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Experiencing Urban through On-Street Activity

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Abstract

The urban economic today enhances a high emphasize on urban outdoor experience. In line with tourism economic demand, this study focuses on pedestrian activity and intensity. This study analyzes data from the outdoor visual observation and digital photography. The objective of this study is to understand the urban context that attracts pedestrian density at the urban outdoor of the Lebu Harmoni, in George Town, Penang. Retrospectively, this street resembles the harmonious living of Malaysian ethnics: Malays, Chinese and Indian. The heritage shop houses façade is a reflection of urban heritage, commercial and social character of the port city.

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Keywords: Urban heritage shop houses; multi-culturalism; urban outdoor observation; on-street cultural heritage

1. Introduction

There are magnetic attractions in terms of on-street activity and product that able to boost pedestrian within Lebu Harmoni. The local citizen is more familiar with the streets name as “Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling.” The number of pedestrian contributes to the vibrancy and intensity of the study area. This vibrancy enhances further the urban heritage culture of tourism despite the heritage streets status. This situation creates a positive aura within the outdoor an urban heritage street. The ambience encourages the street to revive commercially and to regenerate instead of deteriorating. Even though, there is a conflict of heritage commercialization as highlighted by Samadi, Z., Mohd Yunus, R & Omar, D. (2012), but the pressure has a positive impact to the street. With regards to urban planning strategy; Jakob, D. (2012)

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repeatedly expresses empathy on the exclusion of the local community from various major events and place promotion projects. The evaluation and analysis by Jacob, D. (2012) describes the festivalization is similar with the eventification and arts-led that altogether leads revitalization culture through promotion of the urban festival. Unfortunately, this scenario used to be ended up with exclusion of local people from participating. The target audience is tourists and wealthy locals. The festivals organizer creates an exclusive and elite. They sell expensive product and purposely make the event as unaffordable to the local. Those disadvantages of eventification especially when it comes to exclusion of local people make it worse and unacceptable.

On the other hand, enhancement of local identity and cultural heritage belongs is the local and therefore, they deserved a privileged in the form of high quality of public amenity. The Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang (MPPP), (GTWHI) and the Think City Sdn Bhd believes on “no make-up strategy” and “remain just the way it is” in holding the status-quo as the UNESCOs World Heritage Site since 2008. There was no major strategy except individual grants and guidelines for shop houses renovation works and they let the urban observers to experience the on-street activities of cultural heritage.

Understanding this urban social conflict and the existing aspect therefore; this research shares with readers on how local cultural heritage such as public congregation for religious ritual can generate economy and revive. Firstly, it is a local lifestyle, commodity for outdoor street shopping and tourism attraction. Secondly, it is purely an expression of local urban heritage. It means that; no costs for imported artists. Thirdly, in the cultural heritage practice; this is part of the continuum of the urban community heritage of Lebu Harmoni that means that no promotion cost since it is purely a local cultural heritages celebration. Fourthly, the richness of multi religious of heritage buildings provides the three major attractions for pedestrian congregation. The heritage buildings provide richness of varieties, closely-linked relationship between pedestrian movement and activity.

Why Digital Photography (DP) and Outdoor Observation (OO)? The combination of both of the outdoors observation through visual and digital photography strengthens the research methods. It works as complimentary in the mixed methods to answer the research question in understanding the real life phenomenon. Digital Photography has its limitation to a particular angle of viewpoint. Therefore; to record the urban outdoor observation which is on-street experience in terms of visual observation has a high potential to fill up the gap of the study areas coverage.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Urban heritage shop houses

The architectural style demonstrates the richness of historical shop houses of Lebu Harmoni. In terms of the façade treatment, the street shares almost similar physical qualities with Lebu Armenia, Lebu Chulia and Lebu Pantai of George Town, Penang. The outstanding value of tangible heritage is the physical attributes of the leftover built heritage of the early shop houses in George Town, Penang. The urban heritage shop houses are the living monument of the tangible cultural heritage. The close image and identity between Pulau Pinang and Melaka shop houses are due to their similarity in terms of colonial influences to the historic Port City. The feature spices-up with the architecture from the British Colonial, European, Asian and multi-ethnic influences. The high awareness and local appreciation towards the existing shop houses make the conservation of historical shop houses is acceptable. The built heritage is well taken care and remains in good condition. The continuous urban livability shall be part of the reviving effort to inherit the essence of the physical and cultural heritage to future generations.

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