



PLANNING MALAYSIA:
Journal of the Malaysian Institute of Planners
VOLUME 20 ISSUE 3 (2022), Page 25 – 36

HIGHLIGHTING THE POTENTIAL OF KAMPUNG KUCHAI, IPOH, PERAK THROUGH A HERITAGE TRAIL

**Nadiyanti Mat Nayan¹, Nur Huzeima Mohd Hussain², Suriati Ahmad³,
David S Jones⁴, Ismail Hafiz Salleh⁵**

*^{1, 2, 3, 5}Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying
UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA (UiTM), PERAK BRANCH*

*⁴Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
GEELONG VIC 3220, AUSTRALIA*

*⁴Monash Indigenous Studies Centre
MONASH UNIVERSITY, CLAYTON VIC 3800, AUSTRALIA*

Abstract

Kampung Kuchai was founded in 1900 by Toh Puan Saripah Rodziah and her husband; Seri Adika Raja Wan Mohammad Salleh. It is claimed that the Kampung Kuchai settlement was the starting point of the City of Ipoh. During its glorious time, Kampung Kuchai comprises a house of worship (mosque), Malay mansions, rows of shophouses, schools, and a government clinic. Hence, to restore the identity of Kampung Kuchai, this project applied a cultural heritage-based trails approach to identifying elements left in this kampong by using site observation and questionnaire survey. The site observation shows that some buildings and spaces are still worth conserving. The survey conducted among the local visitors of the Old Town of Ipoh helps to identify the visitors' favourable needs in establishing a successful heritage trail of Kampung Kuchai. Through appropriate actions taken from all parties involved and considering findings gained by the surveys, the heritage assets of Kampung Kuchai will consistently be recognized and appreciated. Introducing a new heritage trail of Kampung Kuchai could help promote the culture and uniqueness of this place.

Keywords: Heritage trail, Cultural heritage route, Kampung Kuchai, Malay heritage-enclave

¹ Senior Lecturer at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). Email: nadiy028@uitm.edu.my

INTRODUCTION

Kampung Kuchai, Ipoh, Perak is an early Malay settlement in Ipoh, and the second settlement after Pengkalan Pegoh. This kampong is located next to Sungai Kinta (Sungai Genta) and adjacent to Kampung Paloh. Kampung Kuchai existed around 1900 with the construction of the Masjid Panglima Kinta in 1898 and increased population density in Kampung Paloh. During the colonial era, Kampung Kuchai and Kampung Paloh were known as the ‘Malay Settlement’ and later called ‘The Wealthy Malay Enclave of Ipoh.’

Located strategically in Ipoh, these 10 hectares of land is one of the last few undeveloped sections of Ipoh that has caught the attention of property developers. In 2021, it was estimated the land value of Kampung Kuchai to reach RM1 billion based on its location and historical significance of the area. From the *Redevelopment Plan of Kampung Kuchai* under the *Special Area Plan of Ipoh 2020*, Kampung Kuchai will be redeveloped into a mixed-use development of commercial, tourism, and residential area (Jabatan Perancangan Bandar dan Desa, 2012). If what has been planned in the *Special Area Plan of Ipoh 2020* continues, it is afraid that Kampung Kuchai will slowly ‘disappear’ from the map of Ipoh. Hence, it is crucial to conserve and preserve the ‘originality’ of Kampung Kuchai to ensure the glorious history of Kampung Kuchai is restored as it is part of the historical value of Ipoh.

Thus, this project aims to promote the historical, cultural, and uniqueness of Kampung Kuchai in Ipoh, Perak by implementing cultural heritage-based trails in the area. Through the right approach, the identity of each building and historical site in Kampung Kuchai can become a new point of attraction for visitors to visit this heritage enclave.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The heritage trail is a new phenomenon in promoting the uniqueness of space and indirectly contributing to the socio-economic of the area. As highlighted by Timothy and Boyd (2015), there are four critical purposes of heritage trails: (i) promoting preservation and conservation of historical values by educating the general public about place history; (ii) enhancing a city’s image or a sense of place; (iii) fostering economic development through their promotion as tourism experiences, and (iv) achieving political aims. Heritage trails help preserve historical value, conserve cultural resources, and allow visitors to feel the past and present. Hence, a successful design cultural resource-based route could offer memorable experiences, cultural education, public enjoyment, and recreation for residents and tourists (Timothy & Boyd, 2015).

A uniquely designed heritage trail should help visitors experience a place through well-told stories. Types and categories of heritage trails vary depending on “length, location, and scope, from short, city-center walks, to extended hikes, scenic drives, and international trade routes” (Cantillon, 2020).

