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## Conflict of Image and Identity in Heritage Commercialization

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### Abstract

The main vertical components of shop houses are façade and window display. Regardless its impressively charming character, the locality of the shop houses has substantial influence. For instance the urban and heritage contextual guidelines are the existing setting for shop houses in Georgetown and Malacca. The shop owners are complying with the city manager's commercial and heritage buildings guidelines. Functionally mixed-used for shopping, working and living but personalization is the expected quality by end users. This high expectation on heritage enhancement caused heritage shop owners to a new pressure to maintain heritage aesthetical and economical balance. Therefore, this paper will share the analysis on heritage street's shop owners to discover their eternal reflection.

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*Keywords:* Heritage commercialization; revitalization assessment criteria; vertical component; image and identity

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### 1. Introduction

The existing shop houses in heritage streets in Penang and Melaka [also known as twin city] are included as one of the '*compulsory destiny*' to visit in Malaysia. Many tourism websites, trip advisors and tour bloggers compounded their recommendation to our local inscribed UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Heritage tourism in both cities has attracted numbers of tourist worldwide in each year. Even though this phenomenon creates global attraction has accumulated high economical investment to those places but

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what does the shop owners get in return? Does this outstanding universal outstanding value (OUV) and heritage commercialization give any impact towards image and identity of their property?

### *1.1. Penang And Melaka Before Inscription*

The shop houses in heritage streets were merely considered as old buildings with historical value before the UNESCO World Heritage Sites inscription in 2008. Those architectural heritage streets with rows of heritage buildings fronting each other are left to shop owners' effort to maintain. The vertical component and space in between heritage buildings functions for pedestrian and vehicular linkages as its horizontal component live without any official protection or conservation efforts. The physical condition was highly depending on shop owners' creativity and affordability either to enhance their shop front or live with exiting condition. Generally, the façade were fairly repaired and maintained to keep the business operating actively. Unfortunately not all shop owners had the common initiatives some shop houses were left deteriorating and caused visual nuisance.

### *1.2. Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)'s Inscription and Grant*

Efforts towards heritage buildings conservation in Penang and Melaka were relatively proportion with awareness among Malaysian academicians, managers and practitioners. The new efforts aligned to revise guidelines in the National Heritage Act revision (2005). Then, the inscription of Melaka and GeorgeTown, Penang: Historic Cities of Straits of Malacca in 2008 as one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites (WHS) in 2008 compounded more consistent implementation of regulations by the respective city manager: Majlis Bandaraya Melaka Bersejarah [MBMB] and Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang [MPPP]. An incentive for heritage building owners is provided as a provisional grant from the Ministry of Finance, Malaysia indicates government's commitment towards urban heritage management. The grant is channeled through the Khazanah Nasional for conserving and protecting heritage buildings within the WHS. The grant is focused for the external façade of heritage buildings within WHS especially for shop houses due to its number which carry an obvious feature to end users.

### *1.3. World Heritage Office (WHO)*

Both Penang and Melaka is sparring partner in ensuring the UNESCO World Heritage Sites inscription in 2008 is in the best condition within their vision and management. At present, World Heritage Office (WHO) in both locations are preparing for the final draft of Special Area Plan (SAP) and Conservation Management Plan (CMP) to guide the enhancement of WHS. The aim is to guide the promotion of conservation, preservation, rehabilitation and reconstruction of WHS. In Penang, the World Heritage Office i.e. the non-statutory body office managing WHS is known as GeorgeTown World Heritage Incorporation (GTWHI) which was established in 2010 whereas in Melaka it is known as Melaka World Heritage Sdn. Bhd. (MWHBS) which was established in 2011.

### *1.4. Image and Identity of Existing Shop houses and impact of heritage commercialization*

Within the heritage site of Penang there are four thousand, six hundred and sixty five (4665) numbers of listed buildings and the majority component is shop houses. On the other hand, there are more than three thousand (>3000) numbers of heritage shop houses in Melaka (Raja Shahminan, R.N., 2007). Historical Style and period of construction is traceable based on its authentic feature of facades. Part of the process of conservation from the Jabatan Warisan Negara (Department of Heritage, Malaysia) is the

documentation of existing shop houses before and after the conservation processes. Based on George Town World Heritage Incorporation and Think City's publication on Penang Historic Shop Houses Style are classified into six main styles according to chronological order. The styles are: "Early Penang Style" (1790s-1850s); "South Chinese" Eclectic Style" (1840s-1900s); "Early Straits" Eclectic Style (1890s-1910s); "Late Straits" Eclectic Style (1910s-1930s); Art Deco Style (1930s-1960s) and Early Modern Style (1950-1970s). The identified style shall be conserved as closest possible by shop owners. Any new changes made towards the heritage shop house within WHS the owner shall undergo: Cultural Impact Assessment (CIA), Dilapidation Survey (DS) reports and Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) approval. The documentations provide a quick reference for new use and function in the development. The conservation principles are applicable towards individual building which one of become the major approaches.

