

URBAN ACCOMMODATION FOR BACKPACKERS AT
JOHOR BAHRU CITY CENTRE

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Specially dedicated to my beloved Bonda and Ayahanda.

Thank you Allah S.W.T. for everything.

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ABSTRACT

Majlis Bandaraya Johor Bahru planned to transform Johor Bahru City Centre into a 'Vibrant, Cultural and Sustainable City of International Standing' to attract more tourist to Johor Bahru. For that reason, several parts they should consider included tourist accommodations management sector for a variety of groups. Due to the increment of land value has caused the hotel owner rise up the hotel price rate to make sure their Return of Investment (ROI) achieved. Because of that, low budget tourist accommodations at the area which most desired by backpackers were very limited. The aim of this study is to investigate the available tourist's accommodation around Johor Bahru City Centre (JBCC) that preferred, suitable and affordable for backpacker. The objectives is to investigate the type of accommodation preferred by the backpackers, to identify the accommodation needs, and to investigate the activities that the backpackers prefer to do. Research methodology used is unstructured interview, site survey, observation, and case study. The data collection was conducted at Johor Bahru City Centre area which is close to the tourist attractions area and transport stations. The results showed there were only 10 units of accommodation suitable for backpackers. Budget hotel were found to be the most preferred choice among backpackers at Johor Bahru. The main reason was the offer of promotional prices especially during events of public holidays. Thus, still have others type offered cheaper price which is hostel and guesthouse but the location become the main factor during the accommodation selection. They need accommodation for a break and mingle with local people and also other backpackers.

ABSTRAK

Majlis Bandaraya Johor Bahru merancang untuk mengubah Johor Bahru City Centre menjadi '*Vibrant, Cultural and Sustainable City of International Standing*' untuk menarik lebih ramai pelancong ke Johor Bahru. Oleh itu, pihak kerajaan perlu mempertimbangkan beberapa aspek termasuklah sektor pengurusan penginapan untuk pelbagai golongan pelancong. Oleh kerana kenaikan nilai harga tanah di bandar Johor Bahru telah menyebabkan pemilik hotel meningkatkan kadar harga hotel untuk memastikan (*ROI*) mereka tercapai. Oleh kerana itu, penginapan pelancong bajet rendah dimana yang paling diinginkan oleh *backpacker* di sekitar bandar Johor Bahru adalah sangat terhad. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menyiasat tempat penginapan pelancong di sekitar Johor Bahru City Centre (JBCC) yang sesuai, berpatutan dan menjadi pilihan *backpacker*. Objektifnya adalah untuk menyiasat jenis penginapan disukai oleh backpackers, untuk mengenalpasti keperluan penginapan, dan untuk menyiasat aktiviti-aktiviti yang *backpacker* lakukan di penginapan mereka. Kaedah penyelidikan yang digunakan adalah temubual tidak berstruktur, tinjauan tapak, pemerhatian dan kajian kes. Kaedah ini dijalankan di Johor Bahru City Centre terutamanya kawasan yang berhampiran dengan kawasan tarikan pelancong dan stesen pengangkutan awam. Hasil kajian menunjukkan terdapat hanya 10 unit penginapan pelancong yang sesuai untuk *backpacker*. Hotel bajet adalah yang paling digemari *backpacker* kerana sentiasa menawarkan harga promosi terutama semasa festival atau cuti umum. Mereka memerlukan penginapan untuk berehat sebentar dan beramah mesra dengan masyarakat dan juga lain-lain *backpacker*.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Study

Tourism sector was made a catalyst for economic improvement for Johor Bahru. It was recorded that tourism sector contributed 60% of Johor Bahru economy (Iskandar Regional Development Authority and Majlis Bandaraya Johor Bahru, 2013). Johor Bahru history have shaped and influenced the social structure, social background and character of the country. There are many characters or elements that make this city unique which is best experienced through its people, arts, culture, food, lifestyles, and tradition. Because of that uniqueness, it is become the advantage to the Johor Bahru government by took action with planed the transformations of Johor Bahru City Centre into a ‘Vibrant, Cultural and Sustainable City of International Standing’ (Iskandar Regional Development Authority and Majlis Bandaraya Johor Bahru, 2013). This initiative is to maintain the city's role as the capital of Johor, providing economic activities, life in the city and the local community amenities while preserving and enhancing the values of identity and heritage. Urban tourism defines as tourism at urban area offered the different lifestyle, behaviour, cultural activities, heritage, and leisure. Urban tourism is essential to the world-wide form because it is part of economic asset for the country. Tourists visit the city for a variety of reasons, it is government or any parties’ responsibility to involved in providing facilities and amenities for tourist and at the same time to promote the tourism city. Tourism can

play a big role in the regeneration of the city, there are different approaches to towns and cities can use to regenerate their communities through tourism (Craggs, 2008).

