THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN CITY CENTRE FOR REVITALISATION
(CASE STUDY: JOHOR BAHRU CITY CENTRE)

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THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN CITY CENTRE FOR REVITALISATION
(CASE STUDY: JOHOR BAHRU CITY CENTRE)

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
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DEDICATION

To my beloved mother, who is 95 years old  
For her unwavering love and support

To my beloved sisters and brother-in-law  
For their moral support and help

To my beloved partners and friends  
For their constant support and encouragement

Thank you.
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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, city centre is the heart of social and economic activities of a city. However, rapid developments and changes in the traditional retail and commercial activities on the periphery of the city can lead to a decline of the city centre as a retail and commercial centre. In Johor Bahru (JB) city centre, the decline of the city centre was mainly due to the degradation of the quality of life, the land use pattern, the characteristics of the retail and commercial activities and provision of public facilities and amenities. One effort that can be undertaken to circumvent the downturn is to revitalise the quality of life (QoL) in the city centre. To this effect, the exercise requires both public and private sectors involvement in the urban management program. The first objective of this study is to identify the main factors that affect the quality of life in city centre revitalisation and the second objective is to identify the most appropriate urban management model for revitalisation. The study scope was focused on the shoppers, merchants, public agencies and non-profit organisations in JB city centre with a total 270 of respondents. The data needed in this study are collected by self created questionnaires and conducted through face to face method. Collected data was analysed using the frequency, cross tabulation, means and thematic analyses. The finding revealed that safety, public hygiene, good public transportation system and public maintenance are the most important issues that need to be addressed in order to provide a better quality of life for its dwellers. The result also suggest that 42% of the merchants and 93% of the public agencies and non-profit organisations selected Business Improvement District (BID) as the most appropriate model for revitalisation compared to Town Centre Management (TCM) or National Main Street Programme (NMSP). They believed that BID is financially independent, and can provide better services, promotion and marketing to improve the business environment of city centre to remain competitive. This study would serve as an important reference to the city council, local government and private and non-profit organisations in the development of partnership to get involved in marketing and revitalising the city centre.
ABSTRAK

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Traditionally, the city centre functions as a major source of employment and businesses. It is also a centre for government administrations, culture, heritage, tourism and home to many residents with social amenities such as parks, hospitals, schools, cinemas, and museums (Goh Ban Lee, 2002; Hernandez and Jones, 2005; Warnaby et al., 2005). However, due to their physical structure, land use pattern, increasing car ownerships and rapid growths in the population, the city centre has expanded its periphery and created sub-centres (Buang Alias, 1993). In the longer term, such concentration eventually affects the long-term health of the city centre, such as degradation of quality of life, traffic congestion, increase in crime, vandalism, pollution, and decrease in resources (Buang Alias, 1993). As a result, the city centre has emerged as an unfortunate symbol of decline.

In the 1990s, the city centre decline was considered an important topic of research on both side of Atlantic (Tiesdell et al., 1996). In the US and UK, the economic decline of the city centres is so visible that many scholars have recognised that the economic decline of the city centre is one of the most serious problems that needs immediate attention (Foiser and Berger, 1982; Warnaby and Davies, 2005). In the case of Johor Bahru, the decline of city centre has become an important concern in the local government agenda. MBJB conducted two studies, the Urban Revitalisation and Conservation Inventory (URCIP) in January 2005 and the Urban
Revitalisation and the Conservation Action Plan (URCAP) in November 2005. These indicated that our city centre is in decline, especially in the CBD and the old town (*Presint Tengah* and *Presint Bandar Raya Lama*).

The reasons for decline as cited in the two studies are the land use pattern, the image of city centre, the building conditions, characteristics of the commercial and retail activities in city centre and the provision of public facilities and amenities (URCAP, 2005).

### 1.2 Problem Statements

Johor Bahru is the third largest city in Malaysia with a total population of 1.4 million, which is expected to grow to 2.2 million by 2020 (Draft Local Plan of Johor Bahru, 2020 and Economic Report, 2005/2006). Population growth has put a strain on the facilities whereby urban dwellers are demanding more efficient and effective provision of facilities.