The inscription of WHS by UNESCO in 2008 has imposed a new style of heritage commercialization. This new status requires a high expectation on high quality heritage-commercial typology. The shop houses are expected to work beyond a normal socio-economic level but to maintain the Malaysian's pride in terms of image and identity. Due to this high expectation therefore, this paper is inspired to unveil shop owners' eternal reflection related to this issue. The aim is to share shop owners' reflection in facing a great impact due to new heritage regulations and commercialization. They are now up to set up a new business strategy to remain competitive with the current demand of globalized heritage tourism and marketing strategy. This paper is limited to cover shop owners' reflection in the selected streets of George Town, Penang and Melaka only.

### *1.5. Heritage Commercialization after World Heritage Inscription*

The tangible heritage such as buildings, sites, shop houses especially within the Core Zone of World heritage Sites is subject to heritage commercialization especially in dealing with global tourism demand. However, the local city manager of Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang has their own conceptual approach which is "not to be shocked by the new WHS title" by deciding "to remain their heritage buildings as it is and minimize changes unless necessary" and "live and let the business run as usual". This concept provides a room of improvement for heritage buildings' owners rather than over-excited with the inscription. On the other hand, Melaka has their own approach in enhancing the WHS status through the creation of new landmark in the world tourist mapping.

## **2. Development of UNESCO Charters**

In the first decade of the millennium, heritage tourism is considered as one of the most '*volatile-products*' in the international market of heritage tourism. Labadi, S. & Long, C. (2010) considered World Heritage Sites only act as tourism advertising strategy to sustain popularity over years in global tourism marketing. According to them, urban heritage sites have become local commodity for attracting tourists. However, building conservation is not enough to knit the city fabric more revitalization efforts through urban design study can improve further our urban heritage city. Chukwunyerere, C.Uguchukwu. (2006) suggests that a neighbourhood is an important quality to be enhanced in urban heritage area. More urban design guide is necessary for incorporation of protecting public policy to create a great street ambience within heritage buildings (Punter, J. 2007). Research on revitalization approach was acutely done which has inspired this research and a high resolution on urban heritage revitalization strategy is conducted. The aim is not to secure the existing built heritage from deterioration after conservation accomplishment but to ensure that heritage streets where those heritages are belongs to are also regenerated successfully.

Conservation methods with seven approaches as guided by Burra Charter (1988) have attracted worldwide applications and interpretations by local conservators.

### 2.1. UNESCO Charters

Besides Burra Charter there other charters can benefit researchers in many ways especially in supporting knowledge enhancement on tangible and intangible heritage. Audits on UNESCO charters were done by heritage observers and researchers. There are many charters for referencing as documented by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in their e-library. Ideally, designers, managers, stakeholders and practitioners in heritage city shall not limit themselves to any specific charter. The current trend of heritage-mimicry without justified reasons shall be terminated. They shall not limit themselves with heritage value consciousness only but shall be technically-equipped to decide the most appropriate approach for their WHS site. In fact, new charter can be developed to fulfill the local cultural needs and functions. The following table presents the chronology of charter of UNESCO charters.

Table 1. UNESCO Development of Charters

UNESCO Development of Charters	Year
Venice	1964
Paris	1972
Belgrade	1977
Florence	1981
Washington	1987
Burra	1988
Lausanne	1990
Vancouver	1994
Bugaria	1996
Mexico	1999
Bulgaria	2000
Krakow	2002
China	2002
Johannesburg	2002
Int. ICOMOS	2003
Andong	2006
Hoi An	2009
Zacatecas	2009
New Zealand	2010

In reflecting the Vancouver Charter in 1994 to the urban heritage context; Samadi, Z. (2011) highlighted that revitalization is not similar to either development or conservation. Revitalization shall be introduced to the whole area i.e. the whole stretch of a heritage street to glow a three-dimensional (3D) ambience and project the local image and identity of a heritage street. In order to have dual functions as a link and place, heritage streets must be audited in terms of a specific performance index to check its'

level of urban quality. Based on Vancouver Charter (1994), the amendment of the charter provided a new conservation tool called Heritage Revitalization Agreement (HRA). In managing heritage project in Vancouver, the city authority found that the existing conservation approach required a more creative and diversify meanings and interpretation which is of urban heritage revitalization.

