

Adaptive Reuse of Heritage Buildings as Hotels in Melaka and George Town - UNESCO World Heritage Cities

Lilawati Abdul Wahab*

Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch, Seri Iskandar Campus, 32610 Seri Iskandar, Perak, Malaysia

Noraini Md Zain

Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch, Seri Iskandar Campus, 32610 Seri Iskandar, Perak, Malaysia

Zaiwanizar Zainal Abidin

Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch, Seri Iskandar Campus, 32610 Seri Iskandar, Perak, Malaysia

Mohd Hafiz Saberi

Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch, Seri Iskandar Campus, 32610 Seri Iskandar, Perak, Malaysia

Norbaizura Abu Bakar

Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perak Branch, Seri Iskandar Campus, 32610 Seri Iskandar, Perak, Malaysia

Abstract

The most visible and neglected heritages nowadays are heritage buildings which are widely available throughout the country. As the number of heritage building have been decreasing day by day, peoples' consciousness has begun to arise. Many heritage buildings have been conserved for various purposes. In general, with their attractive features, most conserved heritage buildings will be adaptive reused as museums, offices, restaurants, residences, business premises and other public use thus becoming one the focal of tourists' attractions. However, the approach in adapting and conserving heritage buildings in Malaysia are not practiced with the right concepts and methods. This research is conducted to assess the adaptive reuse works that have been implemented on the heritage buildings as hotels specifically in Melaka and George Town UNESCO World Heritage Cities. The hotels which are adapted from heritage buildings have been specifically identified and questionnaires surveys have been performed to the respective owners or managers in order to obtain their responses thus arriving to a more accurate research result. Several findings have been obtained which will help in promoting adaptive reuse works in the future.

Keywords: Adaptive reuse; Heritage buildings; Melaka and George Town.



CC BY: [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

1. Introduction

Adaptive reuse of heritage buildings is a part of the conservation processes. It is a wise move to ensure that a building or heritage legacies or heritage buildings are conserved, given a new breath and is best suited to its intended function. Adaptive reuse of property is concerned with converting buildings into other, more effective and efficient uses (Douglas, 2006). It is also a step in defending the legacy of ancient heritage from vanishing over the time. Adaptive reuse is a process whereby a building which is modified to its new function which is completely unlike the original one. Orbasli (2008) stated that adaptive reuse is a process by which the building is modified for new usage and consequently abandoning its old function. Usually it requires some modifications to the building to ensure that the building can meet the requirements of the new building's function as required by the owner. Generally, adaptive works involved conservation, modification, repair, retention and correction works. It needs to be comprehensively planned to ensure that the adaptive reuse of the building will be fully optimized. According to Cantell (2005), as an alternative, adaptive reuse offers a sustainable building site with the existing infrastructure and materials on site.

Heritage building adaptation work is a work of modifying the function of a building from its original function. In carrying out adaptive reuse work, the limitation of the works must be carefully observed especially for heritage buildings located in the UNESCO World Heritage Site Conservation Zone. Adaptation of heritage buildings in this area must be conserved in accordance with the conservation principles and conservation guidelines provided by the respective Local Authorities. Based on Department of National Heritage (2017) conservation principle must comply with four aspects which are to remain the authenticity of material, design, workmanship and plan of building.

2. Scope of Research

This research will focus on heritage buildings that have been adapted as hotels. Concentration will be given to two heritage cities that have been listed as world heritage city by UNESCO. To limit the scope, the research will only focus on the core zone and buffer zone of the city. This research is expected to provide a broader picture and understanding on the issue of adaptive reuse and conservation of heritage buildings as hotels to support the heritage conservation and heritage tourism industry in Malaysia.

3. Research Objectives

The objectives of the research are to investigate more about adaptive reuse of heritage buildings as a hotel in Malaysian's heritage cities. The objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the hotels with adaptive reuse principles in Melaka and George Town UNESCO World Heritage Cities
2. To analyze the type of heritage buildings which are suitable to adapt as hotels in Melaka and George Town UNESCO World Heritage Cities.
3. To assess the levels of adaptive reuse of heritage buildings as hotels that have been practiced in Melaka and George Town UNESCO World Heritage Cities based on the principles of building conservation.

