

Adaptive reuse of historical buildings and local residents' actual visitation

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Abstract

Heritage tourism is one of the fastest growing components of tourism due to its ability to attract millions of international tourists and contribute billions of dollars to the host country. There are numbers of studies looking at the heritage tourism, mainly focusing on motivation, visitation behaviour, perceptions, appreciation, awareness and sustainability based on the public and architectural perspective. However, there is still lack of study looking at the influence of adaptive reuse of historical buildings toward the local resident's actual visitation. Thus, to understand the phenomenon and filling the study gaps, this research note reviews the literatures, uplifting the issues in the proposed study contextual setting and developing the framework.

Keywords:

Adaptive reuse, historical building, appreciation, actual visitation

1 Introduction

When the word heritage is pronounced what comes to people's mind? Most likely, the answers that come across are something to do with the past or history. In this sense, heritage is something inherited from one generation to another like artifacts, landmarks, sites and the historical buildings and they are partly considered as a valuable glimpse of the past (Mydin, Keling, Sani, & Abas, 2014; Jaafar, Noor, & Rasoolimanesh, 2014; Azhari & Mohamed, 2012; Peyravi, 2010; Department of Environment and Heritage, 2004; McCain & Ray, 2003; Huh, 2002; Nuryanti, 1996). Most of these scholars and organization posited these products can be a legacy and testament that should be preserved for the future generation as it portrays the identity of communities and nations and closely related to tourism.

In line with that notion, heritage tourism is one of the fastest growing components of tourism and has drawn increasing attention in the industry (Poria, Bulter & Airey, 2003; McCain & Ray, 2003; Huh, 2002). Some consider besides others heritage tourism at the forefront in the global tourism industry due to its ability to attract millions of international tourists and contribute billions of dollars to the country (Samadi & Yunus, 2011; Bullen & Love, 2009, 2011; Timothy & Boyd, 2006). Despite this, due to the urbanization and globalization, many artifacts, landmarks, heritage sites and historical buildings as components of heritage tourism are dilapidated suffers abandonment and demolition resulting in extinction and some them in fact have been gone forever. Taking one obvious example, Irene (2016) reported that most of the heritage shop houses in Singapore were replaced with high-rises as it moves towards modernization. Many Singaporean started to realize not only inbound tourist declining, but not to exaggerate only few heritage assets available in this modern country which directly affect their heritage tourism. It is also worth highlighting that the declination of Hong Kong's heritage tourism in a way slows down the economy and people are moving out instead of coming into the country (Chu & Uebergang, 2002).

Owing to the importance of heritage tourism as money spinning industry various initiatives are being undertaken to preserve the valuable heritage products. One of the alternate practices to preserve the valuable heritage products including the historical buildings and becoming an increasing trend is through the adaptive reuse (Adiwibowo, Widodo, & Santosa, 2015; Ijla & Brostrom, 2015; Mine, 2013; Bullen & Love, 2009, 2011; Peyravi, 2010). Essentially, adaptive reuse is the recycling of an obsolete historical building through developing the potential of additional use and wear for preservation (Heritage Council Victoria, 2013; Ijla & Brostrom, 2015). Aligned with this, the historical sacred places like Hagia Sophia in Turkey and the Great Mosque of Cordoba in Spain for instance, are being converted into a museum and attracted millions of visitors (Ahn, 2007). Similarly, Coliseums in Rome is one the world-famous heritage site and renowned historical buildings and due to several reasons has been turned into various functions and eventually continual received countless numbers of visitors each year (Drew, 2009). These examples clearly indicate that if it is wisely being implemented the alternate preservation practice of the adaptive reuse historical

building not only can save them from abandonment and extinction, but could attract a number of tourists and directly gain financial benefits out of it.

1.1 Issues in contextual study setting

As part of the fourteen states in Malaysia, Sarawak despite not all has also faced setbacks with regard to colonial historical buildings that were lost due to development, suffered from carelessness and ravages particularly in the Kuching city (Yap, 2014). The local famous Gambier Street Wet Market and Treasury Building just to name a few, have been demolished several years ago resulting strong a loss felt to the state. This has given much consequence not only to the local residents, but affects the heritage tourism which, besides others is part of the state economic contributors.

Worrying of losing many more heritage buildings which have a high potency, the Sarawak local government has initiated several heritage zone projects and activities with the local communities (Kho, 2016; Bernama, 2015). These initiatives are undertaken with the intention to preserve and protect the heritage sites and buildings within the city area. The Old Courthouse, the Square Tower and Kuching Waterfront heritage landmarks are part of the heritage zone (Yap, 2014). Another way of preserving those historical buildings is through the adaptive reuse, revitalizing or converting them into a commercial center for the public. The China House (formerly the Old Court House) and the Magenta (formerly the Square Tower) are the obvious examples where both buildings are reused as eateries or semi exclusive public eating place and other event purposes (Irene, 2016). In this sense, although its function with additional special features shifted from the original, the aesthetic elements dealing with structure and the valuable treasures of the buildings is maintained.