### *2.2. Conservation and Individual Shop Lot Strategy*

The problem with conservation is its limitation of control within the individual lot of shop houses unit only. The establishment of special area plan such as ethnical enclave: Little India, China Town and Malay Cultural Village are in the process to improvise the problem, but the approach is used to be limited to the conservation of individual building only and not the space in between! What happen to the public space which is the space in between conserved heritage buildings? In response to the call of particularization of competitive product in the global age; the image and identity of our heritage commercialization of shop houses has a great impact towards a creation *a place* rather than just *a new conserved buildings*. Robertson, K. (2004) enhanced that economic success will lead to heritage sustainability in heritage clusters rather limitation in individual lot. The definition of *a place* acquires a '*blue ocean strategy*' of image and identity to create a new version of business strategy. It is more towards customer-friendly and new style of operating to meet the current demand of heritage tourism and market.

## **3. Heritage Commercialization Towards Revitalization**

### *3.1. Beyond Individual Strategy*

The establishment of special area plan such as ethnical enclave: Little India, China Town and Malay Cultural Village are in the process of broadening the boundary of conservation beyond the individual lot only. However, but the trend remains in a fraction without overall approach of urban design strategic tools. The existing row of shop houses in Penang which was once architecturally influenced by previous colonization is currently in need of a new interpretation not just diversification, universalism, homogenization of borderless environment in heritage sites but sustainably revitalized and locally relevant and competitive in terms of economic, environment and social values.

### *3.2. Urban Heritage Revitalization*

At present, based on on-site visual observation in both sites; shop houses are combined to undergo re-adaptive usage to become boutique hotels to attract international heritage observers. However, the space in between is commonly treated as hoteliers' private space rather than for public. The re-adaptive usage of the shop houses neighborhood is expected to trigger new livability but caused more pressure by others shop owners especially their close by neighborhoods. Nevertheless, a properly planned heritage street programmed shall be designed and sponsored to suit our local cultural heritage to uplift the individual pressure.

## **4. Methodology**

This paper serves only one of the sixth phases of the overall great heritage street research. The obtrusive research design was chosen in this research involves the strategic approach to diagnose the real sickness faced by individual shop owners on site. Face-to-face interviews with shop owners were done individually at the shop lots in the selected streets in Georgetown and Melaka. The interview session was

conducted within their business between 09.00am to 10.00pm between December 2011 and March 2012. The language used for the conduct of interview sessions was Bahasa Malaysia and English to suit the comfortable level and effective communication between shop owners and researcher.

The study site was limited to the selected heritage streets only which were Jonker Street in Melaka, Armenian Street and Chulia Street in Georgetown, Penang. The result only reflects the total of three hundred and sixteen units (316 units) of shop houses from those sites. In this study, one hundred and three units (n=106 units) of shop houses in Jonker Street in Melaka, fifty three units (n=53 units) of shop houses along Armenian Street and one hundred and fifty seven (n=157 units) for Chulia Street, Penang were selected but the result was based on random sampling method.

The newly design of the Revitalization Attribute Criteria (RAC) was utilized in the toolkit of the questionnaire design. The interviews were based on the structured questions of RAC. There were forty eight (48) success indicators in the RAC based on identified from earlier phase of exploratory research which combined selected indicators to develop a new model. The conduct of this research is part of the process in establishing the design model of success heritage streets. In this particular level of study, success indicator is yet to be confirmed to determine as the best predictors for street success performance. The modification of model is expected in the final one prior to factor analysis steps. The finalized extraction of factors shall confirm the main group which was initially divided into two main groups: 24 items in the physical success criteria and the 24 items in the eternal success criteria.

In the newly developed of the Revitalization Attributes Criteria (RAC) design with five-point (5-Point) Likert Scale which offers five levels of ranging of disagreement to agreement is measured in the questionnaires. This is considered as a symmetrical balanced since there are equal amount of negative and positive positions for the shop owners to choose from. The design of course has taken up at least one hour to complete with a cycle of an interview session. Even though time spent during business is crucial for shop owners but time spent considered as significant since shop owners managed to unveil their decisions and personal stance. Some of them ignore their eternal conflicts that they are facing on image and identity of their commercialized heritage property simply because of time limitation to think and share within their hectic business life routine.

