



# Recalling the Past: Maintaining continuity in urban heritage tourism

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## Abstract

What did the past inherit to a place? It left a track of continuity that builds the identity of the place. This study aims to observed continuity aspect to develop heritage tourism in a historic corridor of Medan City. Using a mixed method of quantitative as well as qualitative, it focused on three indicators in the study area namely values, nostalgia, and familiarity. The findings have shown that the largest contribution in building the area identity came from the heritage buildings and historical stories while the familiarity was proven to be weak.

Keywords: Heritage tourism; place identity; continuity

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## **1.0 Introduction**

Tourism has grown rapidly to be a leading industry in many parts of the world. For developing countries, it even plays a great role to support the economic growth (Kundu, 2012). As the global economy and social life continuous to grow, the necessity of traveling is now hard to avoid. Ever since people has started to travel to different places and their visits have developed in number and type. One particular type of tourism favored by people nowadays is heritage tourism. It provides the tourists peculiarities and unique experiences due to the cultural and historical aspects. Moreover, this type of tourism has become the most influential and fastest growing among the others (Boyd, 2002).

A major aspect in the success of tourism is the tourists' satisfaction. It will lead people to their return to the area and moreover, become a potential marketing tool (Voon and Lee, 2009). The peculiarity generates this satisfaction in a place. It may lie on the heritage elements or psychological attachment between tourists and the environment (Brown, 1992). It comes from physical and non-physical elements of the heritage area (Ashworth et al., 2007). The peculiarities will give distinct and different experiences to the people. A satisfying place relates to feeling, emotion, and behavior to affect the identity of the place. To this extent, continuity becomes an important aspect of the tourism for it could reshape and maintain the identity of a place (Twigger-Ross & Uzzel, 1996).

## **2.0 Literature Review**

As a forming aspect of place identity (Twigger-Ross & Uzzel, 1996), continuity helps to guard and sustain the identity itself. For instance, a continuous present of historic buildings can show the previous time in an area, even bring back the memory from the past (Lalli, 1992). The aspect defined into two forms; the place-referent and place-congruent continuity (Twigger-Ross & Uzzel, 1996). The place- referent refers to continuity produced in a specific area such as physical forms that shows the past stories there. Meanwhile, the place congruent or so-called "elective belonging" exists when someone can relate to a place that contains some values he holds. In this case, the continuity is not merely the physical forms, but the values contained (Twigger-Ross and Uzzel, 1996). It may include customs, religion, ideology, and habit. There are three main values in the study area; heritage buildings, historical stories, and cultural activities.

Also, continuity aspect also concerns about the stability of value in a place and how it rooted to someone's thought (memory, nostalgia, experience). Therefore, values, nostalgia/ memories, and familiarity become three indicators to observe continuity in the study area (Fig.1).