4. Literature Review

As stated in the Burra Charter, adaptive reuse is rehabilitating or renovating heritage buildings or structures for any uses other than the present uses (Australian ICOMOS, 1999). When a building can no longer function with its original use, adaption is the only way that a building's fabric heritage significance can be preserved and maintained (Bullen and Love, 2011). According to Worthing and Bonds (2008), adaptive reuse allows structures to retain their historical values while providing for the occupants' modern needs. Through changing certain elements of a building, an ecclesiastical structure can become a commercial structure, a commercial structure can become a residential building and a residential building can even become an ecclesiastical structure (Bullen and Love, 2011). Highfield (1987) has identified the reasons for the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings such as, short construction times, economic advantages, approvals from authorities, gazetted building laws and the advantages of heritage building designs. Adaptive reuse also one of the methods to sustain the heritage buildings. Adaptive reuse extends the lifespan of the building and reduces demolition waste and its carbon footprint (Tan *et al.*, 2018). Adaptive reuse is the best way to ensure a heritage building continues to be used (Chandler, 1991; Larkham, 1996).

Heritage is a legacy and witness from the past of the man-made environments that represent the cultural history and cannot be duplicated or replace once lost (UNESCO., 1972). According to Ab Wahab *et al.* (2016) if the heritage buildings are located within the UNESCO World Heritage Site conservation zone, then the adaptive reuse works will be more complex. Each conservation area has different guidelines but essentially still in the same basis such as actions that can and should not be done in conservation work (Othman, 2006). This is because there are laws governing by the authority to protect the heritage buildings especially if they are over 100 years old. These Acts are to ensure that such buildings are conserved from being damaged or altered in arbitrarily. Despite the re-adaptation concept, however, the importance of the principle of conservation needs to be emphasized when the work is done to avoid the many changes made for the heritage building. According to Parnell (1987); Fielden (2000), four aspects of authenticity need to be considered and practiced as outlined by the International Center for Study on Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (1982). These four aspects are authenticity of building materials, design, workmanship and layout of the building. In accordance with the conservation principle, the practice of building conservation should maintain as much as possible the original building structure and fabric (Harun, 2011). According to Lukito and Rizky (2018) besides not complying with the act, problems that often arise in the process of conserving heritage buildings are physical changes of the building which are inconsistent with values that the building has before such as emotional, cultural and use values.

Adapting heritage buildings to hotels is one of the choices to adaptive reuse of heritage buildings in historic cities (Ab Wahab *et al.*, 2016). It is a smart move in optimizing the use of heritage buildings. Properly managed and maintained historical buildings can reduce the number of vacant buildings; create viable business district and employment, as well as attract visitors (Rani *et al.*, 2017). The adaptive reuse of heritage buildings to hotels is a customization without the need to build a new building for the purpose of the hotel industry. The adaptation is a two-pronged point where customization works not only save heritage buildings from extinction but indirectly helps the hotel and tourism industry in Melaka and George Town and Malaysia in general. According to Worthing and Bonds (2008). Heritage buildings that are traditionally styled often have the environment and uniqueness of high-quality architecture and this is the main attraction of tourists to visit the building and the city. With the growing interest in heritage tourism, destinations and hospitality providers have recently invested resources in redeveloping and renovating heritage hotels (Yoo and Lee, 2015). The success of heritage hotels will give a lot of good impact to historic city such as high economic returns to various parties, travel agents, tour operators and owners of the premises.

Figure-1. Sample of hotels from adaptive reuse works of heritage buildings in Melaka and George Town



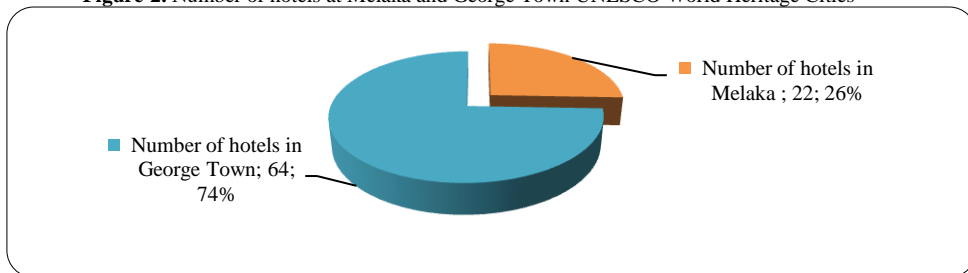
5. Research Methodology

The methodology used for this research is quantitative method where it is perceived to be able to yield the best results in accordance with the objectives of the research. This research comprises of several stages, starting with theoretical work, pilot study inventory and followed by conducting a questionnaire. The pilot study inventory was conducted to identify the number of hotels from adaptive reuse works of heritage buildings in Melaka and George Town. The questionnaires have been distributed to the owner or manager of the hotels to get their responses on the problem raised. The questionnaires approach is found to be more effective because respondents can express their opinions without having to deal with researchers. The data from questionnaires obtained were then analyzed using SPSS computer software to get the more accurate results.