Land use changes is the main phenomena that often occur in urban area where transform the green spaces to urban development area. Land use change is due to the population growth, increment economic and technological movement (Norliyana Adnan, 2009). Therefore, land use changes cause the incensement of land value at Johor Bahru especially at Johor Bahru city centre where effect the local resident socio-economy and life style. Urban resident need to generate the profit from urban area for their economy stability by involvement on economy sector. In Johor Bahru, 47% land use for economical use, 39% for non-economical use, and 14% for roads and transports use (Majlis Bandaraya Johor Bahru, 2012). Preserving the cultural and heritage values is the key of development strategy for the regeneration of Johor Bahru into a vibrant economic centre. The values of the heritage and cultural are important for the urban element that give the soul and character for the area. Therefore, the land use in urban areas is constantly changing according to the time changing and the current demand.

Accommodation is important to the visitors where they need appropriate place to stay and take rest if they visit Johor Bahru city either for vacation, business or other purpose. The retail, hospitality, and transport become main business sector that can spread and gain more income from the sector. Tourist had choose what the affordable accommodation for them either choose the type, rate, or the accommodation conditions. The choices factors are different for difference tourist background. High profile tourists or visitors with purpose visit for business matter, they not much care about the price because it is paid by company. It is also same goes to international tourist from country that have higher currency value than Malaysia. This situation different from the backpackers who budget-minded, they prefer the budget accommodation like hostel, budget hotel, bed and breakfast or motel. They normally not care much about the comfort but they really care about the cheaper price.

Accommodation business challenges arise when they need to consider the return of investment (ROI) on budget accommodation due to the high land value at urban area. Refer to Pawar (2014), to make good return of investment (ROI) should be look for different way. Multi-use development approach one of another way to successful

hotel ROI. Provide more facilities and tourists need on accommodation. By this way, hotel development become large and cost such as real estate cost, construction costs and others are can be shared by other investors and make the hotel project more viable. He said also that, this multi-use development is the way to budget accommodation survives on hotel market.

1.2 Problem Statement

In recent year, backpacker tourism becomes a trending tourism style. Backpacking style provides another option for tourists to experience the views on the vacation. In Malaysia, backpacker evolution has progressed and there is a potential market for this sector. Therefore, it is a must to create strategies to establish a sustainable future for the sectors either by foreigners or citizen's themselves. Upgrade accommodation service become part of market strategies to provide the backpacker needs and facilities especially at attractive area that have many opportunities for market development.

The increase in price of the land value in Johor Bahru had caused the hotel owners to raise the profit in their business. Because of that, low budget tourist accommodations at the area which most desired by backpackers were very limited. The demand for tourist accommodations may increase when Johor Bahru turn into tourism city. Based on current situation, there are several hotels in Johor Bahru city centre that offer different rate prices. However, there are only a few low budget accommodations available for backpacker.

1.3 Research Aim

The aim of this study is to investigate available tourist's accommodation around Johor Bahru City Centre (JBCC) that preferred, suitable and affordable for backpacker at urban area. This study also to get better understanding of the backpacker accommodations types, condition, and environment at city area.

1.4 Research Objectives

- i. To investigate the type of accommodation preferred by the backpackers at urban area.
- ii. To identify the accommodation needs of the backpackers.
- iii. To investigate the activities that the backpackers prefer to do at or around the accommodation.

1.5 Research Questions

- i. What type of accommodation preferred by backpackers?
- ii. What is a backpacker needs for an accommodation?
- iii. What kind of activities that the backpackers prefer to do?
- iv. What they concern about an accommodation?
- v. What are the backpackers purpose travelled in urban areas?
- vi. What is the backpacker expectation of low budget accommodation at urban area?