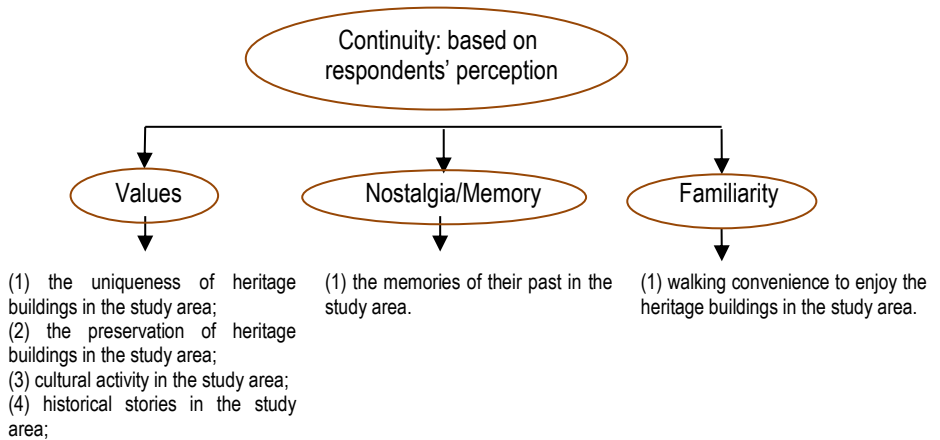


Figure 1: Aspect of continuity in research

### 3.0 Methodology

This research was conducted using a mixed method to gather information about continuity aspect in the study area. Field observation was conducted towards urban tourism elements in the area (Jansen-Verbeke, 2005). Meanwhile, tourists' perceptions were assessed through qualitative and quantitative processes. The qualitative data was gained from depth interview with nine key respondents that are tourism stakeholders in the city, including artist, an association of travel tours and the heritage buildings owners. Qualitative data resulted from questionnaires distribution to 360 respondents divided into two groups; 144 tourists (with a ratio of 60 domestic: 40 foreign); and 216 local people. The main difference between the two groups was defined by Ashworth (2009) that tourist is someone who is on vacation, and local people do not take a vacation.

The analysis process used triangulation method where both quantitative and qualitative data analyzed together and concurrent to get a general idea and to deal with causative factors. The data were generated by SPSS to be provided in tables and figures. Throughout the research, the issue of language usage in the area became one obstacle to the study. Unfortunately many foreign tourists such as from Netherlands and China did not speak English.

The study area is a well-known heritage tourism area in the heart of Medan City. It stretches from a Malay region, Chinese region to Dutch colonial area in the past. It is shown by many heritage buildings in the area (Fig.2.). Some of these buildings include Malay Sultanate's Maimoon Palace, China Shophouses, and buildings with Art Deco Style and Renaissance (Ginting, 2013)

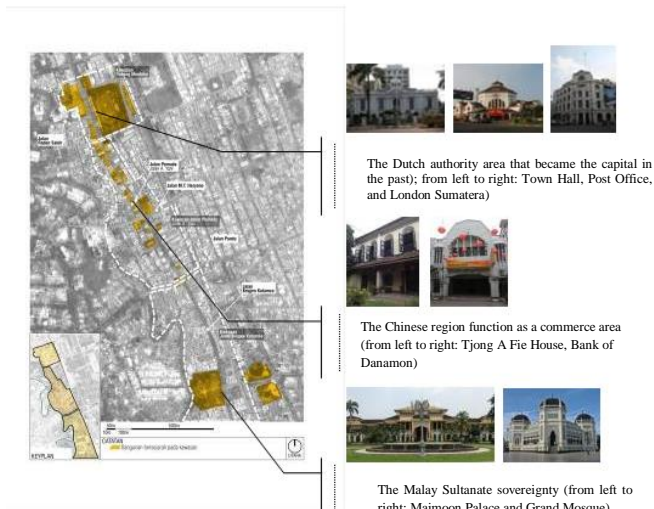


Figure.2: Research area

#### 4.0 Results and Discussion

Overall, the tourists who come to the study area are mostly female. The study has found that 51% of the tourists were female and as 49% were male with age range 24-49 years as 54%. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents had gained higher education where 51% were Bachelor Degree, and 16% were Master Degree. Also, 35% of respondents have an average income of over seven million rupiahs (IDR) per month. The data is line with a similar study that tourists, who visited heritage objects, were those that tended to have higher education. They tend to have a curiosity towards something bigger and try to answer it by visiting the heritage objects (Ginting, 2013). Moreover, a significant income enabled them to visit the heritage objects wherever and for a longer time. Meanwhile, based on the country of origin, tourists from Singapore and Germany, Netherland, Malaysia, and America was ranked in of 7%, 6%, 5%, 4% respectively.

Based on the questionnaire results, there was not a big difference of the respondents' opinions of the tourist and local people. The local people felt that the historical story was still the main attraction but not to the foreign tourists (Table 1). The questionnaire results show that the presence of historic buildings and the historical stories in research areas were two biggest things that formed the identity of the area.

