



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS' VISUAL PREFERENCES OF KUALA
LUMPUR HISTORIC CITY CENTRE***

MEYSAM DEGhati NAJD

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**INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS' VISUAL PREFERENCES OF
KUALA LUMPUR HISTORIC CITY CENTRE**

By

MEYSAM DEGHATI NAJD

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

December 2014



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Dedicated to:

My great family,

*My Lovely wife, **Mahsa**, for her immense companionship
My cheering mother, **Nasrin**, and my dad, **Hassan** the real hero,
My sisters, dear **Faezeh & Maedeh***

To all my friends;

*To “**Kaveh**” and three awesome “**Mehdi**”s for their comprehensive supports*

And

To the great teacher in my life

*“**Heidar...**”*



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

INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS' VISUAL PREFERENCES OF KUALA LUMPUR HISTORIC CITY CENTRE

By

MEYSAM DEGhati NAJD

December 2014

Chairman: Nor Atiah Ismail, PhD
Faculty: Design and Architecture

Rapid developments in Malaysia have resulted into unrestrained urban growth in major cities, particularly in Kuala Lumpur, the capital city. Urbanization also led to the deterioration of the Kuala Lumpur historic urban areas and their domination by modern urban constructions. Through these changes, city transformation witnesses identity crises in addition to the formation of an identical modern global image of city. In this regards, tourism industry is also affected due to historic heritage conservation issues. Therefore, serious attempts are highly demanded to implement an integrated heritage conservation by utilizing public participation while elevating the tourism industry.

This study aims to identify public perceptions towards historic urban areas by bringing in public and international tourists' perception into account for a sustainable and integrated heritage conservation. The Kuala Lumpur Historic City Centre (KLHCC), the most historic urban heritage site in the city was taken as the study area for the current research. An exploratory preference survey carried out by using a photo questionnaire that sampled 308 international tourists from 54 countries while visiting the study area. The data was analysed by means of the Content Identifying Method (CIM) and several statistical analyses to determine group preferences toward KLHCC, the historic urban area.

The findings of this study showed low preferability of KLHCC as a prominent historic area in the eyes of international tourists despite of ongoing heritage conservation by the government. It also indicated a deficiency of existing expert-based conservation guidelines, rules and regulations. Moreover, the findings introduced six key visual preference dimensions of historic urban area which significantly contribute to the international tourists' preferences. *Chaotic, historic architecture, roadside heritage, greenery, connectivity and modernity* are those dimensions from which *historic architecture* was measured as the most preferred while *chaotic* was of the least preferred among others. In addition to the physical characteristics, the influences of some personal factors were studied against visual preference dimensions. These

factors included of socio-demographic characteristics of gender, age, level of education and country of origin together with *socio-psychological motivation, level of familiarity and interest level*. Contrary to the socio-demographic characteristics of participants that did not show any significant impact upon their visual preferences toward KLHCC, *socio-psychological motivation, level of familiarity and interest level* were highly correlated and impose influences on the dimension groups.

Implementations of the findings from this study have the capability of contributing towards public-based conservation and preservation of historic urban areas in different levels of consideration and decision making processes.



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

KECENDERUNGAN VISUAL PELANCONG ANTARABANGSA TERHADAP BANDAR BERSEJARAH KUALA LUMPUR

Oleh

MEYSAM DEGhati NAJD

Ogos 2014

Pengerusi: Nor Atiah Ismail, PhD
Fakulti: Rekabentuk dan Senibina

Pembangunan pesat di Malaysia telah menyebabkan pertumbuhan pesat bandar utama dengan tidak terkawal, terutamanya di ibu Negara Kuala Lumpur. Urbanisasi juga menyebabkan kemerosotan kawasan bandar bersejarah di Kuala Lumpur dan pembangunan pertumbuhan bandar moden. Perubahan ini menyaksikan transformasi bandar kepada imej global moden dan krisis identiti. Industri pelancongan turut terbabit dengan isu konservasi warisan bersejarah. Sehubungan dengan itu, usaha yang serius sangat diperlukan untuk melaksanakan konservasi warisan bersepadu dengan menggunakan penglibatan orang awam disamping meningkatkan industri pelancongan.

