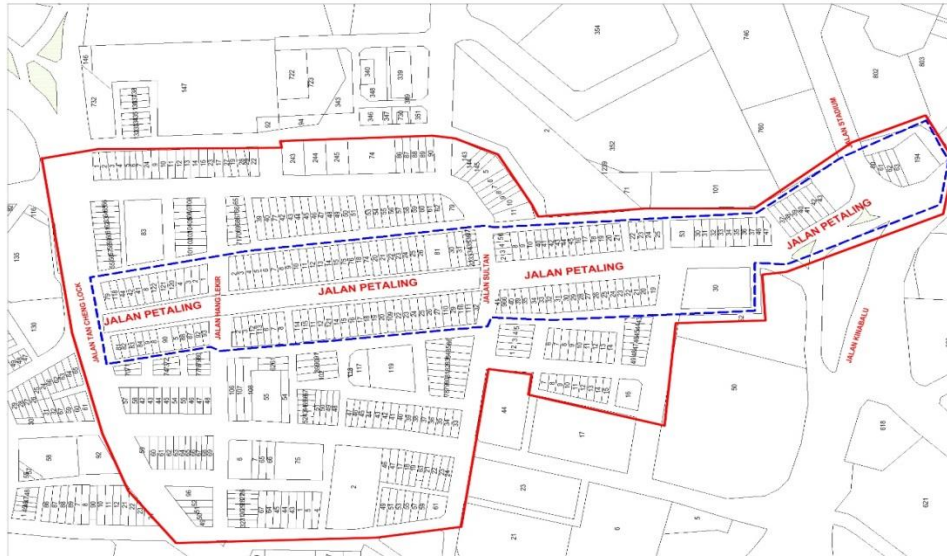


Figure 1.4 – Kuala Lumpur Chinatown, KLC Study site. Red line: Indicating KLC study area. Blue dashed line: “The Spine” of KLC – Petaling Street. Image Source: Kuala Lumpur City Hall.

The development of Kuala Lumpur Chinatown, from a small settlement turned into a booming town was initially started with those one or two-storey wooden or mud houses with thatch roofing constructed James (1963). The Kuala Lumpur town and those wooden shophouses were once destroyed by a serious flood occurred in the early of 1881 and such massive flood swept over Kuala Lumpur town. Not long after, Kuala Lumpur was followed by engulfment of fire which was causing second devastation to the town. These successive problems seriously destroyed the town structures of wooden and thatch roof civilian shophouses Gullick (1939). KLC has witnessed the change of Kuala Lumpur from the Chinese tin mining village turned in to a state capital Gullick (1990). Therefore KLC plays a role beyond holding the cultural heritages but the history of Kuala Lumpur.

The study has emphasised on the heritage facades conservation challenges brought by urbanisation and city developments such as international migration causes culturally diversify James (2013). These challenges can be seen in Chinatown, Kuala Lumpur with those post-modern buildings built in the early 80s stand massiveness, unsympathetically next to the small scale old shophouses with no contextual consideration and the street stalls and hawkers found foreigners.. In fact, number of challenges has faced to enhance the users willingness to building conservation, particularly where redevelopment pressures are immense in urban renewal districts within historic cities in south-east Asia Yung et al (2014). Apart from challenges, the heritage shop owners and tenants as defined as user in the study on their preference towards heritage old shophouse would be pivotal for city heritage conservation works in KLC. The study also revealed that the current old shophouses in Chinatown,

Kuala Lumpur as one of the prominent tourist spots in the city centre of Kuala Lumpur with its heritage significant by having continuous public walkway which also has segregated the pedestrian from the traffic known as “five-footway” or verandah. Five-footway extended the space for shop activities that engage pedestrian. This concept uniquely distinguish the heritage old shophouse design modern street design which concentrate on modern shopping centres and designated spot for leisure activities Shamsuddin (2008). However, the KLC heritage old shophouses has positioned in urbanisation and under economy pressures that lead to its stock of heritage old shophouses devalued by the owners and users. Therefore, the importance of facades conservation which would be emphasised to the heritage old shophouses due to their fragile situation. Besides, the heritage old shophouses have their architectural elements that could enhance the uniqueness of a place Toong (2014). The objective of the study intended to inform and improve the users’ awareness to the old shophouse buildings’ values. It would lead to the idea of joint effort of conservation between the government and the old shophouse users (both owners and tenants) in Kuala Lumpur Chinatown (KLC). The users’ awareness would led to influence preference towards their shophouse’s facade and cultivates a tacit rationale of old shophouses adaptive reuse strategy to cater for contemporary use which, potentially avoid the city fabrics to be dismantled and disconnected within the urban spaces. Furthermore, conserving old shophouses’ façade not only having the heritage physical stock retained as artifact as tangible element but social benefits, such as the idea of adaptive reuse of old buildings would conserves also intangible heritage value – The Local Culture Toong (2014). The old buildings could enhance the streetscape, enrich local character and provide a sense of place. It has illustrated by people, especially in the UK where the case was, have much prefer old buildings as compared to new as the city either essentially attractive or valuable as they evoke the past or unattractive as current modern buildings lack in details Lowenthal (1978). The approach of preserving the heritage old shophouses stock encourages the continuity of social life in a sustainable community which would avoid to the forced eviction of inhabitants, which usually leads to gentrification and reduce social inclusion Yung et al (2012) within the city development.

