

ASSESSMENT OF FUNCTIONAL AND EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT IN MALACCA RIVERFRONT PROMENADE

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Graphical abstract



Abstract

Physical modifications in urban environment can change the meaning of place, whether positive or negatively. Relationship between physical features and activities in urban environment can create functional dependencies and emotional feeling to place. Functional and emotional pattern in a place will influence the level of place attachment. Considering this issue, the research focused to assess the pattern of functional and emotional attachment in Malacca Riverfront Promenade (MRP), a popular urban space corridor along the Malacca River well-known as the historic promenade corridor located in Malacca, Malaysia. Mixed method is used to identify the pattern of attachment. Questionnaires were directed to 165 respondents and in depth interview were done to 18 street vendors and shop owner. Observation through photographic and written documents of physical features and activities were executed. The findings indicate that the pattern of functional and emotional arises from several indicators which are important for maintain the place attachment.

Keywords: emotional attachment, functional attachment, riverfront promenade, place.

Abstrak

Pengubahsuaian fizikal pada persekitaran bandar boleh mengubah makna tempat, sama ada positif atau negatif. Hubungan antara ciri-ciri fizikal dan aktiviti dalam persekitaran bandar akan membuat kebergantungan fungsi dan perasaan emosi kepada tempat. Corak fungsi dan emosi sesuatu tempat akan mempengaruhi tahap keterikatan tempat. Memandangkan isu ini, penyelidikan dilakukan untuk menilai corak keterikatan fungsi dan emosi di Melaka Riverfront Promenade (MRP), koridor ruang bandar di sepanjang Sungai Melaka yang popular dan terkenal sebagai koridor persiaran bersejarah yang terletak di Bandar Melaka, Malaysia. Kaedah campuran digunakan untuk mengenal pasti corak keterikatan. Borang soal selidik telah diarahkan kepada 165 responden dan temu bual khusus telah dilakukan kepada 18 penjaja dan pemilik kedai. Observasi melalui fotografi dan dokumen bertulis mengenai ciri-ciri fizikal dan aktiviti telah dilaksanakan. Temuan kajian menunjukkan bahawa corak fungsi dan emosi timbul daripada beberapa petunjuk yang penting untuk mengekalkan keterikatan tempat terbabit.

Keywords: keterikatan emosi, keterikatan fungsi, promenad tebing sungai, tempat.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

A robust relationship between functional and emotional in certain places can create meaning, this process known as place attachment. This study argues that physical changes in urban environment can change the meaning, whether positive or negatively. This research responds this issue by using the place-based concepts.

Responding to the issue, research was conducted to determine the pattern of attachment that occurs on the riverfront promenade in the city which is a popular urban space in Malaysia. This study concern to identify the relationship between physical features through the functional needs or relationship between users and special place. Malacca Riverfront Promenade (MRP) was examined in this research, a popular urban space corridor along the Malacca River known as the historic promenade located in Malacca, Malaysia. The objective of this study was to identify the pattern of emotional and functional attachment in MRP. The assumption has revealed that pattern of attachment is determined by the dominant features related through place.

MRP is stretching about 5 kilometers long started from Malacca Creek (near Malacca Square) until Kampung Morten and Spice Garden. MRP is inside of the core zone and buffer zone area of Malacca Historical City. Beautification and conservation projects in Malacca River possibly are able to improve the physical quality of the area. The accessibility to the area is very easily accessed from Admiral Road, Kampung Pantai Road, Munshi Abdullah Road and Bunga Raya Pantai Road. Next to the Malacca Square is a replica of the *Flor de La Mar* sailing ship, which is the focal point of this area. Starting from this node, MRP is outspread into the downtown and accessible for both pedestrian and bicycle on the river bank. This route is available on both sides of the river and has a very good quality.

2.0 Literature Review

Scholars try to explain certain aspects of the human relationship with the environment or studies between people to place. A place is a combination of three aspects comprising activities, concept of place and environment [1], however, a number of studies with various cognitive, affective and conative elements has been emerged [2]. At least three factors need to be considered to understanding a place, such as character of physical environment, function and activity, and meaning or symbols [3]. Place attachment [2], identity of place [4], topophilia [5], the dependence of place [6] is a concept that is often raised in the literature of environmental psychology. Based on the study of human beings and their relationship with the urban environment,

clearly identified that relationship between physical elements and the life in urban fabric created place attachment [2] which has been influenced well-being, quality of life and sustenance.