Matlamat kajian ini adalah untuk mengenalpasti pandangan orang awam terhadap kawasan bandar bersejarah dengan menitik beratkan pandangan orang awam dan pelancong antarabangsa untuk tujuan konservasi warisan mampan dan bersepadu. Pusat Bandar Bersejarah Kuala Lumpur (KLHCC), kawasan warisan bandar yang paling bersejarah telah digunakan sebagai kawasan kajian semasa. Kajian pemilihan keutamaan dijalankan menggunakan soal selidik bergambar yang diambil daripada 308 orang pelancong antarabangsa daripada 54 negara yang sedang melawat kawasan kajian. Data telah dianalisa dengan menggunakan kaedah Mengenalpasti Kandungan (CIM) dan beberapa analisis statistik untuk mengenalpasti kumpulan keutamaan pemilihan terhadap KLHCC, Kawasan Bandar Bersejarah.

Hasil kajian menunjukkan kadar pemilihan keutamaan yang rendah bagi KLHCC sebagai kawasan bersejarah yang terkenal dimata pelancong antarabangsa walaupun konservasi warisan sedang dijalankan oleh pihak kerajaan. Ia juga menunjukkan kekurangan garis panduan, kaedah dan peraturan pemuliharaan sedia ada. Selain itu, hasil kajian turut memperkenalkan enam dimensi visual keutamaan kawasan bandar bersejarah yang memberi sumbangan kepada pemilihan keutamaan oleh pelancong antarabangsa. Ianya adalah, ketidakaturan, senibina bersejarah, ruangan bandar bersejarah, kehijauan, kesinambungan dan kemodenan adalah dimensi di mana senibina bersejarah diukur sebagai keutamaan manakala, bagi ciri-ciri fizikal,

pengaruh beberapa faktor peribadi telah dikaji terhadap dimensi kecenderungan visual. Faktor-faktor ini termasuk ciri-ciri sosio - demografi jantina , umur , tahap pendidikan dan negara asal termasuklah motivasi sosio - psikologi , tahap kebiasaan dan tahap minat. Bertentangan dengan ciri-ciri sosio - demografi peserta kajian yang tidak menunjukkan apa-apa kesan yang ketara ke atas kecenderungan visual mereka terhadap KLHCC , motivasi sosio - psikologi , tahap kebiasaan dan tahap minat adalah sangat berkait rapat dan memberi pengaruh ke atas kumpulan dimensi .

Perlaksanaan hasil kajian ini mempunyai keupayaan untuk menyumbang ke arah pemuliharaan berasaskan kesedaran awam dan pemeliharaan kawasan bandar bersejarah di pelbagai peringkat pertimbangan dan proses membuat keputusan.



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APPROVAL

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 12 December 2014 to conduct the final examination of Meysam Deghati Najd on his thesis entitled "International Tourists' Visual Preferences of Kuala Lumpur Historic City Centre" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Science.

Members of the Thesis Examination Committee were as follows:

Mustafa Kamal Bin Mohd Shariff, PhD

Professor, LAr

Faculty of Design and Architecture

Universiti Putra Malaysia

(Chairman)

Norsidah binti Ujang, PhD

Associate Professor

Faculty of Design and Architecture

Universiti Putra Malaysia

(Internal Examiner)

Hazreena binti Hussein, PhD

Senior Lecturer

Faculty of Built Environment Building

University of Malaya

(External Examiner)



ZULKARNAIN ZAINAL, PhD

Professor and Deputy Dean

School of Graduate Studies

Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 23 January 2015

This thesis submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee are as follows:

Nor Atiah binti Ismail, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Design and Architecture
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Mohd Yazid bin Mohd Yunus, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Design and Architecture
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Suhardi Bin Maulan, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Design and Architecture
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

BUJANG BIN KIM HUAT, PhD

Professor and Dean
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Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:

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Date: 12.12.2014

Name and Matric No: Meysam Deghati Najd/ GS32284

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Name of the Chairman of the
Supervisory Committee:
Nor Atiah binti Ismail, PhD