Considering the adaptive reuse historical building is an alternate practice that was recently been applied in the Kuching city and considering new to the local residents, it is therefore important to know and understand their attitude towards it. In other words, through this development a few questions are still lingering; a). What is the perception of the local residents' perception toward the adaptive reuse historical building? b). What is the knowledge of the local residents of the adaptive reuse of historical building? and c). How strong the influence of adaptive reuse of historical building attributes towards the local residents' level of appreciation and their actual visitation?

Although there are abundance of available studies looking at heritage tourism and which involve motivation, visitation behavior, perceptions, appreciation, awareness and sustainability based on the public and architectural perspective (Ijla & Brostrom, 2015; Mydin et al., 2014; Jasme, Mydin, & Sani, 2014; Jaafar et al., 2014; Teo, Mohd Khan, & Abdul Rahim, 2014; Plevoets & Cleempoel, 2013; Azhari & Mohamed, 2012; Samadi & Yunus, 2012; Omar & Ishak, 2009; Bullen & Love, 2011, 2009; Poria et al., 2004; McCain & Ray, 2003; Coeterier, 2002, Black, 1990), there is still lack of study looking at the influence of adaptive reuse historical buildings toward the local

resident's actual visitation particularly using Sarawak as a contextual study setting. Thus, to understand this phenomenon and filling the study gaps, the empirical study needs to be undertaken.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Adaptive reuse of historical buildings

Overwhelmingly, previous researchers have been investigated and introduced the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings for future generation (Adiwibowo et al., 2015; Ijla & Brostrom, 2015; Mydin et al., 2014; Jasme et al., 2014). The adaptation of a historical building actually allows the preservation whilst making it economically viable rather than being demolished and reconstructed which requires higher cost (Black, 1990). Rather than building a new one, it is more practical to adapt existing old building with new uses. Apart from adaptive reuse, other terms are also frequently used in literature such as "renovation", "refurbishment", "remodelling", "reinstatement", "retrofitting", "rehabilitation", and "recycling" of buildings (Wilkinson & Reed, 2008). Despite various terms used, the adaptation of reusing heritage buildings has significantly given benefits to urban areas in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental. Bullen and Love (2009) confirmed that the urban residents in Los Angeles are committed towards a sustainable adaptive reuse program for their residential regeneration. The residents realized the advantages of adaptive reuse in terms of sustainability prevail over the advantages of demolition and new development as experienced in the city. With regards to appreciation grading based on aesthetic elements, Adiwibowo et al. (2015) found that public's appreciation towards historical buildings plays an important role in influencing their intention to visit those places.

2.1.1 Clarity of purpose

Every building has different functions depending on the main purpose of its existence in the first place. The uses of a building may change from time to time though, when the main purpose shifted into a new purpose in order to meet the current needs and at the same time preserve its authenticity. In those days, some historical buildings have been reused into a museum or concert hall, library, houses, offices, restaurants (Mine, 2013) and even a factory outlet (Adiwibowo et al., 2015). Thus, Coeterier (2002) revealed that the new function of the historical building must follow the original form of the building instead of the form follows the new function in order to keep the original nature of the historic building. In line with Barker's (1968) 'behaviour setting', the function is strictly connected with the nature of a building or a place. Several considerations in terms of the suitability need to be taken especially when abandoned historic building being reused for a new function. Hence, to preserve the authentic form of historical building, although its function shifted from the original, best and constant maintenance will indirectly help to protect these historic buildings from extinction.

2.1.2 Present special features

The building's aesthetic values include "aspects of sensory perception for which criteria can and should be stated. Such criteria may include consideration of the form, scale, colour, texture and material of the fabric; the smell and sounds associated with the place and its use" (The Burra Charter, 1999). In a study by Coeterier (2002), he noted that colour and building material are part of the aesthetic elements in evaluating reused historical building. The application of modern colour is one of the choices in enhancing the beauty of historic building, yet still maintaining its authenticity. Colour such as grey and white are the most appropriate for historical building, but not dull colours like pink, yellow and blue (Askari & Dola, 2009). Likewise, Mydin et al. (2013) stated that soft or pastel colours as well as white are the ideal colours that highlight a building as a heritage building and its heritage value. However, striking colours are not appropriate and not allowed to be used in terms of preserving the value of historical buildings as well as too many colours can eventually destroy the building's aesthetic value.