Therefore, every heritage trail will be different, depending on the story, place, and it could create empathy between people from different times, cultures, and places. Hence, a heritage trail helps to enhance the value of place, creates a learning atmosphere, and builds identity and a sense of place.

Based on Timothy & Boyd (2015), there are six stages of the evolution of routes from original tracks to developed routes (Figure 1). An original cultural trail could evolve “spatially, temporally, and purposefully from its original functions into more generalized touristic roles” (Timothy & Boyd, 2015, p. 22). The evolution portrays the need to include considerable public enjoyment, recreation, cultural activities, and other suitable image enhancement (New South Wales Heritage Office, 1995; Timothy & Boyd, 2015). The point of attractions along the trails and how the elements are portrayed are crucial as part of successful indicators for a heritage trail.

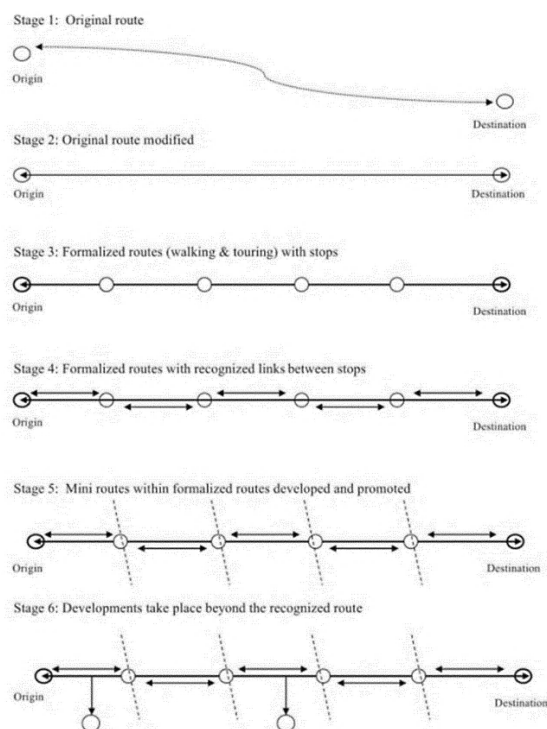


Figure 1: Six stages of evolution of cultural heritage routes.
Source: Timothy & Boyd, 2015.

However, in creating an attraction, an object, building, or place must first be “valued, desired, preserved and [include] story that is interpreted by human beings” (Timothy & Boyd, 2015). Including these heritage assets will improve an understanding of the cultural context (Yunus, Endut, & Said, 2021)

and strengthen the element of authenticity. In addition, incorporating the local communities and tourism strategy should also be highlighted as part of establishing a trail. As highlighted by Aburamadan et al. (2021), “lack of awareness in the value of cultural heritage from local communities exacerbates the diminishing efforts in preserving cultural assets” (p. 3). By comprising the physical setting, activities, and meanings of a place (Ghani, Rahman, Nayan, & Bahaluddin, 2018), and the involvement of the local community, the trail will embrace different values for the visitors. Most importantly, the trail is enjoyable for the greatest possible number of users (New South Wales Heritage Office, 1995).

METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative; site observation, and quantitative; questionnaire survey approaches. Integrating mixed-method in research helps acknowledge the theory or aspects of the research (Young, 2016). In addition, it also strengthens the validity and reliability of the data.

Site inventory and observation were conducted in Kampung Kuchai to gain direct information on the on-site situation, especially the heritage building conditions and its surroundings. In heritage conservation aspects, primary data gained from site observations help a researcher to “explore of and further learning about the site, helping them better visualize the richness of heritage, engaging, and communicating with history” (Liu, 2020). In addition, a researcher is more connected to the case studies through direct observation.

Besides site observation, a set of questionnaires was constructed and distributed among local visitors in the Old Town of Ipoh, Perak in February 2022. As Malaysia was still in the pandemic phase, the number of respondents approached for the study was limited to one hundred. Even with the smaller sample size, the selection of respondents was based on their familiarity with ‘heritage trails’ terminology and having visited a heritage trail once either in Ipoh, Perak, or other states in Malaysia. These inclusion criteria and selection rationale were adopted to ensure significant results from the survey.

The questions in the questionnaire are grouped into two sections; Section A, with questions related to demographics, and Section B, with questions associated with visitors’ preferences that influence them in visiting the proposed heritage trails. Applying Scale of Preferences questions give respondents various options regarding the subject. Closed-ended questions are applied in the questionnaire to define visitors’ perceptions of the heritage trail. This method is conducted to ensure that the findings from the questionnaire strengthen the outcomes gained from site observation on preserving the elements that still existed in Kampung Kuchai.