Name of the Member of the
Supervisory Committee:
Mohd Yazid bin Mohd Yunus, PhD

Name of the Member of the
Supervisory Committee:
Suhardi Bin Maulan, PhD

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LIST OF ABBRIVIATIONS

ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
CHKL	Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan
CIM	Content or Category Identifying Method
DBKL	Dewan Bandar Raya Kuala Lumpur
Df	Degree of Freedom
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
KLHCC	Kuala Lumpur Historic City Centre
M	Mean
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
R	Regression Coefficient
RQ	Research question
r	Correlation Coefficient
s.d	Standard Deviation
sig	Significant Value
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
Sub-RQ	Sub-research question
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
α	Alpha
β	Standardized Beta Value
ρ	Significant Value



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of study

Malaysia amongst other oriental countries moves forward in the consequence of the rapid surge of economic growth in the eastern part of the globe. Kuala Lumpur as a metropolitan area and the capital of thirteen states and three federal territories, witnesses the most extraordinary transformation towards the global orientation just through the few last decades (Bunnel, Barter, and Morshidi, 2002; DBKL, 2003). The outward progress of the city development and its sprawl initiated from the historic centre of Kuala Lumpur (Ayob, 2010). Figure 1.1 illustrates the land desirability for development adjacent to the historic centre of the city. It might be due to the proximity to the administrative and commercial centres which were launched in this area. Vast construction led to the dominance of modern buildings on historic area and even its destruction.

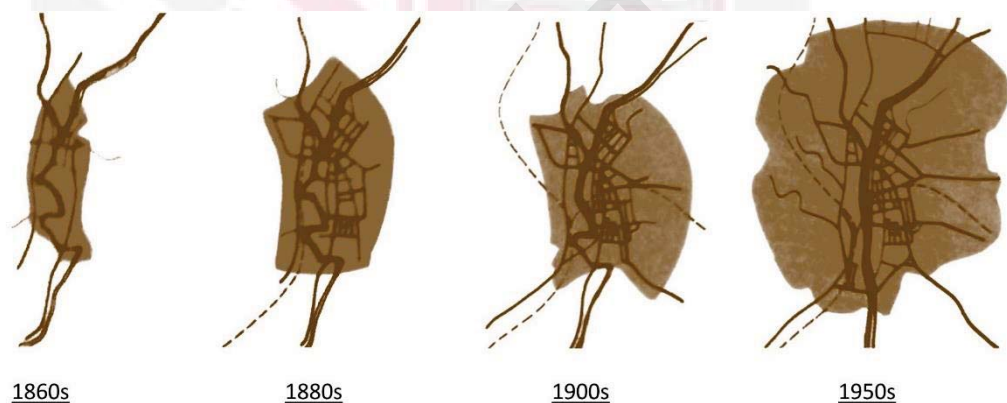


Figure 1.1: The city growth at the muddy confluence of Kelang and Gombak river
(Adopted from DBKL, 1991)

Discussions about sustainable development in recent years concentrated mostly on the rapid development of urban areas. Among various challenges of rapid urbanization, the deterioration of historic urban areas as the historic and cultural heritage of nations has become under consideration. Therefore, balancing among heritage conservation and urban development together with its contribution toward a sustainable development are the main challenges amongst growing cities (Stovel, 1999). A serious attempt has launched by United Nations in order to demonstrate the role of heritage and its integration in sustainable development context. It is a necessary reaction toward the threats of development in various aspects against “heritage and its inherent values” (ICOMOS, 2011, p. 1). In this regard, the most recent general assembly of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the 17th, has focused on the possible strategies and solutions for contributing the heritage in the face of issues on development (ICOMOS, 2011a).

Heritage contributes to the sustainable development in various points of view correspondent to the “three pillars” of environmental, economic, and social

(UNESCO, 1992). Environmentally, the maintenance of heritage properties is the mostly focused area within which technical aspects are considered to control the effects of environment on heritage which is a basic and fundamental need for the protection of heritage (Tweed and Sutherland, 2007). The social aspect of sustainability emphasises on the quality of life and its needs to raise social equity. The role of heritage, in this regard, goes for social contributions such as providing sense of belonging and identity which is a hot topic in developed societies. Another benefit of heritage contributes to the economic dimension of sustainability, the most significant prerequisite of human needs, specifically in developing countries like Malaysia. Heritage in its various categories and built heritage in particular, attract tourists, who are in fact the boosters of economy (Tweed and Sutherland, 2007).