Based on the studies conducted by MBJB, one of the factors that caused the decline of the city centre is the land use pattern. The priority of land use in Johor Bahru city centre is mainly for roads 45.35% and commercial purposes 36.86%. Only a relatively small percentage of 0.10 to 0.12 is allocated for residential purposes and industrial use (as shown in Appendix A). This indicates that the city centre’s activities are more focused on infrastructure and commercial purposes (URCAP, 2005). In other words, the city centre does not have enough population to create the critical mass to support these activities. The population growths in MBJB is only 2.2% compared to MBJBT’s expected growth of 4.71% (Draft Local Plan of Johor Bahru, 2020). This indicates that the concentration of population is located mainly out of the city centre.

The effect of rapid growth rate of population in MBJBT has created an increasing demand for housing. It is therefore witnessing massive mixed residential,
commercial and industrial developments outside these areas. This has caused a significant impact on the traditional retail format of the city centre. For example, most of the hypermarkets are located in the outskirts of Johor Bahru, such as Jaya Jusco in Permas Jaya and Tebrau City, Plentong Giant at Pelangi Lesuire Mall, and Carrefour in Sutera City.

Another factor is the image of the city centre. The physical appearance of the city is important as it represent the core characteristic, identity and image of the city. But looking around in Johor Bahru city centre, most of the buildings were constructed in the 1950s and 1980s. The majority 53% of the holdings in the city centre are classified as being in fair condition. However, 13% of holdings, especially along Jalan Trus, Jalan Siew Nam, Jalan Ungku Puan and Jalan Dobby, are in bad condition and 32% of the holdings are considered good (URCIP, 2005) (as shown in Appendix B). There are only a few modern commercial buildings, namely the Public Bank Building, Landmark Building, Persada Johor Convention Centre and Puteri Pan Pacific Hotel, and two major shopping centres, namely, City Square Shopping Centre and Kotaraya Shopping Centre.

It is noteworthy that despite the state government and city council efforts to improve the physical landscape of the city centre image through the “Johor Bahru Beautification Project” which was completed in 2005 (MBJB Annual Report, 2005), there are many critics from the business people and urban dwellers of the entire project. The place is still far from what was promised or expected. This is partly because of the uncooperative attitude from the individual holding owners, independent merchants and public. For example, many owners of the historic buildings neglected to maintain the premises and are letting them either deteriorate or become under-utilised. In some cases, the attitudes of merchants and business people appear apathetic and they make little effort to improve the shop-front design, for instance, to renovate the building and improved the physical appearance of the building to make the shop look more attractive to pedestrians and shoppers.

Another factor is the public facilities, which include the pedestrian walkways, benches, bus stops, traffic lights and street light, waste collection, street cleaning,
trimming of trees and so forth are among the most common complaint by the general public (MBJB Annual Report 2000 - 2005). The purposes of public facilities are to provide essential support to pedestrians and vehicular traffic and to help buildings function more effectively. It appears that the public improvements system did not help in supporting the functions and visuals of the city centre’s buildings and users.

The pedestrian walkway along the old town suffers from a lack of proper maintenances and has different in sizes, where certain paths are wider and others very narrow (URCIP, 2005). Furthermore, the road pavement is not designed to facilitate the physically handicapped as numerous obstacles, such as lamp posts, trees or plants are located on the pavements. In many cases, even if facilities were provided, they are left unused or occupied by homeless people. In contrast, no benches are provided along Jalan Wong Ah Fook, which is considered the high street in the city centre (URCIP, 2005).

Public transport facilities such as bus stops and taxi stands are very important factors for visitors, and a comfortable and strategic location would encourage more people to use public transport. However, there are only four locations where bus stops and taxi stands are available in the city centre: Jalan Ungku Puan, Jalan Wong Ah Fook, Jalan Tun Abdul Razak and Jalan Ibrahim. These facilities are not provided in other parts of the city centre (URCAP, 2005). As a result, visitors prefer to drive rather than use public transport.

