Exploring Identity’s Aspect of Continuity of Urban Heritage Tourism

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Abstract

Continuity is one important aspect forming identity of a place. This research aims to investigate the influence of continuity in one of the historic corridors of Medan city. It uses three indicators; values, nostalgia, and familiarity. The uniqueness of research area has become an important tourism attraction that generating tourist's quality of life. This research uses mix method, and it shows that the physical aspect; the existence of heritage buildings, the past story is the largest aspect shaping identity. Unfortunately, aspect of familiarity is weak yet majority respondents had a desire to visit this place again in the future.

Keywords: Heritage tourism; place identity; continuity

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the current economic generators, especially for developing countries (Kundu, 2012). Tourism is one of welfare generators or quality of life (QoL) for the local community, both in terms of individual and the general public (Hamzah et al., 2013; Khosravi and Mohamed, 2013). Tourism also aims to improve the tourist’s QoL through various ways such as, resting, relaxing, recreation and even increase the knowledge and insight to the new things (Constanta, 2009). Today tourism grows in line with the increasing of income and quality of global society life, where travelling is a basic requirement. Heritage tourism is the favourite one. Heritage tourism oftentimes mingled with cultural activities, thus enriching more experience. As a result, the heritage tourism becomes the most

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influential and fastest growing (Boyd, 2002). In tourism, one of the most important things is tourist satisfaction. If they satisfied, then they will return. Moreover, they will be a potential marketing tool (Voon and Lee, 2009). In heritage tourism, tourist satisfaction lies in the peculiarities of its region. Therefore, it is necessary creating the tourist perception of heritage elements, would be even better if they create an emotional and psychological relationship between tourist and the surrounding area (Brown, 1992). Distinctiveness are produced both in physical and non-physical elements of the heritage area (Ashworth et al., 2007). The distinctiveness divergence between one place to another and become the main attraction for tourist. A satisfying place integrated with feeling, emotion, and behavior. A satisfying place creates a harmony between the elements of physical, social and cultural and it is affecting the identity of a place. There are four factors influence identity of a place; continuity, distinctiveness, self-esteem and self-efficacy (Brown, 1992).

The purpose of this research is to investigate the effect of continuity in heritage tourism area in Medan City. Aspects of continuity could reshape and maintain continuity of place identity (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996).

2. Aspect of continuity

Continuity is one of the aspects forming the identity (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Its existence can help continuance, reshape, and maintain the identity of a place. For example, the presence of an older building whose existence can help us remember or turning back a memory (Lalli, 1992). Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) defined continuity into two forms; the place-referent continuity and place-congruent continuity. Place-referent continuity means a place can produce continuity aspects, for example: physical forms, which exist in a place, may remind visitors of the stories in the past. Definition of place-congruent continuity is a person that knows his true identity in a place that has the values that he holds in his life, not because of the physical place. Other theory called "elective belonging" when people know for sure themselves with a place. People choose a place because it represents the values, ideas, and lifestyle, not because of its physical form, but rather to the values contained in it (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996). Those values are customs, religion, principle of life, habit or others. In this research, assessed value is the value of architectural heritage buildings, the story and history of the area, and cultural activity of research area. The continuity aspect is an inseparable aspect of the forming process of true identity. There is element of time in sustainability aspect where a place physical character is nothing but more particularly to the values contained therein, the stability of the values espoused and connectedness one person memories (memory, nostalgia, experience). This research had specified three indicators to notice the continuity aspect that is forming the research area identity, such as values, nostalgia or memories, and familiarity (see Figure 1).

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Fig. 1. Aspect of continuity in research.
3. Research’s methodology

This research used mix-method. A qualitative method conducted by doing observation based on Jansen-Verbeke's urban tourism elements. Then, researchers also did depth interviews with nine key respondents who are tourism stakeholders, such as artist, association of travel tours, and the heritage buildings owners. The quantitative method conducted by distributing questionnaires from 360 respondents that divided into two categories, as following 144 domestic and foreign tourists (with a ratio of 40:60); and 216 local communities. Ashworth (2009) defined tourist as one who are on vacation and local people as a person who do not take a vacation.

All data will be analyzed by triangulation method. Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed together and concurrent to get a general idea and to deal with causative factors. Descriptive analysis was generated by SPSS version 20 and provided in tables and figures using Microsoft Word, and Excel. One obstacle in the field that limits this research is the language issue. Many foreign tourists, especially tourists from Netherlands and China, did not speak English.

This research took place in the heritage area of Medan, stretching from the Malay region to the Dutch colonial zone. Many heritage buildings exist in this area, showing three influential authorities in the past (Dutch, Chinese and Malay). Researchers categorized this area into three parts i.e. Sultanate of Deli; Chinese shop houses around Kesawan and buildings inherited from Colonial around Merdeka Square. In fact, this area (as shown in Figure 2) is a popular heritage tourism object that is very attractive to the tourists. Many heritage buildings exist in this area, such as buildings with Malay’s character namely Maimoon Palace, China Shophouses, and buildings with Art Deco Style and Renaissance (Ginting, 2013).