## 5. Results and Discussions

An intelligent approach of conservation is aimed to secure buildings from natural and cultural deteriorating processes. In managing the heritage city, part from conserving heritage buildings any unmaintained and unmanaged property that caused visual nuisance were either seized or sold out to any interested stakeholders. Heritage buildings or shop houses which were properly inherited, maintained and active shop fronts remain their business as usual basis and offered with an upgrading grant.

Based on the recent conducted research in both WHS in Penang and Melaka, it was found that heritage shop houses owners (either newly owned or inherited property) has multi-intention to their property. This is due to image and identity conflicts that make them decide in at least to five decision makings choice. These findings are based on the face to face interview processes but the oral statement is justified though the revitalization's visual assessment. This was done on the shop houses' shop fronts in which indicated that the shop houses were either active or passive. They have their personal principle regarding the future of their property: such as for personal 'antique collection' and some keep it 'for future higher purchase demand'. Unfortunately, there are number of cases where conserved shop houses were left unoccupied after conservation processes accomplished after the WHS inscription in 2008.

On the other hand, a genuine approach of reviving or putting building '*back to life*' programs shall be introduced. Those heritage shop houses through a proper revitalization programs though heritage commercialization will act as a catalyst to generate its embedded economical, environmental and social



value. The following Table 2 is a list of statement as summarizes the findings on their conflicts on image and identity issues based on shop owners' reflection as analyzed and extracted from the research. The left column is a list of conflicts and the right column is the impact of heritage commercialization towards the shop houses façade.

Table 2. Conflicts Image and Identity in Heritage Commercialization

Conflicts of Image and Identity	Heritage Commercialization on Facades' of Shop houses
Ambiguity on Heritage Requirements by Regulating Bodies Between shameful deterioration and conserve	Remain Existing Architectural Feature Update trend, pride and stylish
Originality of Facade attractiveness Between heritage aesthetic and commercial-optimization	Construction Cost Affordability Additional cost for re-adaptation of usage from existing old shop houses
Proportionate of Signboard to Overall facade Between business promotion and unique architectural heritage facade	Contradictory Principle Big sized /eye catching signboard to cover façade or to reduce size to promote unique heritage elements
Legibility of Heritage Character To change between led interactive façade or existing heritage	Optimizing Balance Approach between current style pressure and maintaining the high cost heritage art and craft
Visual Quality of Architectural Style and Decoration Between international and contemporary-modern tropical	Design Direction Impose new architectural detail elements or to maintain heritage decorative elements
Clarity of Message from Window Display Between maximum glass display and traditional window sized display	Harmonious Infusion Display Moderate display: combination of size between futuristic and traditional sized display
User Friendly Operating Style Between western and tourist prone	Mixed Style Malaysian cultural authentic style
Product Variety to Offer Between universal techno-computer-communication gadget, wi-fi provider and ethnic cultural style	Tourist/Local Support Service Combination of Malaysian ethnic to make new unite infusion for Malay, Chinese and Indian.
Communicative Language Between Bahasa Malaysia, English and local dialects	Malaysian International Style Malaysian style

Beyond the physical quality of shop houses facades in which success attributes can be indicated the research provides a high focus on the eternal attributes too. Therefore, in this research shop owners' eternity is unveiled. Shop owners' strength to face the impact of globalization and new heritage commercialization in which effect them physically and mentally required a high valorization spirit. Their economical sustainability shall be proceeding or to change their ongoing business by facing the upcoming heritage-prone business.

The following Table 3 presents the decision makings category by shop owners with dealing with their shop house. Again, this result is based on the face to face interview with shop owners of the three study sites.

Table 3. Category of decision making in managing image and identity conflicts

No	Category of Decision Making	% Of Shop owners (Jonker Street) [n=106]	% Of Shop owners (Armenian Street) [n=53]	% Of Shop owners (Chulia Street) [n=157]
1	Keep for Future Investment	8	28	9
2	Personal Antique Collection	12	16	4
3	Willingness to Change	25	20	25
4	Pro-active Sustain and Continue	35	20	22
5	Re-adaptive Use as Hotel/Commercial	20	16	40

Based on Jonker Street’s experience, the research analysis found that the majority of thirty five percent (35%) of the shop owners preferred to be pro-active towards heritage commercialization and regulation imposed on their heritage shop houses as compared to only eight percent (8%) shop owners who are willing to keep it for future. This result is opposite to Armenian Street’s one. The majority of twenty eight percent (28%) of shop owners prefer to keep their shop houses for future investment or use. However, the result shows that five options of decision making reflected almost fairly distributed among shop houses. Another study site in Penang which is Chulia Street has shown a remarkable indicator on re-adaptive usage on the heritage property in which the result shows that shop owners’ willingness to gain benefit from the heritage commercialization through hotel operation and their supplementary business. Based on the recent research it was found that forty percent (40%) of the shop owners from Chulia Street has high interest in turning their heritage shop houses into more marketable property. This decision has increased the revitalization of the space in between into an active, attractive and save link and place.