6. Data Analysis

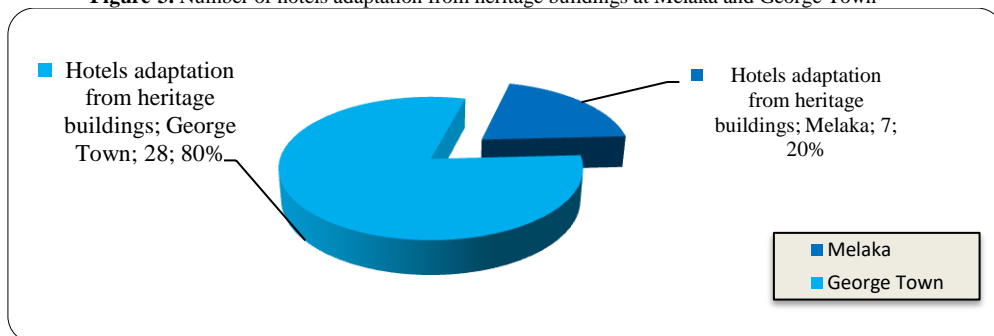
Data analysis is one of the key elements in every research because all the obtained data from primary sources and secondary sources are raw data that has not been processed. First stage data analysis is performed to analyze primary data derived from inventory survey on number of heritage buildings that have been adapted as hotels in core and buffer zones of Melaka and George Town. It was found that there were 86 numbers of hotels with 22 hotels or 26% hotels are in Melaka and the rest of 64 hotel or 74% hotels are in George Town. This evident that George Town has the capacity of the hotel three times higher than Melaka although basically George Town is only a half-width bigger area than Melaka.

Figure-2. Number of hotels at Melaka and George Town UNESCO World Heritage Cities



As a result of a survey conducted on 86 hotels located in the core and buffer zone of Melaka and George Town UNESCO World Heritage Cities, 35 hotels are adaptations from heritage buildings. Out of the 35 hotels, 7 hotels are located in Melaka while 28 other hotels are located in George Town.

Figure-3. Number of hotels adaptation from heritage buildings at Melaka and George Town



In terms of hotel category, there were 3 hotels or 4% hotels are backpackers, 68 hotels or 79% hotels are budget hotels, 1 hotel or 1% hotel is 1 star hotel, 2 hotel or 2% hotel is 2 star hotel, 4 hotel or 5% hotel is 3 star hotel, 2 hotel or 2% hotel is 4 star hotel, 1 hotel or 1% hotel is a 5 star hotel, 5 hotels or 6% hotel is a boutique hotel and lastly 0% hotel are on motel category. Budget Hotel was the most hotels can be found in both of the cities.

Table-1. Category of hotels located at Melaka and George Town

Category of Hotel	Number of Hotel	Percentage (%)	Min	Median	Mode
Hostel (Backpackers)	3	4	3.63	3.00	3
Motel	0	0			
Budget Hotel	68	79			
1 star Hotel	1	1			
2 star Hotel	2	2			
3 star Hotel	4	5			
4 star Hotel	2	2			
5 star Hotel	1	1			
Boutique Hotel	5	6			
Total	86	100			

The next data analysis was conducted to assess original function of the heritage buildings. The total number of original buildings that practiced adaptive reuse as hotels in Melaka and George Town UNESCO World Heritage Cities are 35 number. The original functions of buildings that have been transformed as hotels are 31 shop houses and 4 mansions. Thereafter, none of the institution, administration and commercial building has been adapted as a hotel.