Place attachment is the main concept in this study. Place attachment is to include positive functional and emotional attachment between the individuals or groups and their environment [2]. Psychological well-being was affected by the accessibility to a place or situation that put pressure on the separation of the place [7] that also affects human conjecture to the place. However, the level of emotional investment to the place indicates the success of an environment to be a place [8]. Place attachment and the related concepts is also as indicators for place distinction that later developed the process of place making and become a sense of place [2] [5] [9].

3.0 Methodology

This research is focus on assessing the pattern of functional and emotional attachment that influence place attachment. Mixed method techniques was applied as research method. Questionare, in depth interview, observation and relationship analysis were conducted to explain the phenomenon of place.

Questionare was engaged through 165 respondents that involved of the mobile users (82) and static users (83). Static user are those people which engage to the place almost every day, such as: shops-owner, shops-keeper and street vendors. However mobile users are those people which engage to the place frequently, such as: visitors, students and local residents who came to visit the place. 18 (eighteen) in depth interview were also carried out to selected respondents in the study area.

Observation is conducted in the case study as a complementary method to produce a more complete exemplification of the widespread functional and emotional pattern of the case study area. In this method, the researchers performed as outside observers (outsider), however collecting the pattern of activity were done through photographic and written documents. Indicator for each issue created for the evaluation is cross examining with the literature.

The relationship analysis through functional and emotional attachment is accompanied to determine their influence to place attachment. In the analysis, the result of study is achieved through triangulation of the data i.e. questionare, interview and observation.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Functional Attachment

The result from questionnaire and in-depth interviews indicated that functional attachment is the strongest attachment. The reaction from in-depth interview (Table 1.0) shows that pattern of functional attachment arises through the length of engagement, level of familiarity, level of dependency, level of satisfaction and comfortable. These findings specified that MRP was significance to support economic and social activity. MRP became dependence place to acquire regular income with high level of commercial opportunities. Satisfaction expressed by availability and diversity of public facilities, streetscape, intensity of visitors and buyers. Physical and environmental comfort is revealed by the level of accessibility and climate protection.

Frequently respondents were satisfied with the improvement of the physical quality of promenade and diversity of products sold inside, which are attractive to visitors. The following respondents respond the MRP:

"Possibly, I do not want to move to another place. This place has good access and a good location, another place was not suitable - there is always people walking around, this place is a pedestrian walkway" (Respondent 02: Hawkers - seven years engagement - MRP).

"I am considering positive about the improvement of quality of this place. Street vendors and visitors were always bursting every day, street vendor sold various kinds of goods and food." (Respondent 06: Visitors - MRP)

"I really like this place, although I have moved to other place, but I always come to visit this place just for strolling and watching people and activity." (Respondent 03: Visitors, 12 years engagement - MRP)

Respondents strongly agreed that public open space and street in MRP are the best place to have fun and organize their activities, however they were decided that the place is very important for them. In-depth interviews indicated that static respondents designate MRP as strong place for their economic dependencies.



Figure 1: More visitors in MRP than any place in the city

Table 1: Functional attachment indicator (in-depth interview)

INDICATOR	PLACE
	MRP
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engagement in the morning through night, social relations and strong attachment of its activities and cultural groups. - Sense of belonging and attachment due to long time of engagement - Committed to routine daily activities. - Relaxing in the outdoor eating area - Attraction of food and special restaurants
Keywords	Frequency, Ownership, Food, Leisure
Familiarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is very familiar with the place. - Can to describe the area, is very good, very image able. - Able to describe in detail the physical changes. - Know any other hawker - Frequently visits and shopping during special events
Keywords	Image, Change, Street Vendor, Event..
Dependency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has control to the space due to his long term engagement - Attachment to the place due to business opportunities - Place chosen for business and society
Keywords	Control, Opprtunity, Business
Satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Satisfied with various facilities and transport facilities - Satisfied with various goods offered at low prices - Satisfied with the place because it attracts many people to visit - Special attraction of food such as noodles and fruit
Keywords	Diversity, Cheap Price, Facility
Comfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comfortable and pleasant stay in the area - A cleaner environment - Happy and comfortable with the place - Comfort access and stroll
Keywords	Clean, Comfort, Access, Walking

4.2 Emotional Attachment

Emotional attachment strongly expressed by static users which are economically reliant to open space and promenade. Emotion is translated into the form of dissatisfaction with the issues which has been arisen in open space. Respondents in MRP expressed dissatisfaction since the scramble of space for street vendors, difference of interests and unsuitable physical changes were appeared. Negative reaction emerged from the static user (legal street vendors)

because to protect their specific space from the threats of illegal street vendors.



Figure 2: Business opportunities by street vendors in MRP



Figure 3: Kampung Morten, positive impression of local character in MRP.