1.6 Scope of Study

The scope of the study is focused on urban accommodations for tourists available at Johor Bahru City Centre area that offered low budget price rate which is suitable for international and local backpackers.

1.7 Significance of Study

The significance of the study is to prove that Johor Bahru still has a lower number of budget tourist accommodations which suitable for various groups and types of tourists who come to Johor Bahru City Centre. This study can help the government by take action to increase and provided the adorable accommodations for low budget tourist especially near to the attractive area and public transport hub area. Better understanding about the backpacker should have before provides the accommodation for them. Backpackers have unique characters compared with normal tourist. So the study about the backpacker characters help researcher to identify which accommodations types, condition, and environment were desired by the backpacker at urban area.

Besides that, this study also help the researcher to come out with better solution for the accommodation and also Design Thesis issue which is cultural issues at Jalan Tan Hiok Nee, Johor Bahru City Centre. Jalan Tan Hiok Nee was gazetted as Heritage Walk because of the heritage and cultural value at the area but local community seem does not aware about that because of less of attraction that can express the uniqueness of the area especially during daytime. Because of that, this study are very important to generate best outcome and solution for those issue which is can provide the accommodation preferred by the backpacker and also can solve the cultural issue at the area (refer to Appendix). One of the characters backpacker is very excited about the new experience and the attracted to the sense of community of the local people. So, the understanding about the backpacker are very important to make sure integration between backpacker and cultural activities potentially become an attraction for other community or tourist to get involve and join the cultural activities. The results from Design Dissertation used to obtain the best outcome at Design Thesis (refer to Appendix).

1.8 Expected Findings

From this study, it is expected that preferred accommodation types for the backpackers are based on their background. Muslim backpackers especially female are very particular about their 'aurat' at accommodation that given some privacy for them. Consequently, their needs are different in terms of privacy room, separated from male room and others. Expected finding, they more preferred to stay at budget hotel who design with separated room and individual bathroom. This is different compared with international backpacker who not really care about the privacy that much because they more emphasis to mingle together doing some activities together.

There are some differences between urban accommodation of budget hotels, hostels and guesthouses, whether in terms of design, service, price and amenities offered. The difference in the type and location also affect the activities of backpacker accommodation where every kind of facility that has offered almost the same but there are some differences such as lobby area for budget hotel are difference with guest house lobby were more like living room area. These differences become the factors of accommodation selection among backpacker. Backpacker priority is a place for them to relax either in the long or short term depending also on the type of the backpacker. There were backpackers who stay in one place for long term to study or deeply learn a local culture. There is also backpacker who comes to travel and experiencing many types culture and mingles with the several communities, this backpacker type usually stay in a place entirely for short term.

In this study also proved that Johor Bahru city area still not enough accommodation for backpacker where provided cheaper price rate especially around the Johor Bahru Sentral as the public transport hub. Because of high land value at urban area, most Johor Bahru hotel is expensive even though it is called as budget hotel. This study expected use to integration design with other function that also can gain building income so the accommodation rate can be cheaper because other function can also gain the building income.

1.9 Structure of study

The structure is divided into five main chapters. Chapter 1 is about the introduction of the overall research which is the delivers and overview of the study. This chapter includes the background study, problem statements, research aim, research objectives, research questions, scope of study, and significance of study, expected findings and the structure of study.

Chapter 2 is about the literature review that provides a comprehensive study about the backpacker profile, backpacker characters, backpacker tourism, and backpacker accommodations. This chapter discussed further about the backpacker and urban accommodation by describe its definition, types, activities, behavior and others related topics.

Chapter 3 describe the research methodology used in this study. Detail explanations about the methodology will explain on how, when, where and what the methodology used for. This chapter is important for the researcher to understand and to be clear about the structure process of the research.

Chapter 4 is the platform of the data collection findings from the research analysis. Discussion about the data and findings are synthesised in accordance to the literature review as a reference. Data were analysed into chart and graft form to show the differences between the data.

Chapter 5 concluded all the research findings and data where it is achieved the research objectives. This chapter also present the possible recommendations and strategies to the future work about the urban accommodation for backpacker at urban area.

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