Provision of pedestrian crossings is also important in the city centre. According to the traffic count in the URCIP 2005 report, there were 1,834 cars passing along Jalan Wang Ah Fook, 14,016 cars passing Jalan Tun Abdul Razak and 1,031 cars passing Jalan Trus per hour. However, there is only one pedestrian bridge along Jalan Tun Abdul Razak, two traffic lights along Jalan Wong Ah Fook and one traffic light at Jalan Trus. The ineffective and inadequate provisions of basic public facilities are large risk factors to pedestrians.
For many urbanites in Malaysia, traffic congestion is one of the major problems that contribute to the decline of the cities. Since most of the road networks in the Johor Bahru city centre were created before the modern modes of transport, the roads are either narrow or have too many junctions within a short distance. Although most of the roads in the city centre have been improved or upgraded, with the increasing car ownership rate (Hasim Mat and Jamel Ariffin, 2005), and being a centre for government administration, a commercial centre, an entry point to Singapore and with a large employment working in city centre (Gurcharan Singh 1996; Hasim and Jamel, 2005; and NST, 16 April 2006), heavy congestion is caused during the peak period in the CBD. This results in considerable economic and social losses to the commuters and communities in general (Gurcharan Singh, 1996). In 2004, about 110,000 vehicles entered Singapore daily, according to YB Freddie Long Hoo Hin (Utusan Malaysia, 21 September 2004).

In order to divert traffic away from city centre, the state government has taken serious measures by constructing a new Customs Immigration Quarantine Centre (CIQ), and relocating the government administrative centre to Bandar Nusajaya (URCAP, 2005). It is estimated the traffic flow to CBD areas will decreasing to approximately 16.42%, once the CIQ is in operation (URCAP, 2005).

The increasing car ownership means that drivers will demand more parking spaces. In the city centre, only 8.36%, or 13.87 acres of the land, is meant for car parking (as shown in Appendix A). The only street parking available is found along Jalan Ibrahim, Jalan Dhoby, and Jalan Trus. However, off-street parking can be found mainly in the commercial buildings and open car parks operated by private entities. In some areas, no on-street parking spaces are available, for example, Jalan Tan Hoik Nee, Jalan Meldrum, and Jalan Siew Nam (URCAP, 2005).

Provision of safety in the city centre is the main concern to many Johoreans. The Social Report and Quality of Life Index 2007 indicated that increasing crime rate, such as snatch thefts, car thefts and vandalism in Johor Bahru is getting worse. The crime rate in Johor Bahru was the highest, with 13,649 cases 68.8% out of a total of 15,679 cases in Johor State. Amongst all, property crime such as snatch thefts,
motorbike and car thefts and vandalism have improved. But serious crimes such as rape and arm robbery have increased 34.48% and 17.65% respectively. As remarked by Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, the Senior Minister of Singapore, Johor Bahru is “notorious for shootings, muggings and car jacking” (Goh Ban Lee, 2002). There is no doubt that crime and street violence in Johor Bahru have become a physical strain to most Johoreans. Even though measures such as safety campaigns and installation of CCTV cameras in high-risk areas were implemented in the city centre, many Johoreans still feel that the city is not safe.

Another major concern to most Johoreans is the flood problem. For example, the flood in December 2006 caused extensive damage to properties and road systems in the CBD. The causes of the flood, besides heavy rain, were partly because of the chocked drains, poor urban design and badly constructed drainage system, i.e. the undersized drainage system that was built in the 1950s and 1980s (Goh Ban Lee, 2002). The flood-prone areas are located along Jalan Air Molek, Jalan Tun Abdul Razak and Jalan Yahya Awal (NST, 20 December 2006). A number of studies have been carried out with the aim of alleviating flooding problems in various locations in Johor Bahru. However, despite the millions spent on flood mitigation measures, many areas in the city centre still suffer from floods.

The decline of city centre is not merely due to the factors mentioned above. The characteristics and nature of businesses and services offered in city centre also play an important role. According to studies (URCIP, URCA, 2005), the characteristics of the businesses in city centre are classified into two categories, formal and informal activities. Formal activities are those activities that are carried out at proper and designated locations. However, the informal activities are those activities carry out at the back lanes, or walkways (“kaki lima”). For example, the hawker stores at the back lane of Jalan Meldrum, Jalan Stesen and Jalan Siu Chin (URCIP, 2005). Retail businesses in city centre are mainly those traditional family businesses. For instance, in Jalan Tan Hoik Nee, Jalan Duke and Jalan Trus, the types of businesses offered are mainly supplies of stationery, bags and textiles, or sundries shops, photo shops and Indian Muslim coffee shops and others. There is
hardly any activity in this area after office hours, during the weekends or public holidays (UCIP, 2005).