FINDINGS

Study Site: Kampung Kuchai, Ipoh, Perak

For Kampung Kuchai, Ipoh, Perak, this enclave still possesses elements that could be highlighted as the main tourist attractions to the place. According to the historical data, Kampung Kuchai was founded in 1900 by Toh Puan Saripah Rodziah and her husband; Seri Adika Raja Wan Mohammad Salleh. It is claimed that the Kampung Kuchai settlement was the starting point of the City of Ipoh. During its glorious era, Kampung Kuchai comprises a house of worship (mosque), Malay mansions, rows of shophouses, schools, and a government clinic. Under the Heritage Trail of Ipoh (Heritage Trail Map 2), seven buildings are highlighted in the trails located in the boundary of Kampung Kuchai (Figure 2). However, some potential buildings have been demolished, while some are deteriorating.



Figure 2: Map of Kampung Kuchai with heritage buildings included in the Heritage Trail of Ipoh (Heritage Trail Map 2).

Source: Author, 2021. Image retrieved from (Google Earth, 2021).

The Compound of Masjid Panglima Kinta

In Islam, mosques are an integral part of a community. A mosque is not only built for worship, but it is “part of a complex which usually included a madrasa (religious school), shops to support the upkeep of the mosque, and other buildings with purposes” (Khan Academy, 2022). Masjid Panglima Kinta is also no exception as its construction was the nuclei of the early settlement of Kampung Kuchai. Masjid Panglima Kinta has become an educational center for the residents of Ipoh. By the time it was completed in 1898, no communities had lived in that area since Kampung Kuchai had yet to exist. Hence, the users were mainly local communities in the surrounding neighborhood, such as Kampung

Paloh, Ipoh, Perak. The compound of Masjid Panglima Kinta housed a *madrasa* known as Madrasah Kamaliah and an old burial ground (Figure 3).

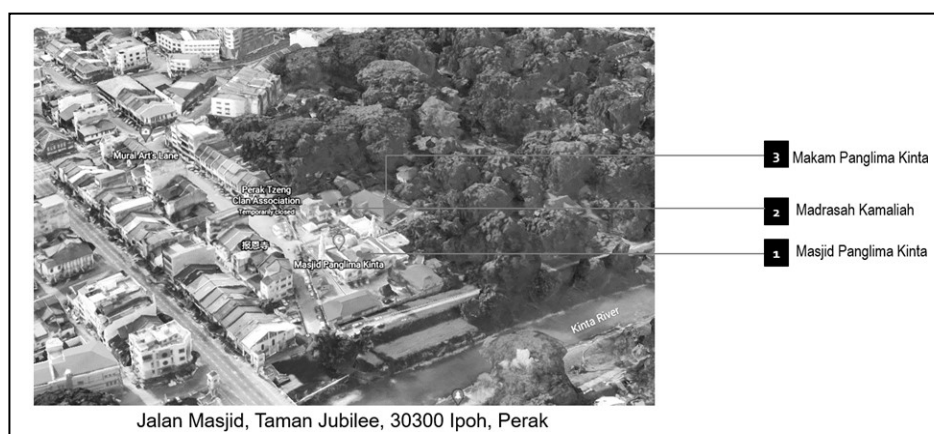


Figure 3: Masjid Panglima Kinta and historical components located in its compound.
Source: Author, 2021. Image retrieved from (Google Earth, 2021).

The compound of Masjid Panglima Kinta housed a madrasa known as Madrasah Kamaliah built in 1905 by the 12th Panglima Genta or Kinta; Che Wan bin Muhammad Yusuff. In the 1950s, Fakih Ghazali revived it as the first Arabic and Islamic school in Ipoh, and the mosque community ran it until the 1970s.

Besides the *madrasa*, the burial ground is located next to the mosque. The burial ground is believed to be reserved only for the descendants or heirs of Dato Panglima Kinta Mohamed Yusuff. According to Talib (2021), more than fifteen *makam* are located in the compound, including the *makam* of Dato Panglima Kinta (Talib, 2021a). In 2012, Masjid Panglima Kinta was gazetted as a Heritage Building under the *National Heritage Act 2005* (Act 645). However, the *madrasa*, spaces, and *makam* located in the compound are excluded from the list.