Figure-4. Type of buildings that has been adapted as hotel in Melaka and George Town

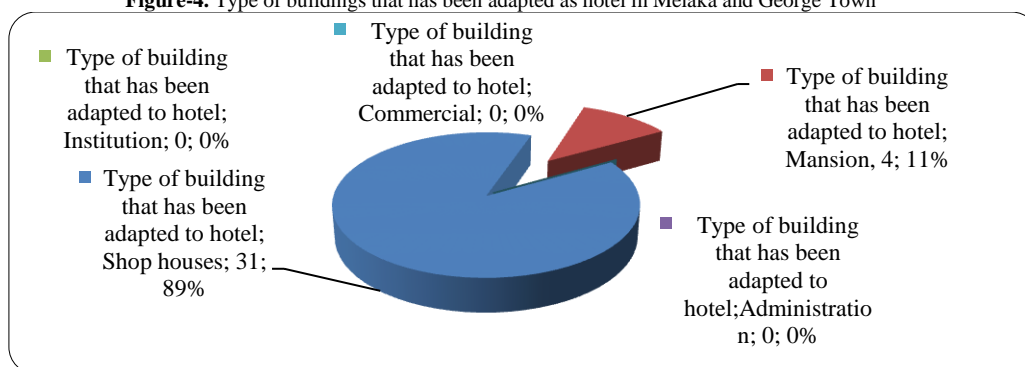
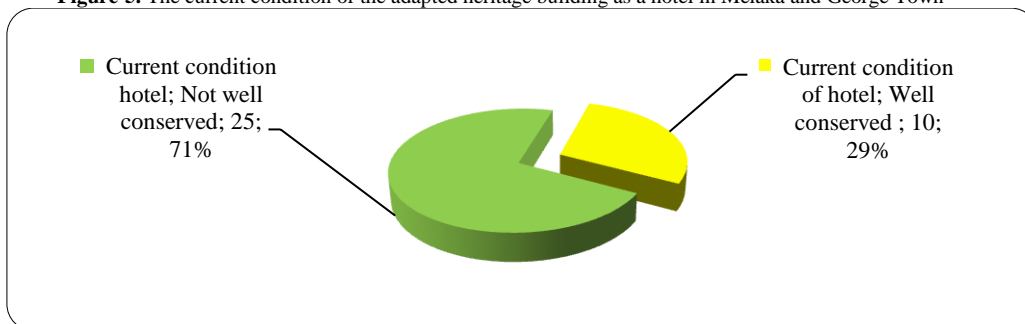


Figure 5 below showed the current condition of 35 numbers of hotels in Melaka and George Town. It was found out that 10 hotels or 29% hotels were well conserved and the remaining 25 hotels or 71% hotels are not well conserved.

Figure-5. The current condition of the adapted heritage building as a hotel in Melaka and George Town



Assessment of the level of heritage buildings adapted as hotels in Melaka and George Town is the main objective to be achieved in this research. Analysis was conducted based on the primary data obtained. In order to facilitate the assessment of the level of adaptive reuse of heritage buildings, an indication of the level according to the principle of conservation of heritage buildings has been provided where these indicators are based on the likert scale. The level of conservation principle followed in adaptive reuse of heritage building as a hotel is divided to 5 different levels as shown in Table 2.

From the analysis carried out to the 35 hotels in Melaka and George Town, it was found that the level of adaptation according to conservation principles was satisfactory, with 9 hotels or 26% hotels had been successful in making adaptive reuse works accordingly, followed by 8 hotels or 23% of the hotels were found to be less satisfied. Subsequently, a total of 7 hotels or 20% hotels were found to be very satisfied, while 6 hotels or 17% hotels have moderate satisfaction and only 5 hotels or 14% hotels are just doing unsatisfied reconciliation level of adaptation.

Table-2. The level of conservation principles practices in adaptive reuse works of heritage buildings as hotels in Melaka and George Town

Scale (Percentage%)	Level of conservation principles practices in Adaptive Reuse Works	Number of hotel	Percentage
0%-19%	Unsatisfied	5	14
20%-39%	Less satisfied	8	23
40%-59%	Simple satisfied	6	17
60%-79%	Satisfied	9	26
80%-100%	Very satisfied	7	20
Number of hotels		35	100

From the analysis it can be concluded that the level of adaptation according to the conservation principles undertaken at the Melaka and George Town World Heritage Cities is simply satisfied. This is based on a mean of hotel percentage with simple satisfied, satisfied and very satisfied levels with conservation principle achieved 50% of the total hotel.