The valuableness of heritage areas for tourism industry, among several other significances of historic urban areas, supports the notion of sustainable cultural tourism, one of the major topics in tourism studies in which, cultural heritage tourism is a part (Silberberg, 1994 as cited in du Cros, 2001). Meanwhile, cultural heritage tourism fell under consideration and interest of global organizations which can be illustrated by WTO in 1995, ICOMOS, 1998, and UNESCO in 1999. The benefit from cultural heritage tourism will support the sustainability of developments by its revenues on one hand (economic pillar) and attain extra considerations towards preservation and conservation of heritage assets on the other hand (social and environmental pillar).

Inevitability of protecting historic heritage lies under time-dependent nature of physical environment. Due to the dynamical aspect of urban environment, it is obvious that historic urban area cannot be frozen; but instead the significant characteristic of area should be preserved along with development. Particularly, in fast expanding economy and developing cities, heritage preservation and conservation is of the mostly considered cases (Lee, 1996; Engelhardt, 1998; Ryberg-Webster and Kinahan, 2013). Moreover, a most recent research by Ryberg-Webster and Kinahan (2013) demonstrated the capability of heritage preservation “as an agent of urban change” and as a “facilitat[or for] community and economic development” (p. 119). Protection and management process of urban heritage appeals an effective role of people since they are an integral sector of human life.

Global attempts starting from the constitution of the “Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings” (SPAB) in 1887 and foundation of national and international organization in advocating of cultural heritage. International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) in 1959 and International Council on Monument and Sites (ICOMOS) 1965, have been following up by official doctrinal principles and documents. International charters and declarations originated from conservation of monuments (ICOMOS, 1964) and were followed by the conservation of historic towns and urban areas (ICOMOS, 1987), historic gardens (ICOMOS, 1981), until the most recent declaration, Heritage as a Driver of Development (ICOMOS, 2011a, 2011b) emphasize all the needs for conservation and preservation of cultural heritage. In this way public participation for protection of heritage with its integration through planning process can help for achieving sustainability (ICOMOS,

1999a; Imon, 2006). Moreover, commitment of communities to reach sustainability is a fundamental supposition of Agenda 21¹ (UNESCO, 1992).

1.2 Kuala Lumpur historic city centre (KLHCC)

The formation of Kuala Lumpur at the muddy confluence of two major rivers of the Kelang and Gombak dates back to the 1850s, when seminal settlements and commercials in addition to the growth of the primitive administrative and civic buildings appeared for the first time (Figure 1.2). It was the beginning of a traditional environment which provided people with great sense of belonging and place attachment. As the important part of traditional community, this environment established a relationship among physical surrounding and various ethnics of the habitants (Ujang, 2008). Since the ends of 19th century, the city grew up quickly and this area became the administrative centre for the Federal Malay State in 1957 (Bunnel et al., 2002).



Figure 1.2. Panoramic view of Kuala Lumpur

Top: 1884, Source: Photographs of G.R. Lambert in Falconer, (1987)

Bottom: 2007, Source: Alex Tan via Wikipedia/ Architecture of Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia, in order to be a sustainable and developed country, through relying on the renewable resource, brings consideration to the tourism industry much more. Reaching to the rank of top ten most visited countries in the world (UNWTO, 2013b) together with turning into the third largest source of income from foreign exchange in Malaysia (Ministry of Tourism Malaysia, 2013) represent the significance and capability of this sector in the progressive trend of the country. Meanwhile, inscribing “Kinabalu Park”

¹ Agenda 21, the Rio declaration on sustainable development is a comprehensive plan in every area which human impacts on the environment was signed by more than 178 governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 1992.

of Sabah state and the state of Sarawak's "Gunung Mulu National Park" in the UNESCO's World Heritage List in the 2000, and there upon in 2008 two historic sites of "Georgetown" and "Melaka", has brought Malaysia in the light spot of heritage tourism proponents in addition to other various attractiveness (IDrus, Khamidi, and Sodangi, 2010). The facts and figures by Tourism Malaysia indicates an average growth of about 9% per annum throughout the last three decades from 2.5 million tourist arrivals in 1981 to about 26 million in 2013.