1.2 Problem Statement

Besides, the study has revealed the heritage old shophouse facades deterioration as resulted due to users succumbed to today economy pressures, the land costs turn sky high expensive and anticipated multiple-folds of land cost increases in the not far future. As referred to the point of development's return, perhaps the idea of adaptive reuse of old buildings probably turned non-realistic to the users as compared to demolish and rebuild the entire building with maximum ratio by having higher floor plates catered (Figure 1.5). As a result, the existence of those low rise buildings, old city fabrics especially those dilapidated were soon being replaced by new high-rise buildings approach would be happened in Kuala Lumpur city. As oppose to lose our heritage buildings, local authority has tried to protect those valuable historic buildings within Kuala Lumpur city through the programme city streets upgrading projects in 2003. The rationale was the old shophouses along the street present "Traditional & Authentic" to the city and Petaling Street was one of those streets Yeoh (2014).

The study has highlighted the importance of heritage buildings of shophouse facades need to be retained due to heritage shophouse facades present good city image, represent "tradition and authentic" which generates city uniqueness. However, it has seemed not effective to KLC as the old shophouse facades were demolished and deteriorate. Perhaps the local authority policies would not able to stop the deterioration but only to slow down the heritage buildings diminish process Toong (2015).



Figure 1.5 – Kuala Lumpur Chinatown Few Heritage Shophouses were Demolished With Façades Retained. One of them was Total Lost.

Although KLC was gazetted as old building facades retention area as informed by the local authority conservation department, users poor participation has affected such façade retention program, as succumbed and compromise in return due to the economy pressures. As mentioned earlier, land value in city centre turned expensive due to scarcity of land and therefore, users in city centre have adopted some irrational adaptive refurbishments and in-filled projects approach. For instance, in Hong Kong, there were old shophouses have been turned into middle-class offices, restaurants and cultural enterprises Chang et al (2009) with extension up to the public walkway and discontinued public access Chang, 2010 which contrary to the city connectivity as intended and those signboards cover the building shop front facades as for the advertising purpose. It is again the legibility of architectural building facades is succumbed to economy pressures.

Cities challenged by the trend of globalisation. One of the effects of globalisation is city losing their own character and uniqueness. In general, globalization allows the cities shift from the agrarian to industrial economic Castells (1989). In view of this, cities setting with new creative identities renewed local authenticity would be one of the side effects of globalization. Globalisation not only limited to rapid human migration, reduced differences between national cultures, it more on visible of homogenization, such as concentration of new cultural, developments and commercial branding in city centers. Such similarity can be seen in developed cities that full with high-rise, expensive corporate office towers symbolise of economic modernisation, marking each city's competitive position in the world in term of financial investment benchmark Zukin (2009). Globalisation, also defined as reduced differences between national cultures. Such definition informs that the identical product can be replicated from one place to another and, this includes city image. Besides, as mentioned before, the foreign work force rapid migration referred to one of the globalisation trends affected Kuala Lumpur city image. This is obviously reflected by the foreigners operate businesses in the KLC (Figure 1.6). Such statement informs that the cognitive and integrities of KLC is challenged by the urbanization and globalisation.