7. Conclusion

Adaptive reuse of heritage building as a hotel in Melaka and George Town UNESCO World Heritage Cities is a smart move as the hotel industry is in great demand in the world's both tourist centers. Most property owners and property developers are beginning to realize the potential value of adaptive reuse of heritage buildings rather than build new buildings. This can be seen in terms of cost to carry out the adaptive reuse work itself. It is usually 50-80% lower in cost than building a new building and will save a lot. Melaka and George Town UNESCO World Heritage Cities have 86 number of hotels with 35 of them are the results of adaptive reuse works. Shop houses and mansions are the most heritage buildings adapted as hotels in these areas reason being the location of the buildings are in the heart of the city centers. Shop houses are the most buildings that have been adapted to hotels compared to mansions. The interior layout, architectural design and interior design still retain to the original features of the heritage buildings. This research has also achieved its primary objective by identifying the levels of conservation principle practice in adaptive reuse of the heritage buildings. From the assessment done, the results are a bit overwhelming because the principle of conservation practiced in the adaptive reuse work is very modest. Unless certain actions and steps are taken, the possibility of an adaptive hotel to lose its privilege and become indistinguishable to another conventional hotel is likely to happen.

The findings of this research are expected to be used as a source of reference that will assist in the development and adaptation of heritage buildings in Malacca and George Town UNESCO World Heritage Cities in particular and Malaysia in general. Apart from that, the findings are also expected to be indirectly contributes to the Malaysian society in which the existence of heritage buildings adaptation effort as hotels can extensively prevent the existing heritage buildings from being extinct and continues to be the gaze of the next generations.

References

- Ab Wahab, L., Mohd Hamdan, N. A., Lop, N. S. and Mohd Kamar, I. F., 2016. "Adaptive re-use principles in historic hotel buildings in melaka and george town." In *Matec Web of Conference*.
- Australian ICOMOS (1999). *The Burra Charter, The Australia ICOMOS Charter for places of cultural significance*. Australia ICOMOS Incorporated: Victoria.
- Bullen, P. and Love, P. (2011). Factors influencing the adaptive re-use of buildings. *Journal of Engineering Design and Technology*, 9(1): 32-46.
- Cantell, S. F. (2005). The adaptive reuse of historic industrial buildings, Regulation barriers, Best practices and case studies.
- Chandler, I. (1991). *Repair and renovation of modern buildings*. McGraw Hill Inc: London.
- Department of National Heritage (2017). *Guideline on heritage building conservation*. Department of National Heritage: Kuala Lumpur.
- Douglas, J. (2006). *Building adaptation, butterworth-heinemann, heriot watt university*. 2nd ed ednEdinburg, United Kingdom.
- Fielden, B. M. (2000). *Conservation of historic buildings*. Architectural Press: Oxford.
- Harun, S. N. (2011). Heritage building conservation in Malaysia, experience and challenges. *Procedia Engineering*, 20(2011): 41-53.
- Highfield, D. (1987). *Rehabilitation and Re-use of Old Buildings*. E & FN Spon Ltd: London.
- International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (1982).
- Larkham, P. J. (1996). *Conservation and the City*. Routledge: London and New York.
- Lukito, Y. N. and Rizky, A. N., 2018. "Collecting memoris of the city through the conservation of heritage building. Iop conference series, Earth and environmental science."
- Orbasli, A. (2008). *Architectural conservation*. Blackwell: Oxford.
- Othman, M. I. (2006). Garis Panduan Konservasi Monumen Warisan Negeri Melaka. Bengkel Konservasi Monumen dan Tapak Tanah Bersejarah, 27-29hb. November 2006, Melaka.
- Parnell, A. C. (1987). *Building legislation historic building*. The Architectural Press Ltd: London.
- Rani, P., Putri, C. and Devina, A. (2017). Transforming heritage building for commercialization. *Journal of the Malaysian Institute of Planners*, 15(13): 135-46.

- UNESCO. (1972). *7th session at general conference concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage*. Paris, France. New York: United Nations.
- Worthing, D. and Bonds, S. (2008). *Managing built heritage. The role of cultural significance*. Blackwell Publishing: Oxford.
- Yoo, K. and Lee, W. (2015). Use of facebook in the US heritage accomodations sector: an exploratory study. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 10(2): 191-201.