The following figures present the findings on shop owners’ intention towards their heritage shop houses in Jonker Street, Melaka, Chulia Street and Armenian Street in GeorgeTown, Penang.

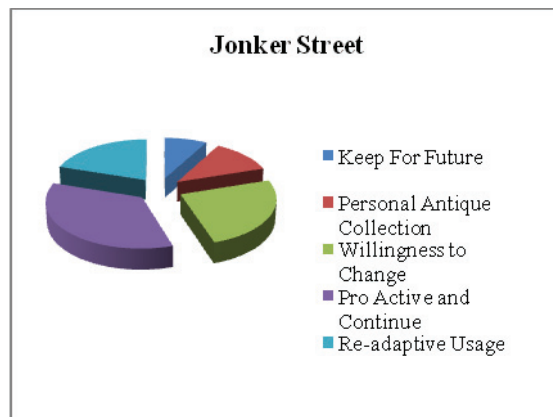


Fig. 1. Shop Owners’ Intention in Jonker Street, Melaka



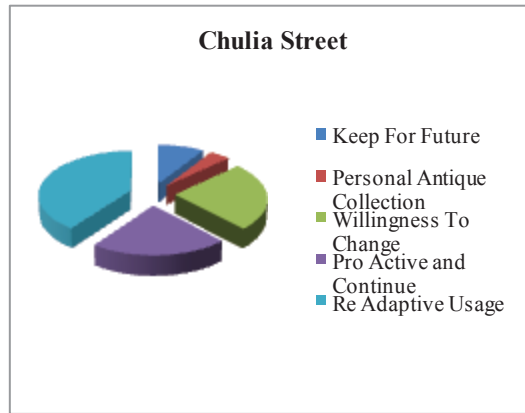


Fig.2. Shop Owners' Intention in Chulia Street, Penang

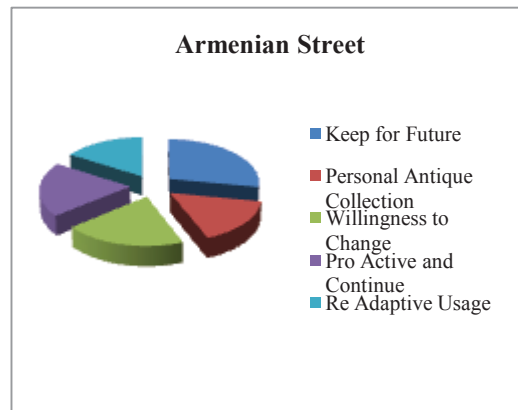


Fig.3. Shop Owners' Intention in Armenian Street, Penang

The issues of new global inclined-environment and its related the image and identity of heritage commercialization is discussed in this paper. In terms of physical attack heritage commercialization is a genuine proof of globalization impact. Promotion of local ethnics' religious activities shall be part of the calendar of activities. This is one of the pro-active measures in end-users including the temporary and permanent occupants, visitors shall be encouraged to congregate the indoor and outdoor of the heritage buildings to celebrate and share the festive ambience of local ethnic activities. In conjunction to those events; local cuisines, art and crafts products shall be made available in market to support the activity.

## 6. Conclusions

International franchising business such as Coffee Bean, McDonalds, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Haargen Daz and Hard Rock Café shall be properly controlled. This franchising business may encourage home feeling experience to certain groups of tourists. In return, we may lead our cultural heritage to disastrous level. However, we need to remind ourselves that foreign tourists don't come to our place for this reason. In fact those places can be easily accessed from their home country. Apart from visiting our WHS, our

cultural heritage including harmoniously multi-ethnic, mixed cultures, art and crafts, religious festivals and authentic nasi kandar, laksa Penang, pasembur, roti canai and teh tarik are part of the attractions! Failing to promote our unique local cultural and heritage product extracted from multi-ethnics of Malaysian as part of the heritage commercialization will diminish our cultural heritage, image and identity. Once our outstanding universal value is sacrificed, it will be an irreplaceable lost.

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