Figure 1.6 – Foreign Workers Operate Business in KLC. Source: The Star.com

Besides, corporate commercial office developments have dominated the city development. They further distinguishing the city to become solely a working place and causes city's fabrics become dismantled, discontinuity and create city gentrification. This can be seen through the central business district (CBD) become soulless after working hour. Therefore, some of the new developed CBD intentionally designed to be injected with more human activities as to keep the place thrive post working hour. Developers have to have high rise residential incorporated to commercial and, we called it mixed-use development as required to achieve sustainable urban design scheme. In view of this, the balance between working and living in city planning would be the solution to make the city stay alive even though after working hour Bromley (2005). The old shophouses provide us the opportunity and precedent of city that provide the live work opportunity. Preserving the heritage old shophouses would revitalise some traditional craft industries. Revitalise traditional craft industries as strategy that certainly increasingly more important for economic development with ordinary life activities in the city Kakiuchi (2015). The city harmonisation would be achieved by having both new and old buildings co-exist within the city centre. As the study posited, there is a need to re-evaluate the values of old building façade stocks that carrying history and heritage significance and contributing to city image, identity and uniqueness through its local integrity. Cities are losing their identity; it could be affected by the factors such as globalization and economy pressures as mentioned in previous section. Besides, people awareness on preserving the old buildings is lacking Ismail (2005). Globalisation has preoccupied people perception that redevelopment must form a modern city, which symbolises the city's advancements and successfulness achievements. Such perception is remaining untrue. It can be further justified with the term of globalisation developments by looking into the international brandings, which the study finds cities having developed a kind of similarities trend globally Zukin (2009).

The current stock of old shophouses in KLC was intervened as there were higher buildings replaced the old shophouses for better return. This can be observed through four to five-storey buildings built next to the current old two-storey old shophouses within the Chinatown of Kuala Lumpur. (Figure 1.7 & Figure 1.8)

There were studies shown the importance of users' preference towards the buildings' façade. Such façade preference analysis could provide us a method to identify old building facades setting in the modern city and assists generating better city image. Stamps (2009) experiment connotes how details of a building façade is, would be the features that influence impression. As a comparison to modern buildings' design, old buildings apparently have their façade design in higher complexity with ornaments and articulation. The relationship between city image and buildings' façade elements has further explained by other scholar. Askari (2009) has identified the importance of those architectural elements that associated to façade such as architectural building style; shapes, materials, colours and designs would affect the city image and character.

The research theoretical proposition identified that by understanding users (owner/s & tenant/s) preference on heritage shophouse facades could effectively assist in heritage facades conservation in KLC. Despite there are conservation guidelines and policies proposed, unique city image and character could be achieved should the combination of government effort with the users' appreciation of old buildings.



Figure 1.7 – Six-Storey Building Next to the Old Shophouses.



Figure 1.8 – 2 Blocks of Six-Storey Building Next to the Old Shophouses.

1.3 Research Objective

The study intends to identify Kuala Lumpur Chinatown shophouses' facade elements that were built in between 1900 - 1945 which have been long enfolded by users' devaluations. The study will further analyse Kuala Lumpur Chinatown old shophouses character as they are appeared and to be read as heritage importance. Such architectural facade elements data collected and identified to unfold the old shophouses facade authenticity in the study area as long as those still available and, to assist further in specific analysis and evaluation of users' preferences toward old shophouse's façade. Such analysis would assist to bridge the users and the government to secure and protect the existing stock of old shophouses in KLC. Such synergy effort would enable historical and heritage values coexistence with the city urbanisation, which could contribute a unique city character and identity of Kuala Lumpur.

1.4 Research Questions

The objectives of the study could be achieved by establishing the research questions. The research questions were established and posed as follows:

- 1) What are the main characteristics of architectural facade elements of old shophouses in Petaling Street?
- 2) What are the user's perceptions on heritage old shophouses' facade in Kuala Lumpur Chinatown?
- 3) How to improve the conservation strategy on city's heritage significance and its sustainability under the urbanisation pressures.

1.5 Significance of Study

The study revealed unique character of the existing shophouse facades and their façade elements in both tangible and intangible aspect in Kuala Lumpur Chinatown (KLC). Significance of the study is to highlight users devaluation towards the significance of the old shophouses. Those shophouses contributed urban heritage within KLC and the city Ismail (2005). These could be identified by looking into the perspective of the stock of old shophouses in KLC in term of city image. Some of the old shophouses indeed has replaced by the modern buildings during 70s and 80s, some had just been demolished including shop front façade recently which should not be happened (Figure 1.9), and most are in the midst of diminishing as resulted by aging and no proper maintenance by the users or aptly called the users devaluation on those old shophouses.



Figure 1.9 – Demolished of 4 Units of Old Shophouses at Jalan Tun H.S. Lee. Old Shophouses User Demolished the Entire Building for New Development. Image source: Y.S. Toong