As for the building material, it is divided into two categories, namely natural (wood and brick) and modern (glass, steel and concrete). Natural materials usually said to be cozy and warm while modern materials are called cold and inhospitable. Similar to Askari and Dola (2009), material is one of the most important elements used to evaluate the historic building facade. Moreover, they further proved that architectural style, shape and decoration as the most important aesthetic elements that influence the evaluations of historical buildings.

In previous literature, attributes of a historical building which include the historic information, aesthetic values, the emotional attachment and what the building has to offer to its visitors, all of those directly and indirectly influence the behavioural intention to visit the place. Adiwibowo et al. (2015) studied that the public tend to revisit to the historical buildings that have been reused into retail stores due to their appreciation towards these reused historical buildings which resulted to their revisit intention. In spite of having special features, there are other reasons of why people visit heritage sites and buildings. The reasons for visiting to heritage sites and buildings are varied depending on the actual purpose of the visit. One of the reasons identified by Poria et al. (2004) was to seek for recreational experiences. These experiences include the desire to have a day out, desire to be entertained, desire to relax and wanted to see world-famous historical sites. Apart from that, people are also visiting to historical sites for heritage experiences due to a desire to be emotionally involved in the past, a sense of the obligations and as part of one's heritage. In addition, learning experience on heritage is another reason of why people visit to heritage sites which involved their desire to learn heritage site, the physical nature of the site and its historic background.

2.2 Knowledge on historical building's background

Despite many statements made by scholars on the knowledge in the literature, the ones that addressed by Davenport and Prusak (1998), and Marakas (1999) are the most suitable in the context of this study. Davenport and Prusak (1998) describe knowledge a fluid mix of frame experience, important value, contextual information and expert insight that provides and offers a framework for evaluation and incorporation of new experience and information. Marakas (1999) stated that the acquisition of knowledge involves with the cognitive process that relates to perception, communication, association and reasoning that can influence the individual confident level. In this sense, public's knowledge towards historical building is greatly influenced either by their experience or information that reaches them. It is proven that the higher in information values that public obtained in term of knowledge is closely associated with the characteristic of the historical buildings itself and vice versa (Coeterier, 2002). According to Coeterier (2002) photograph, brochures, mural and few others are the mechanism of increasing the public knowledge toward the heritage matters. A study conducted at Lenggong Valley World Heritage Site (WHS) identified that due to lack of knowledge on heritage among the local community, creating the obstacle for information dissemination and discourage participation among residents and youth in conservation program (Jaafar et al., 2014). This is further supported that owing to lack of information disseminated and despite overwhelming most of shoppers do not know about the historical background of the building that turned into popular factory outlets in Bandung.

2.3 Appreciation

By definition, appreciation is a recognition and enjoyment of the good qualities of someone or something (English Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2016) or positive evaluation or positive attitude toward any object or thing (Maio, Olson, Bernard & Luke, 2003; Cross, 2005; Ham, 2009). Another definition by Merriam-Webster (2016), appreciation is an act of evaluation, recognition of aesthetic values and an expression of admiration or gratitude. In relation to the historical buildings, appreciation is evaluated based on admiration and recognition of the good qualities of aesthetic values. According to Moulin & Boniface (2001), one of the methods of recognizing people's appreciation towards heritage building is through their level of awareness. According Berman (2006) the facade and the ambience clearly influence the peoples' appreciation toward historical buildings and that public's evaluation and appreciation of a historical buildings' is based on parameters such as the building's background, function and familiarity (Coeterier, 2002).

In order to create public recognition and appreciation, knowledge of the historical buildings needs to be provided and those do not have any access to the buildings' background and information, thus their emotional attachment and appreciation of the building is considered weak (Galihkusumah, 2010). The appreciation and evaluation of the historical buildings are based on aesthetic or visual elements such as colour, the building material and proportion (Coeterier, 2002) and architectural style, shape,

texture, material, dimension and scale and ornaments of the building (Askari & Dola, 2009). Adiwibowo et al. (2015) found that public's appreciation towards historical buildings reused for commercial purposes, particularly in the retail industry plays an important role in attracting visitors. This finding supports Plevoets and Cleempoel (2013) that public admiration can be stimulated by preserving the historical building's facade which eventually can attract them into the building.