UNESCO describes cultural significance of historic areas to be able to represent the sense of connectivity, provide link between the experiences of the past to the present in order to be felt by the future generations (ICOMOS, 1999). "[T]he past-down from one generation to another" (IDrus et al., 2010, p. 66) heritage are those characteristics which are able to lead to a well-shaped identity and culture of cities in the modern era. Losing the relationship with the past causes a gradual discontinuity with rich experiences which lasted for ages.

The above mentioned significance of cultural heritage demands severe attempts for conservation and preservation in their advocating. Aside from the international attempts in preparing regulations and guidelines, in Malaysia the "Urban Development Corporation Act" (Act 46, 1971) and the "Antiquities Act" (Act 168, 1976) which recently were replaced by "National Heritage Act" (Act 645, 2005) are the legislations and regulations which were referred to in support for conservation of cultural heritage.

1.3 Problem statement

As an obligatory responsibility for all of the nations, the concept of sustainability appeals serious attempts in advocating of heritage areas. Malaysia in its way to become a developed country with a world class capital city, requires extra attentions to the objective and guidelines of sustainable development. In this regard the current study sought for the existing shortcomings in the field of urban heritage conservation by targeting tourism industry in its way to sustainable development.

Since 1957 and just after independency, due to the economic booming in Malaysia, the whole country and especially its capital city of Kuala Lumpur has been experiencing a rapid development. The growth of the city in deal with the natural landforms such as river valleys and heaps together with human interventions has led to the dominance of identical modern character of city upon the specific identity of different areas (DBKL, 2003). The City Hall Kuala Lumpur (2003) states that, "more recently, buildings like the KL Tower and the Petronas Twin Towers at the KLCC provide images of a city that is thoroughly modern, while [it is] firmly in touch with its cultural roots" (8.2.3, 273). It causes the historic image of the city slowly fading in competition with modernization. Consequently, the historic identity and image of the city has been mellowing between modernization and urbanization movement. It was resulted that modern and standardized images of global universal characteristics were replacing upon the traditional urban environment (Raad Al Shams and Badarulzaman, 2014; Ujang, 2008).

At the same time, respect to the significant role of tourism industry in Malaysia, the Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020 with the vision of reaching the world class city level, "aims to maximize these inherent strengths to make it into an attractive international tourist destination" (DBKL, 2003, 8.1, 264). Besides a rich diversity of

tourist attractions to suite all tastes, Kuala Lumpur encompasses heritage areas which target those of heritage tourism and historic interested visitors. The historic core of the city as the standpoint of city formation is a valuable tourist spot which contains most of early commercial, residential and administrative buildings with a unique architecture. Unfortunately, several studies revealed the preferability of other attractions for international tourists in comparison with heritage attractiveness (Zakariya, Mohyuddin, and Yaman, 2007; M.Ariffin and Hasim, 2009; Abooali, G. and Mohamed, 2011).

On the macro scale, tourism industry is being affected though as diversity of attractions limited to those offered by this identical image. After China, Malaysia was the only country from Asia that gained the reputation of becoming among top 10 tourist destinations from 2009 to 2012, but it did not take longer since Thailand overtook the place in 2013 (UNWTO, 2014). Moreover, statistics reveal that despite of reaching to this rank, Malaysia could not reach to the top ten list of destinations in terms of the international tourism receipts revenue (UNWTO, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013b, 2014). By having a glance upon the trend of tourism attractiveness and proposing Malaysia as an appealing destination, it is clear that the attention was mostly paid to the natural charming of country such as beaches for relaxation and the rain forests for their uniqueness and virginity. These all imply that inadequate consideration is given to other complementing attractiveness that would cause increasing in tourists' length of stay.

Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2020 (CHKL 2020) under some specific approaches has legislated a variety of policies to reach the defined goals which is discussed through the next chapter. Despite operating thoughtful considerations about the importance of heritage sites, preservation and conservational efforts upon the historic monuments and buildings, review of recent literatures and observations demonstrated an unsatisfactory outcome. There seems to be a wide gap between legislated guidelines and executed interventions with perception of public. The presumed disparity emerges from our unawareness about the perception of people to the historic urban areas and the way that they perceive both heritage properties and later interventions.