Facts	Area of Deli Sultannate						Area of Kesawan						Area of Mertekka Square													
	Local People		Tourist		Local People		Tourist		Local People		Tourist		Local People		Tourist											
	Min	Stev	Min	Stev	Min	Stev	Min	Stev	Min	Stev	Min	Stev	Min	Stev	Min	Stev										
A	3.72	0.80	3.85	0.76	4.10	0.63	3.63	0.74	3.75	0.60	3.78	0.78	3.72	0.80	3.85	0.76	4.10	0.63	3.63	0.74	3.75	0.60	3.78	0.78		
B	3.83	0.69	3.87	0.62	4.02	0.70	3.70	0.70	3.62	0.72	3.70	0.85	3.83	0.69	3.87	0.62	4.02	0.70	3.70	0.70	3.62	0.72	3.70	0.85		
C	3.62	0.85	3.70	0.70	3.57	0.87	3.30	0.77	3.30	0.79	3.53	0.75	3.62	0.85	3.70	0.70	3.57	0.87	3.30	0.77	3.30	0.79	3.53	0.75		
D	4.10	0.88	4.02	0.68	4.18	0.75	3.42	0.79	3.78	0.80	3.97	0.78	4.10	0.88	4.02	0.68	4.18	0.75	3.42	0.79	3.78	0.80	3.97	0.78		
E	3.70	0.83	3.58	0.85	3.92	0.87	3.32	1.00	3.62	0.80	3.55	0.87	3.70	0.83	3.58	0.85	3.92	0.87	3.32	1.00	3.62	0.80	3.55	0.87		
F	3.88	0.32	3.10	0.90	4.00	0.55	3.15	0.90	3.67	0.57	3.07	1.18	3.88	0.32	3.10	0.90	4.00	0.55	3.15	0.90	3.67	0.57	3.07	1.18		
Value Format : 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree																										

Table1.: Elements of continuity in research area

#### 4.1 The values

The physical form of the heritage objects can provide value or special meaning to the tourists (Shuib et al., 2008). It occurs in the town of Malacca and Pulau Pinang in Malaysia, where preservation of historic buildings has been able to make a heritage tourism activity continue to these days (Azhari, Mohammed, 2012).

In this research, the respondents were amazed by the existence of heritage buildings in the research area. They were very impressed with the unique heritage buildings in this place; Area of Deli Sultanate Tourist (3.85), the Local People (3.72), (see Table 1); Area of Kesawan Tourist (3.63), the local people (4.10); the Area of Merdeka Square Tourist (3.78), Local People (3.75). The existence of heritage buildings (Figure 1) is the main attraction of this area (Ginting, 2013). It is followed by depth with one of the historic building owners:

"It is important for us to maintain the Area of Kesawan because of the building artistic style diversity, for example, Tjong A Fie House. A feature of this building facade is ranging from the characteristic of Malay, Colonial, until China. It shows the richness of Kesawan Area."

(Key Respondents: Owner of Tjong A Fie House)

Most of the respondents appreciated the existence of heritage buildings and wanted an enhancement through heritage buildings preservation. As following result Area of Deli Sultanate Tourist (4.02), Local people (4.10); Area of Kesawan Tourist (3.42), Local people (4.18); Area of Merdeka Square Tourist (3.97) Local People (3.78) (see Table 1).

Heritage also consists of non-physical (Timothy and Boyd, 2003), including historical stories. Unfortunately, the stories in the area still felt to be low. Nevertheless, the local people felt these stories are good enough whereas this area was formed in the early time of Medan; Area of Deli Sultanate Tourist (3.87) Local People (3.83); Area of Kesawan Tourist (3.70), Local People (4.02); Area of Merdeka Square Tourist (3.70) Local People (3.62) (see Table 1). It is followed by an interview with one of the historic building owners.

"The most important in Area of Kesawan is the stories due to the history in it. For example, the history of Tjong A Fie House that associates with the founding of the Medan City. Moreover, people can narrate it continuously."

(Key Respondents: Owner of Tjong A Fie House)

The non-physical form of heritage often refers as a culture, an essential element in tourism heritage; the values enjoyed by the heritage tourist (Jansen-Verbeke et al., 2005). Unfortunately, most of the respondents felt the cultural activities low, especially at the Area of Deli Sultanate Tourist (3.70), Local people (3.62); and Area of Merdeka Square Tourist (3.53), Local people (3.30) (see Table 1). They assumed the attractiveness of the historic buildings style in this area was not in line with cultural activities to describe the values of its history. Key respondents expressed it through interviews:

"Medan city has not had a cultural celebration scheduled. Furthermore, the unique culture has not yet shown as local tourism objects. In fact, its cultural art is fascinating and unique."

