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“Digitalising Sarawak Translational Research”

The 11th UNIMAS Research & Development Exposition 17-18 July 2018

PULLMAN HOTEL, KUCHING

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Tourist Expectation on UNESCO World Heritage Sites  
Brand Signals in Malaysian Historical Cities

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This paper is intended to unfold the UNESCO World Heritage Sites (WHS) Brand Signal's functions and expectations by tourists. The brand identity which include the 'visual appearance and communications' is reflected through the brand owner, which in this case is the WHS brand. In 2006, the UNESCO Creative Cities Network which was convened in Santa Fe, New Mexico highlighted that the term 'creative tourism' as “travel directed towards an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage, or special character of a place, and it provides a connection with those who reside in this place and create this living culture” [1]. Since the inscription on Melaka and Georgetown’s Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca in 2008, there have been development of conservation and management plans and structure to maintain the World Heritage Sites in the UNESCO list. Thus, in the empirical investigations conducted at the historical cities in Malaysia such as Melaka and Georgetown, varieties of signs and signals were found. Figure 1 shows an example of Street Maps that illustrate the WH emblem as symbol of UNESCO's WHS.

In this study, the researchers randomly interviewed the tourists around the core zones at both locations as there are more activities and signages found. The interviews were transcribed and themes were identified according to the tourist expectation model. Recognizable signages or wayfinding systems around the core zones were also identified and documented. The images were analysed according to the locations and type of sign design.

Figure 1. Street Map of Melaka and Georgetown Historic Cities

There are four main factors that determine the ‘Tourist Expectations’ when traveling; destination image, past experience, word of mouth and external communication [2]. For the purpose of this study, the participants were interviewed at the UNESCO designated zones in Melaka city and Georgetown within five days of data collection. The questions are relevant to the model of tourist expectation as can be seen in Figure 2.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was funded under the UNIMAS Special Grant Scheme F03/SPGS/14(2)/15(11).

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