1.4 Research goal, objectives and research questions

Previous considerations in this chapter discussed on the significance of historic heritage, necessity of conservation and their contribution to tourism industry leading to sustainability. Despite activities held to conserve prominent historic buildings in Kuala Lumpur historic city centre (KLHCC), the historic characteristic of the area has not been well conserved and are getting to be deteriorated. It proves the inefficiency of existing guidelines and implementation trends in protecting the characteristics of urban heritage areas.

Research goal: Respect to the importance of integrated heritage conservation in the context of vibrant urban development to attain sustainability, inputs from public need to complement the existing guidelines in the process of decision making for conservation and preservation of historic urban areas.

Due to the above mentioned shortcomings in urban heritage conservation and to bridge the existing gap, the main research question of the study indicates:

Main RQ: How do international tourists perceive Kuala Lumpur Historic City Centre (KLHCC)?

The subsequent is the objectives of this study followed by relevant sub-research questions in turn for providing information to respond the main research question and consequently to gain the research goal.

The main objectives of this study and their relevant sub-research questions are as follows:

Objective 1: To identify international tourists' visual preference toward Kuala Lumpur Historic City Centre (KLHCC).

Sub RQ 1: What is the international tourists' visual preference toward KLHCC?

Objective 2: To determine environmental characteristics of the study area that influence visual preferences of tourists' toward KLHCC.

Sub RQ 2: What are the physical characteristics of the study area that influence international tourists' preference towards KLHCC?

Objective 3: To recognize international tourists' personal factors affecting their visual preferences towards KLHCC.

Sub RQ 3: What are the impacts of different personal factors upon the visual preferences for the KLHCC?

Based on the above mentioned research goal and to achieve the objectives outlined for this study, four hypotheses are proposed. Testing every hypothesis require different analysis to examine if they will be rejected or accepted. The proposed hypothesis to be tested in this study are as follow:

Hypothesis 1: KLHCC is not well preferred in the eyes of international tourists.

Hypothesis 2: Environmental characteristics of KLHCC influence visual preferences of participants.

Hypothesis 3: Visual preferences of international tourists toward KLHCC differ between various socio-demographic sub-groups.

Hypothesis 4: International tourists' personal factors of *motivation, level of interest, and level of familiarity and knowledge* affect their visual preferences toward KLHCC.

1.5 Scope and limitations of the study

This study intends to investigate tourists' preferences toward the historic centre of Kuala Lumpur. The focus area was limited to the enclosed micro urban space adjacent to the confluence of the two rivers of Kelang and Gombak -the forming kernel of Kuala Lumpur-, that includes the historic Dataran Merdeka square and its immediate

surrounding buildings, infrastructures, natural elements, and constructions (refer to Figure 3.2). The rationale behind selecting this area as the study focus was its prominence on two other spots of Kuala Lumpur primary heritage zone. This spot was also used as the colonial district during the British colonization era and contains the largest number of historic buildings among others (Chen, 1998). Outdoor spaces and physical features of the study area which largely shape the main character and identity of the study spot were under consideration. The macro insight to the area, indoor spaces, and other complementary determinants of urban studies, are out of the scope.

Another significant limitation of this research is related to the other side of the study, that is, the respondents. The respondents of this research were selected from the visitor groups present at the scene and eager to participate in this study. The visitors outside the study area and locals (i.e. residents and local visitors) have been excluded in this research to avoid biases.

In other words, due to the diversity of various languages among tourists from different countries, only the English language speakers, regardless of their level of language knowledge, were able to participate in the study. It caused the exclusion of those without ability in English communicating.

1.6 Organization of the thesis

This thesis has been organized into five chapters. The first chapter –introduction– introduces the background for the study and states the research problem. By having a glance upon the significance of the study, it goes through the objectives of the study and relevant questions. At the end, the scope of the research is described and its limitations are declared.

The second chapter provides the main body of the thesis by reviewing relevant literatures to the study. The heritage conservation and preservation, related literature in addition to its relation to tourism industry, have been reviewed. Moreover, environmental assessment and perception literature are discussed at the following. Description of the way that how we would identify preferences of people toward historic urban area is discussed in the third chapter, that is, methodology. Chapter four comes with the main analysis, results and detailed discussions about them. Finally, the significant findings, implications, and recommendations for future studies will be concluded at the final chapter.





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