(Key Respondents: Chairman of ASITA (Association of the Indonesian Tours and Travel Agent of North Sumatra Province)

## **4.2 The Nostalgia**

In heritage tourism, unique experience is favored by the tourists. It drives special feeling (fantasy, nostalgia, fun, proud and symbolic self-experience) to the tourists and enable them to distinguish a place with the others. Memory or nostalgia formed and strengthened the relationship between people and the environment (Hashem et al., 2013). Therefore, a place not only requires a physical environment, but it should also able to bring a memory or nostalgia for peculiar experiences.

The questionnaire result showed that the respondents have no personal and unique experiences in the area. Despitethe rich value in the heritage buildings, the tourists feel that their typical experiences or memories in the area were not good, i.e. Area of Deli Sultanate (3.10), Area of Kesawan (3.15), Area of Merdeka Square (3:07) (see Table 1). Only local people own strong perception of their personal experiences in the past; Area of Deli Sultanate (3.88), Area of Kesawan (4.00), Area of Merdeka Square (3.67) (Table 1). It is followed by an interview with one of the respondents.

"I would come to see my relatives in Indonesia. My grandfather used to travel and eat in a restaurant here. Therefore, I also would like to know the experience of the foods and beverages in this restaurant."

(Key Respondents: Chief of North Sumatra INCCA (Indonesian Congress and Convention Association of North Sumatra)

The lack of personal experience could harm the historical value and the relationship between tourists and the area. One way to arrange back the memory of the historical story is to make a story about the historic buildings into a marketing tool (Abdullah et al., 2008; Omar et al., 2013). Stories about famous people that related to a historic building ought to be packed in such attractive form.

## **4.3 The familiarity**

Another physical aspect provides a value of continuity is the walking comfortability. Continuous pedestrians' walkway along heritage objects does support the values of heritage buildings. Certain physical quality, including pedestrian interaction, is indispensable for a heritage tourism area to form the positive perceptions through the character forming elements.

Most of the respondents still assessed the quality and comfort of pedestrians' walkway along the research area was low; Area of Deli Sultanate Tourist (3:58) Local People (3.70), Area of Kesawan Tourist (3:32) Local People (3.92), Area of Merdeka Square Tourist (3:55) Local People (3.62) (see Table 1). Although the tourists tend to use tour buses, they are not satisfied with the existing of pedestrians' walkway. They argued that the quality of this walkway should be improved so they can enjoy the visual experience when walking. This visual experience includes the heritage buildings located along the road or other elements

such as vegetation and patterns of pedestrians' walkway. It is followed by an interview with a respondent:

"But, look at our pedestrians' walkway that is less convenient and disjointed. However, it very supports tourism. Moreover, local people such us also need a safe of pedestrians' walkway."

(Key Respondents: Owner of Tjong A Fie House)

## 5.0 Conclusion

A heritage tourism area has the distinctiveness that differs it from the others. The specificity of heritage tourism can be created from physical or non-physical objects. This peculiarity then becomes the identity of the area. As one of the aspects forming the place identity, continuity consists of values, nostalgia or memory and familiarity.

In the study area, values have a good effect, while familiarity and nostalgia have a low effect. Therefore, researchers argued that continuity aspect does not support in forming the place identity. It is unfortunate because the place identity is precisely the attraction of heritage tourism. Therefore, the nostalgia and familiarity in the area need to be upgraded. For instance, the authenticity of heritage objects must be maintained and well-guarded, an actual heritage stories should be published on a website or other media. Meanwhile, the cultural event should be put on a schedule. All of these efforts are crucial to being done to help develop heritage tourism and at the same time give a good impact on the people's lives. Immediate actions to improve the continuity in the area are necessary. A further more detailed research on how to improve each element of continuity is suggested to gain appropriate expectations.

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