From the statement above, it can be concluded that the main factors that are important and concern to the city dwellers are basically the changes in land use pattern, the movement of population shifting to outskirt of the city centre, the physical image of the buildings, lack of public amenities such as; proper bus stop and taxi stands in the city centre. Poor maintenance of public facilities such as dirty street, poor sidewalk, dirty toilets, poor landscape and street light were also highlighted. Other areas of concerned are social problems associated with the crime, snatch thief and vandalism, poor traffic, insufficient parking and good entertainment, retail outlets also among the main factors contributed to decline of city centre. Therefore if the city centre wants to attract business and visitors, it is important that the city centre is safe, clean, interesting and offers a wide choice of merchandise, in addition to well-established entertainment and leisure facilities. When the city centre becomes more interesting and where entrepreneur opportunities exist, people will move back to the city centre. Recently, researches have shown signs of increasing interest of the population moving back to the city centre to live and work (Gratz and Mintz, 1998), particularly those young people who have decided that the security of working for others is a thing of a past, and will try to use their skills to venture into business and start up their own company. For them, the city centre is their priority choice. This mirrors the choice of baby boomers, and empty nesters who want to enjoy more leisure time and are looking for a quality lifestyle such as good entertainment outlets, cinemas, theatres and restaurant facilities, which are all normally found in the city centre.

1.3 Research Questions

This paper focus on what are the factors that are important to revitalise the city centre and which urban management models are the most appropriate to implement in Johor Bahru city centre.
Based on the following issues to form the basis for the research questions:

1. What are the main factors that affect the quality of life in city centre revitalisation?
2. Which urban management models is the most appropriate for Johor Bahru city centre? Is it Town Centre Management, Business Improvement District or National Main Street Programme?

1.4 Research Objectives

Based on the problems mentioned above, there are two research objectives:

1. To identify the factors that affect the quality of life for city centre revitalisation.
2. To identify the most appropriate urban management model for revitalisation.

1.5 Significance of Study

The findings of this study would be useful to the following groups of urban actors:

I. City Council (MBJB) and Local Government

In Johor Bahru, the city centre management is monopolised by the city council. It is important for management of MBJB to understand how they can cooperate and coordinate with other urban actors in order to help the city centre achieves its goals. The knowledge and enterprising skills from the private sectors could help the local authorities have a better understanding of the local communities’ needs, particularly the commercial sectors. The Local
council and authority had the power in legislation and expertise in working in partnership with other organizations as well as existing contacts; this expertise would be invaluable to private entities. The local authority can work with businesses to improve the safety, cleanliness and marketing of an area. This will benefit not only the businesses but all those who live in, work in and visit the area. Moreover, it could reduce the cost of services, such as the police or fire rescue team and advertising and promotional campaigns. In addition, it would help to protect the property values and infrastructure investments in the city centre. It also would help to enhance the local government revenue tax base.

II. The Private Sectors

This study would serve as a guideline to the private sectors to allocate their expertise, time and funding to the city centre, where they can bring up their ideas and innovations to help run and manage the city centre that would eventually benefit them. The involvement of the private sectors in city centre management could bring tremendous benefits to the business, in terms of pedestrian flow, business volume, expanding to a larger customer base, improving their public image and overall goodwill.

III. Non-Profit Organizations

The study would provide an opportunity for the Non-Profit Organisations in participating in the development/planning of the city centre. The involvement of the Non-Profit Organisations could help to improve the city planning and development in terms of preservation of historical buildings and public realm. In the mean time the organisations can help to developed activities, programmes for the youth and local community to participate, creating job and training for the local community. The organisations can also help to promote and joint hand with the private or public sectors to create industry training to the youth and un-fortunate children. In return, the organizations could attract more new members and developed partnership
programmes with others in joint projects which benefit the city and its community.

1.6 Scope of Study

The purpose of this study is focused on the Johor Bahru City Centre, and the scope of study is focused on the quality of life, public-private-partnership urban management models in managing the city centre. The information of this study is used to identify ways to manage the city centre urban management so that the city centre can become more sustainable and vibrant.

In order to have a better understanding of local government functions, this study shows the organisation structure of MBJB, their functions, activities, funding and their financial status and the decision-making process. Therefore, this study only shows the problems and limitation faced by MBJB before 2009 and problems identified after this date would not be included in this study. The feedback and information gathered from primary and secondary data in this study would help MBJB to improve their quality of services and provide a better quality of life to its urban dwellers.