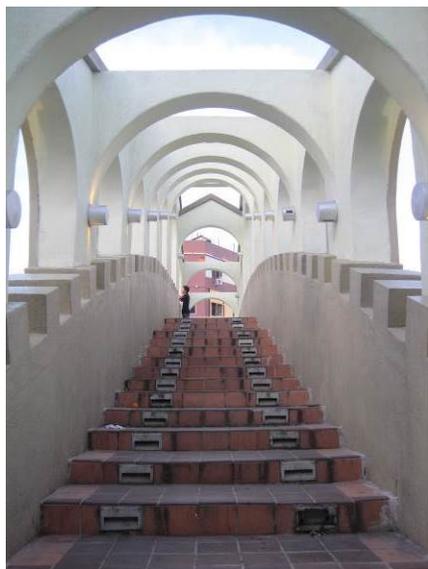


Figure 4: Bridge across the Malacca River, new physical features in MRP.

Table 2: Emotional attachment indicator (in-depth interview)

INDICATOR	PLACE
	MRP
Happiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A festive and happy to be there – Happy and satisfied with the physical changes – Enjoying a busy atmosphere – Happy to see hawkers and street vendors – The more tourists and visitors
Keywords	Livability, Change, Atmosphere, Business
Positive impression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Positive with its place – As a specific atmosphere of open spaces that cannot be found elsewhere – Positive about different atmosphere
Keywords	Characteristic, Atmosphere, Popular
Sentiment-Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Resistance for move the street vendor – Defensive to physical environment changes – Sensitive about physical changes and difficulties – Take care of hygiene – Social relations and strong attachment due to the engagement of cultural activities and similar groups. – Feeling that the place is more suitable for young people and tourists – The cleaner space and well organized
Keywords	Transfer, Stay, Sensitive, Clean, Social affairs, Youth, Tourists
Loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Will not be moved to another place because I feel comfortable and rewarding life in the region – Choosing to settle in the area after retirement due to familiarity – Not willing to move elsewhere due to have a lot of friends – Engagement of its regular visits
Keywords	Comfort, Satisfaction, Familiarity, Frequent visit
Pride	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Proud with Malacca historic sites and notice physical changes in open space – Proud of the popularity of open space and roads to foreign tourists – Proud to the place because of its uniqueness
Keywords	Historical site, Famous, Tourists
Love	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Love the place and know very well about the place – Love the place and want to feel the atmosphere
Keywords	Familiar, Atmosphere

Results obtained from in-depth interviews indicated that sense of positive emotions associated with the atmosphere of open space, streets, activities, character, image enhancements and a physical feature. The following statement shows commitments to open space:

"I am living outside this area, but I really like this place and if possible I want to continue my business here." (Respondent 02: Hawkers, MRP).

Respondent expressed their emotion to describe the familiarity to open space and streets, also the proficiencies of open space and streets to provide choice for leisure:

"I love the atmosphere here because I'm familiar with this place, a lot of choice for leisure and goods with good price." (Respondent 13: Visitors - MRP).

To analyze the emotional attachment of specific place, scholars have developed seven levels sense of place which can be used to recognize the level of attachment [10]. Level of emotional attachment in MRP can be classified at third level, i.e. emotional attachment associated with available meaning. Open space and streets has been preserved as personal and collective experience also the integration of identity with its meanings and symbols to create a 'personality' of place. A strong sense of identity in community strongly feels on the streets which have historical value and modern open space character. The place is characterized by uniqueness and distinct identity from any other place.

Table 2.0 describes the indicators of emotional attachment compiled from in depth interview. Respondents not only share their knowledge of the place but also the sentiment, pride, loyalty and 'topophilia' [5] to place. Their existence is closely linked with a role of place to create a sense of 'belonging' and sense of 'territoriality'. Concerning to place theory, the power of place identity is depending on two factors, i.e.: the available emotional investment made by each people into place and length of engagement with place.



Figure 5: Becak attraction, create special atmosphere in MRP



Figure 6: Caricature drawing attraction in MRP, create both functional and emotional attachment.

5.0 CONCLUSION

In MRP, functional attachment arises through the length of engagement, level of familiarity, level of dependency, satisfaction and comfortable. However, emotional attachment emerges from the knowledge, sentiment, pride, loyalty and love to MRP. MRP can be perceived as the best place which has various choices to support users activities compared with any other areas in the city. MRP is also very important for user's existences as a place for economic-dependence and primary place to acquire income and livelihood. It was concluded that the pattern of functional and emotional attachment has substantial impact to perceive the identity of place in MRP.

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