Fig. 2. Research area.
4. Research’s findings

Based on the result of 360 questionnaires, obtained data that as 51% were female and as 49% were male with age range 24-49 years as 54%. Several similar studies supported this data, which also found that female tourists were visiting heritage attractions more often than male.

The number of respondents who have a background undergraduate education at 51% was Bachelor Degree, and 16% were Master Degree. Thirty-five percent (35%) of respondents have an average income of over 7 million rupiah (IDR) per month. These findings support similar research that found that tourists, who visited heritage objects, were those that tended to have higher education (undergraduate). Tourist with higher education tend to have a curiosity towards something bigger so that they tended to find out our answer the curiosity by visiting the heritage objects (Ginting, 2013). In addition, 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 the amount of 7%, 6%, 5%, 4% respectively. This finding is consistent with the statistical data of Medan City in 2012. It stated that in the last three years, there are an increasing number of tourists visit from Malaysia, Singapore, China and the Netherland. The Climate of Plantation Business and the Alliance Cooperation of IMT-GT are the two contributing factors of the increasing of Asian tourists. Meanwhile, tourists from Dutch due to the factors in the past, especially during the colonization, besides they are also interested in the culture and ecology of the Asian country.

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

Table 1. Elements of continuity in research area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facts</th>
<th>Area of Deli Sultanate</th>
<th>Area of Kesawan</th>
<th>Area of Merdeka Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local People Tourist</td>
<td>Local People Tourist</td>
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<td>Min</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>I am very amazed at the style of the art of historic buildings in this place</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>I am very amazed at the historical stories in this place</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>I am very impressed with the culture celebration in this place</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>It is interesting to see the old buildings keep well maintained.</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Pedestrian passages may help maintained the condition of the old buildings</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>I am very impressed with the memories of the past</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Value Format : 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree

3.81 | 0.73 | 3.69 | 0.75 | 3.97 | 0.73 | 3.42 | 0.82 | 3.62 | 0.71 | 3.60 | 0.87 |
5. Research’s findings

5.1 The values

Respondents’ perceptions regarding the uniqueness of the existing heritage building in research area need to be investigated to determine how large the influences of physical in making the attractiveness to the respondent. Shuib et al. (2008) stated that the physical form of the heritage objects can provide its value or special meaning to the tourists. It also occurs in the town of Malacca and Pulau Pinang in Malaysia, which is the two of most popular heritage tourism destinations in Malaysia. Preservation of historic buildings in both city and several other towns in Malaysia has been able to make a heritage tourism activity continue to this day (Azhari, Mohammed, 2012).

The same thing found in this research where respondents were amazed by the existence of heritage buildings in the research area. They were very impressed with the uniqueness of 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 Maimoon Palace, Tjong A Fie House, a row of Chinese Shophouses, and a row of heritage buildings inherited from the Colonial’s era namely London Sumatera, Post Office and City Hall (Figure 1) are the main attraction of this area (Ginting, 2013).

This result of an interview with one of the historic building owners described it:

“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. However, he also said that the historic buildings around this area also have different characteristics.”

(Key Respondents: Owner of Tjong A Fie House)

Almost all of respondents thought that they appreciated the existence of heritage buildings. Respondents also want an enhancement through the preservation of heritage buildings in those areas. 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 including art, music, dance, literature, theater, martial art, language, the daily life, traditions and folk stories (Timothy and Boyd, 2003). One of the non-physical forms is the historical stories. The research area stories felt by most of the tourist respondents are still low. Almost all of 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).

The heritage buildings configuration along the research area describes three existing authorities during the early time of formed of Medan, i.e. Colonial, Chinese, and Malay. Thus, it is not maximized perceived by tourists. In addition, the result of an interview with one of the historic building owners stated the importance of the historical value in this place.

“The most important in Area of Kesawan is its historical stories as well as the forming of its building because people can remember and narrate it continuously. For example, the history of Tjong A Fie House that associates with the founding of the Medan City.”

(Key Respondents: Owner of Tjong A Fie House)

The non-physical form of heritage often refers as a culture. Culture is an important element in tourism heritage; culture is the values enjoyed by the heritage tourist (Jansen-Verbeke et al., 2005). The majority of 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).

Almost all of the respondents assumed the attractiveness of the historic buildings style in this area is not in line with cultural activities that can describe the values of its history. It was expressed by key respondents through interviews, as follows:

“Medan city has not had a cultural celebration scheduled. Although there is a Ramadhan Fair, a festival that held every year and for a month. Ramadhan Fair is more attractive to the local communities and local tourists. The unique culture has not yet shown as local tourism objects. In fact, its cultural art is very interesting and unique.”

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

In heritage tourism, one thing that favored the tourists is the unique experience that provided in the heritage tourism area. It produces a special feeling (fantasy, nostalgia, fun, proud and symbolic self-experience), and also enable one to distinguish a place with the others. Memory or nostalgia is one of the factors that forming and strengthening the relationship between a person with the environment (Hashem et al., 2013). A place not only require a physical environment, but also able to bring a memory or nostalgia for peculiar experiences. A place may increase the quality of the tourist experience in tourism activity, in which they get the benefit of a social-psychological.