1.7 Limitation of Study

This research is conducted only for the Johor Bahru city centre. The concept of the public-private-partnerships scheme in the urban management is new to Malaysia. Many urban actors have no knowledge of its operation and management of the three models that presented to them. Hence, this research can only be adopted or implemented with strong support from the public and private sectors, non-profit organisations, local communities and individuals. Without support from all parties, implementation of the programme could face many problems, such as funding and expertise, particularly when the city council is running in deficit.
1.8 Methodology of Study

The flow of the study is categorised into theoretical and empirical aspects. Each aspect contains several steps involved in the study process. The flow is depicted in the flow chart (Figure 1.1) below.
1.8.1 First Stage: Identify the Problem Statement and Objectives of the Study

The first stage mainly concentrates on identifying the problem statement, the objectives, significance, scope and limitations of the study. The idea for the problem statement was taken from observations, recent media coverage and two studies conducted by MBJB regarding the city centre’s problems and issues.

1.8.2 Second Stage: Theoretical Research

The second stage is the theoretical review. In this stage, the study emphasises on gathering theories that are relevant to the study. The focus for this stage is to understand the key issues mentioned in this study. These key issues are the city’s life cycle, quality of life, urban management models, public-private partnership and the Johor Bahru city centre case study.

To achieve the first objective, the review of Quality of Life, Public-Private Partnership and Johor Bahru Case Study which provided useful information of the factors that affected the revitalisation will be presented. To achieve the second objective, the review of the three different urban management models, that are the BID, TCM and NMSP, will be presented to establish which the most appropriate model for revitalisation is.

The relevant materials for the literature review are academic publications, books, dissertations, journals, government agencies reports and publications. These materials will assist in understanding the background of the study from various perspectives.
1.8.3 Third Stage: Conduct Empirical Surveys to Gather Data

There are two types of data which have been gathered to gain a better understanding for this study. In order to achieve the first objective, the primary data will be collected from respondents; meanwhile, the census and other data are gathered from the relevant government agencies, including MBJB, MBJBT, Property Market Report and others.

Primary Data

The primary data for the studies have been collected through field surveys, through questionnaires given to three different groups of urban actors. In order to achieve objectives one and two, the list of questionnaires used for this interview is attached in Appendix D to F. The feedback of the questionnaires will provide a clearer picture of the business environment and health of the Johor Bahru city centre. The main questions asked to the urban actors mainly focused on:

i) The factors that affect the city centre and
ii) The quality of the MBJB services delivery, and
iii) The improvement that they expected from the city centre, and
iv) The appropriate urban management model to be implemented in Johor Bahru City Centre.

1.8.4 Fourth Stage: Data Analysis

At this stage, the data and information collected from the third stage will be scrutinised and selected to glean the relevant data for the study. In order to achieve the first objectives of the study, three types of analysis will be performed: the Frequency Analysis, Cross-Tabulation Analysis and Mean Analysis. On the other hand, in order to achieve the second objective of the study, the data derived from the structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires, the study utilised the quantifying method. In this method data was informally quantified according to the frequency of responses occurring and was then sorted and categorised into smaller
sets of abstracts or conceptual phrases. These conceptual phrases were then allocated numerical values and percentages according to the frequency of responses and entered into scoring matrices.

1.8.5 Fifth Stage: Suggestions, Recommendations and Conclusion

The outcome of the analysis will be used for a final discussion regarding the revitalisation of the city centre. Suggestions and recommendations from different urban actors would also be stated at this stage. The suggestions and recommendations are related to the Johor Bahru city centre and the conclusion is to tie up the relationship between the problem statement and objectives of the study.

1.9 Chapter Layout

The report writing of this study consists of six chapters. The breakdown of the chapter layout is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

An overview of the study, covering problem statements, objectives of study, scope of study, limitations, methods of study, chapter layouts and expected results.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review focuses on the key issues that are of interest to this study. In this chapter, the theories and concepts of the city life cycle, quality of life, public- private partnerships and urban management models by different authors were adopted.
Chapter 3: Case Study of Johor Bahru City Centre

The background of the case study of the Johor Bahru City Centre. A brief discussion of the physical, social and economic condition of Johor Bahru, followed by the structure of MBJB, its organisation, functions, activities, funding and decision-making process are included in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

This chapter discusses in detail the methodology of the study, commencing from literature review to methods and techniques adopted to produce the information needed in this study.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis

All the primary data collected from the questionnaires are analyses in order to achieve the objectives of the study.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings from the analyses in the previous chapter were revealed. The conclusion derived from the findings and recommendations for further studies are provided.
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