Old Mansions

Once known as ‘Malay Settlement’ and later called ‘The Wealthy Malay Enclave of Ipoh,’ it is not surprising if this area still has some mansions that prove the existence of a Malay village here. The mansions that can still be identified are Rumah Dato’ Panglima Kinta Sedewa Ngah Abdul Wahab (1903), Rumah Seri Adika Raja (1901) and Rumah Haji Yahya Abdul Raof (1903) (Figure 4). Besides these three mansions, another mansion is believed to have been built in the 1900s. However, the building owner could not be identified (Talib, 2021). From the listed mansions, Rumah Dato’ Panglima Kinta Sedewa Ngah Abdul Wahab collapsed except for the front part, which is made of brick. As for Rumah Seri

Adika Raja, the mansion is badly deteriorating. Both mansions have been converted into workshops.

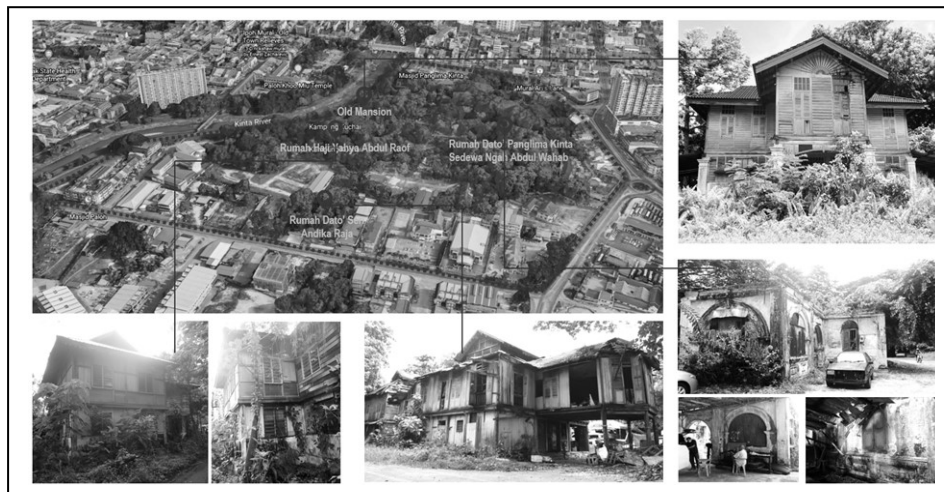


Figure 4: The location of four mansions that still existed in Kampung Kuchai's enclave.
Source: Author, 2021.

Other Significant Heritage Buildings

As mentioned earlier in the article, the Kampung Kuchai enclave is also comprised of schools and a government clinic (Figure 5). It has the first Malay Girls School built in Ipoh, now known as the Aminuddin Baki Gallery, which is located next to the Masjid Panglima Kinta compound. In addition, Kampung Kuchai also housed one of the earliest Chinese Schools in Ipoh. Sadly, the conditions of all these buildings are also severely deteriorating. For example, the government clinic is hardly recognizable as it is almost collapsing and hidden by the overgrown bushes and trees.

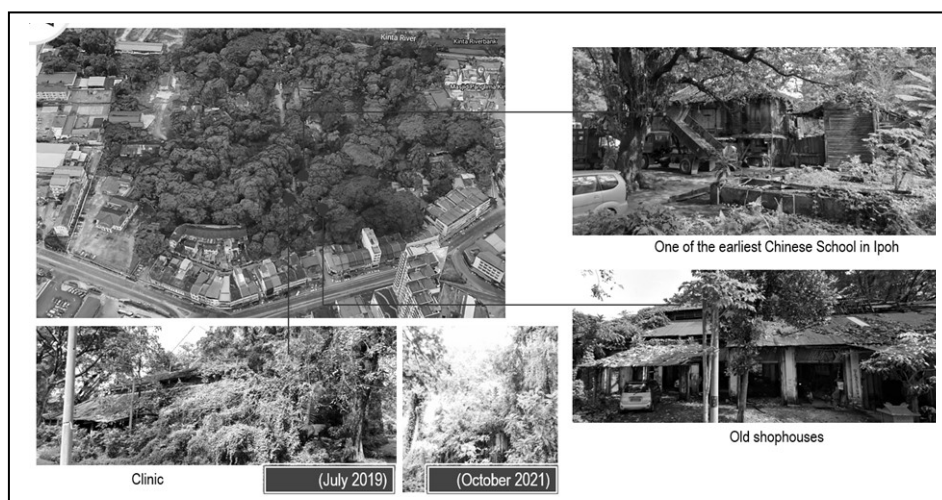


Figure 5: The location of other significant heritage buildings located in Kampung Kuchai.

Source: Author, 2021.

Rows of Shophouses

Besides the Masjid Panglima Kinta's compound, the old mansions, and other heritage buildings, the perimeter of Kampung Kuchai is completed with rows of shophouses. Most of the shophouses are located in Jalan Bendahara and Jalan C. M. Yusuff. Although the shophouses were built circa the 1910s to 1930s, each building still carries its history, identity, and characteristics. Hence, these buildings have the potential to be included as part of the heritage trail of Kampung Kuchai.