Based on the questionnaire result about their perception of memories in the past, apparently they have a bad experience, 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 have a 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). Personal experience is mostly a memory when they visit the research area to enjoy the culinary at several restaurants that are still functioning or memory when they are walking enjoying the scenery around the Merdeka Square. The Personal experience was felt by the key respondents through interviews as follows:

"At least, when I saw my grandfather descendant in Indonesia, I would come. As I have heard from the owner of Restaurant of Tip Top that said, my grandfather often eats here. If we have a history of descent, of course, we would like to know. He used to travel and eat 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))

A place with many historic buildings is an alive and dynamic place, full of meaning and experience. It can produce a magnificent relationship with those who visit it. Lack of personal experience was not in line with the significant values of the historical value of research area. As a result, the relationship between tourists with research area is not intertwined. Supposedly, someone cognition observations of the physical environment that rich in historical value will increase and strengthen as the existence of these historic buildings.

We asked respondents' perceptions of the memories of the research area. It turns out that the respondents’ perception (respondents from outside the area and foreign) about the typical experience or their memories of the past was not good; Area of Deli Sultanate (3.10), Area of Kesawan (3.15), Area of Merdeka Square (3.07) (see Table 1).

Local people have a 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) (see Table 1). Personal experience is mostly a memory when they visit the area to enjoy the culinary at several restaurants that are still functioning or memory when they are walking around enjoying the scenery around the Merdeka Square.

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). It is useful to create a story about the birth, childhood, and school of a famous writer in a town or the stories of other famous people that related to a historic building. These stories ought to pack in such attractive form. Therefore, it can be interesting information for the tourist. The tourist argument was confirmed by the result of interviews with the key respondents, as follows:

"I am happy to come to Maimoon Palace and Grand Mosque. I always remember the memories with my family. Since we often pray in that Mosque, it reminds us the glory of the past of Malay kingdom as well as my childhood memories. So far I still enjoy these moments. If visit Medan, I will go to this place, take a walk, take photos and also pray at that Mosque. It is purely to remember the past."

(Key Respondents: Descendants of Deli Sultanate).

5.3 The familiarity

There are other physical aspects that may provide a value of the place identity continuity, which is the comfort of walking while enjoying the heritage objects that exist in the heritage tourism area. Continuity of pedestrians’ walkway along heritage objects will be able to reinforce the values of heritage buildings. Certain physical quality is indispensable for a heritage tourism area in order to form the positive perceptions through the character forming
elements. Trees, building facades, user density, land use mix, rail and pedestrian interaction, configuration and context include in that physical quality.

To determine familiarity, researchers asked respondent’s perception of walking comfort along the heritage buildings. Almost all of the respondents complained about the quality and comfort of pedestrians’ walkway along the research area; 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 respondents, who came from outside the area and also foreign, tend to use tour buses, overall, they (local people, tourists outside the area and foreign) are not satisfied with the existing of pedestrians' walkway. Respondents argued that the quality of this walkway should improve because the good quality of pedestrians' walkway will allow them being able to enjoy the visual experience when walking. Visual experience in the research area is the heritage buildings located along the road, but it may construct from other elements such as vegetation and patterns of pedestrians' walkway. This is consistent with the result of an interview with one of the heritage building owners in the research area:

"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)

According to the tourism theory of Jansen-Verbeke, pedestrians' walkway is included into the category of additional elements, such as entry access and parking. The infrastructure facilities availability, such as roads or public facilities includes a comfortable pedestrians' walkway are also an indicator of QoL. A good physical environment is part of the community welfare which is one of the elements that were affecting their QoL (Jusoh et al., 2013).

6. Conclusion

A heritage tourism area has the distinctiveness that differ it from the others. The specificity can be created either because of the existence of physical objects or objects of the heritage non-physical; even this peculiarity is the place identity of this area. Continuity is one of the aspects forming the place identity, which consist of values, nostalgia or memory and familiarity. In this research, three aspects have a different effect. Values have a good effect, while familiarity and nostalgia have a low effect. Therefore, researchers argued that continuity aspect of the research area does not have a large role in forming the place identity. It is unfortunate, because all the elements, that forming the place identity, should be mutually supportive and equally play a role in maintaining it, and it is precisely the attraction of the heritage tourism. The place identity is also one thing that may a new thing or knowledge for tourists. Furthermore, they can add knowledge and quality of tourism activities. The element, that were forming the nostalgia and familiarity, need to be upgraded, for example, the authenticity of heritage objects, an actual heritage stories published on website and calendar of culture event. Maintain and enhance the place identity of a place in heritage tourism is crucial to be done in order to survive and increase as well as give a good impact on the local people welfare.

In addition, researchers suggest the actions immediately to improve the continuity of the elements. Researchers recommend for further research on how to improve the continuity of the elements to strengthen the identity of this research area. The strong place identity will be the biggest capital to develop the activity in that place; of course, it will be a great impact on the local people welfare.

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