2.4 Actual visitation

It is worth mentioning here that actual visitation in the context of the literature is the same as actual behaviour. The actual behaviour is defined as an act that one consciously wills and either by physical or mental activity (Berthon, Campbell, Pitt, & McCarthy, 2011) and people will anticipate in situations either positive or negative in line with their self effectiveness level (Vallacher & Wegner, 1987) or as an action that responds to organism stimulation such as physical activity, internal physiological, human's emotional process and involve mental activity (Syed, 2009). The backbone of the argument is that actual behaviours are strongly predicted by behavioural intentions (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Typically, studies that examine the actual behaviour in most areas including tourism are less compared to the behavioural intention due to the complexity in tracking actual behaviour. Kolyesnikova, Dodd and Wilcox (2009) for instance identify gender influence the reciprocal consumer behaviour towards a wine product while Berthon, Campbell, Pitt and McCarthy (2011) examines the firm's stance towards its creative customers and the actual action it takes in response to its creative customers. Meng and Xu (2010) deduced tourists' actual behaviours are influenced by various indicators ranging from planned behaviour, impulsive behaviour, and experiences of others (Kim, Kim, & Goh, 2011). On European tourist's behaviour and motivation of visiting Chiang Mai, Thailand, Plangmarn, Mujtaba and Pirani (2012) revealed that cultural values in addition to other play a critical function in attracting in tourists.

On visitation toward heritage sites and historical building's heritage and cultural attraction are the two vital factors that influenced overall tourist and those who had experienced travel to heritage/cultural sites were more satisfied compared to those who had never experienced it before (Huh, 2002). Although contradicting with the initial intention or motivation of visiting Hsu & Huang (2010) contended that physical and environment on the sides influences tourists' actual behaviours to revisit and Yao (2013) discovered heritage product's attractiveness significantly stimuli tourist experience and satisfaction. The reasons of visiting heritage sites and buildings are varied depending on the actual purpose of the visit; to seek for recreational experiences, to see world-famous historical sites, desire to be emotionally involved in the past, a sense of the obligations and as part of one's heritage are some the reasons identified by Poria et al. (2004). Despite some did not know the buildings historical background, public engrossedly appreciate and visiting reused historical buildings (Adiwibowo et al., 2015).

3 Conceptual Study Framework

Based on the literatures and the highlighted issue, the conceptual study framework is illustrated in Figure 1: The framework portrays the influence of adaptive reuse of historical buildings toward the local residents' actual visitation. The framework further displays the local residents' appreciation as mediating variable in examining the significant relationship between independent variable and dependent variable. The local residents' knowledge on historical building's background as moderator between adaptive reuse of historical buildings attributes and appreciation.

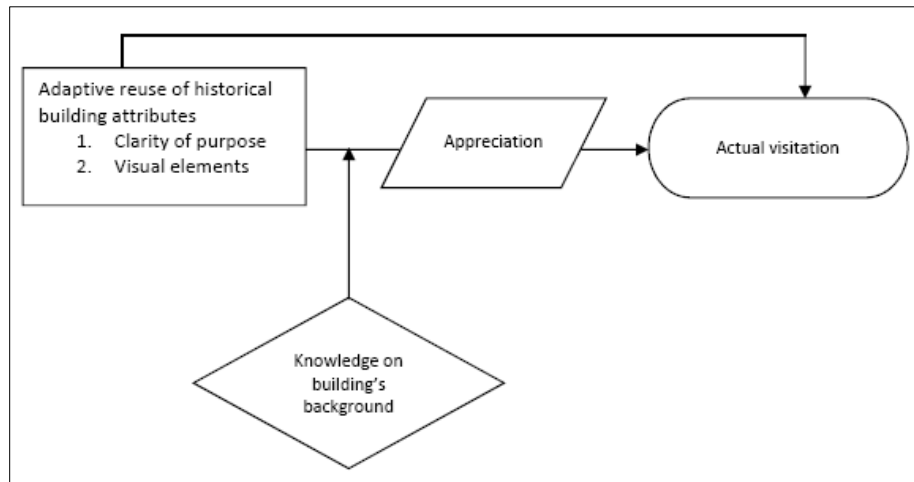


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

4 Conclusion

As the study is still under investigation thus from the academic perspective it is hoped that the result will explicitly reveal the understanding of the local resident's behaviour toward adaptive reuse of historical buildings and expand the existing body of literature in the heritage building studies. It will most likely be leading other potential researchers to look more in-depth or in broader scope related to the reused of historical buildings. From the practical perspective, this study enables to provide significant contribution to the governments and in the context of the study the Sarawak state government to better understand the behaviours and attitude towards heritage tourism particularly among the local residents. By knowing and understanding the local residents' actual visitations toward the adaptive reuse of historical buildings, the local authorities will able to make a decision on what products and services to offer from the adaptive reuse of historical building that fits the public demand without disregard the significant values on the legacy of the past. This indirectly benefits the future generation as it portrays the identity of communities and nation and closely related to tourism.

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