To enhance the awareness of protecting the old shophouses stock that still available in historical and heritage significance area Kuala Lumpur to the users is aim of the study. The study posits awareness of protecting the old shophouses in KLC could be achieved by understanding of users' preference on old shophouse's façade and its elements expression that have been long bestowing from 1880s to 1900s and their collective appearance setting. Besides individual shophouse façade, a non-typical façade arrangement in rows provides poetic and cultural richness to the street scene collectively especially in the modern context. The old shophouses in KLC unique character were due to their verandah way. Verandah-way should be read as part of the façades' elements of the old shophouses in KLC. But, it has meant for public walk-way which is very different from other heritage sites in Malaysia (for example Malacca & Penang). Furthermore, the uniqueness of those old shophouses in KLC could be referred to their varieties of architectural facade styles. The entire KLC could be remained as the idea of living museum of Kuala Lumpur. The study topic was important to be discussed due to the need to re-evaluate users' devaluation of Kuala Lumpur Chinatown old shophouses. As identified on site, there are old shophouses dilapidated and some are deteriorating. Therefore, there is a need to disseminate the awareness of restoring and protecting the old shophouses stock as long as they still made available. If there is no proper protection being enforced, soon the stock of old shophouses in KLC will disappear and replaced by the new buildings and, such

situation would change the unique setting of KLC. This study provides recommendation of preferred facade elements and old shophouse character expression that could improve owner's revaluation to their old shophouse and, enhance their conservation desire in Chinatown towards old shophouses collectively. Finally, the study also suggests the authenticity of the facade elements and characteristic of the old shophouses' in Chinatown, Kuala Lumpur for its city image and identity.

1.6 Methodology of Research – A Qualitative Research

Case study research design & method overview:

The study focuses on user's (owner/s & tenant/s) preference on the old shophouse façade, façade elements. Such study intends to investigate user's preference in the old shophouse façade setting and heritage conservation in modern city, through a case study Yin (2009). Devaluation of heritage old buildings can be seen by the deterioration and poor condition the heritage building of old shophouses in the selected study site – Chinatown, Kuala Lumpur. Heritage old shophouses' poor condition was due to the economy pressures in the modern city context, conflict of interest and lack of awareness towards value of the heritage old shophouses Ismail (2005).

The multiple sources of data were based on literature reviews of architectural façade's elements within shophouse typology study and interviews with the old shophouse's owner and tenants in Chinatown, Kuala Lumpur. There were eight (8) heritage shophouse owners or tenants were selected for the interviews in the study site. Besides, the study would be further analysed and interpreted with observer impression via forming an impression and report their (unit of analysis) impression in structured form. As for the interviewed data, the recordings of interviews with the old shophouses' either tenants or owners were transcribed into written form for closer study named as verbatim transcription technique. All interviews would be manually recorded and transcribed before end of the day. For validation, four-step validation methodology Yin (2009) was used to validate such case study results.

1.7 Limitation of Study

The study only focuses on the evaluation of users' preference toward heritage buildings of old shophouses' façade and their character expression in modern city. The mentioned users are referred to both tenants' and owners' of the heritage old shophouses. The study towards users' preference on heritage old shophouses' façade conservation in Kuala Lumpur Chinatown (KLC) are in collective instead of individual shophouse. KLC symbolises a treasure trove for those who love heritage, culture and history. The case study carried out in KLC as to understand the users' preference on heritage old shophouses façade and due with their facades deterioration problem. Thus, there are other factors that

possibly influence users' willingness in preserving the heritage old shophouses' façade and buildings stock in the city centre is awaited to be discovered and explored. However, this study would be limited as (1) determining the selection of old shophouses and their facades problem in the study site, (2) Understanding how façade elements preferred by the users and which leads toward conserving the old heritage shophouses' façade in modern city context and, (3) identifying and documenting the existing stock of old shophouse facades in the study site.

1.8 The Thesis Structure

The study was documented and divided into six chapters. Chapter one includes introduction in which the background of the study, problem statement identification, the research questions, research objectives, significance of study, research method and the limitation of study. Chapter two describes and discusses on Chinatown, Kuala Lumpur in general as a case study site. The heritage buildings of old shophouses' façade would be discussed in this chapter. Chapter three was where the literature studies and review, topics that relevant to the study and the proposition have allocated. This chapter also study heritage old shophouse buildings' facade element, authenticity city character, study of people preference in building façade and its setting, method on evaluation of people preference. Besides, the old shophouses' architectural style or character in Chinatown, Kuala Lumpur is included within this chapter. Chapter four describes the research method that adopted in the study. It encompasses the development of research instrument, research procedures such as the study validations Yin (2009) including building reliability of the instrument, data collection and analysis. Furthermore, this chapter covers the availability of existing data, photographic evidence in the study site. Besides, data availability from local authority, both relevant government and non-governmental agencies of Kuala Lumpur also be discussed. Followed by chapter five, this chapter focuses on the analysis gathered through the interviews and findings. Finally, chapter six concludes the research with the suggestion and suggestion analysis the of users' preferred heritage old shophouses' façade settings which could enhance the city unique character and identity effectively. The chapter has made recommendation on heritage old buildings of shophouse facades to be protected even though under the situation of economy pressures and urbanisation.

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