Data Set: Questionnaire

A total of one hundred sets of questionnaires were distributed using Google Forms for selected respondents but only 68 were filled correctly and could be included in the studies. Hence, the overall response rate for this study was 68 percent. Data gained from the survey was analyzed by using the quantitative descriptive method.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

From the data obtained, with a total of 68 respondents (N=68), 40 respondents are male (58.82%), and 28 are female (41.18%). Age-related questions have been categorized into three groups; 21-30 years, 31-40 years, and 41-50 years. The results show that 41 respondents are aged between 21-30 years, which comprise 60.29% of the data, 22 respondents are between 31-40 years (32.35%), and five are under the category of 41-50 years (7.36%). For a question related to location

or geographical data, 27 respondents live in Perak (39.71%), and 41 are visitors from outside of Perak (60.29%). These findings depict that the Old Town of Ipoh, Perak has unique values that could attract visitors, especially those living outside of Perak.

Visitors' Preferences for Heritage Trails

Under Section B, the survey applied a Scale of Preferences (Scale 1 Less Preferred – Scale 5 Strongly Preferred) to indicate the respondent's level of preference for the heritage trails. The Scale of Preferences helps to quantitatively measure visitor-oriented development(s), preferences, and personal experiences (Chen & Chen, 2009) in the urban heritage area (Nayan, Jones, Ahmad, & Khamis, 2021). Included in the questionnaire was the diagram of six stages of development of the cultural heritage routes proposed by Timothy and Boyd in 2015 (Figure 1). These six stages of cultural routes are adopted in the questionnaire to investigate the preferable heritage trail of Kampung Kuchai among the respondents. Amongst the six cultural heritage routes listed in the questions, almost all respondents acknowledged Stage 03: Formalized routes with stops as being the most preferable trail for Kampung Kuchai, with 34% being strongly preferred (n = 23) and 41% moderately to strongly preferred. In contrast, Stage 01: Original route was less valued by the respondents, with only 4% recognizing it as most suitable as the cultural heritage route for the Kampung Kuchai (Figure 6). The findings agree with Timothy & Boyd that Stage 03 provides "a greater diversity of trail users [which] increased the number of visitors and bypassed in favor of more interesting locales" (Timothy & Boyd, 2015, p. 22).

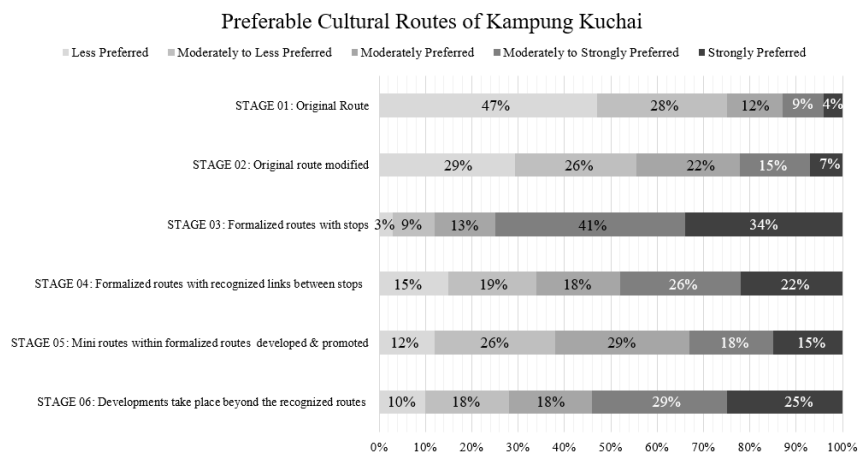


Figure 6: Preferable cultural routes of Kampung Kuchai.

When asked about respondents' most preferred and most enjoyable trail to explore, from four sites listed; (i) archeological sites, (ii) industrial heritage sites, (iii) historic urban landscapes, and (iv) rural landscapes, 46% (n=31) voted for a heritage trail located in the historic urban landscape. Archeological sites are the least voted for, with 7% (n=7) (Figure 7). The findings reveal visitors' interest in exploring urban heritage sites and indirectly show the importance of developing an appropriate heritage trail for Kampung Kuchai. The questionnaire also includes visitors' preferences on elements of the trail. From the four elements listed; (i) cultural performances, (ii) ceremonies and festivals, (iii) traditional arts, and (iv) instagrammable spots, respondents have voted for traditional arts to be included in the trail (37%, n=25) (Figure 7).

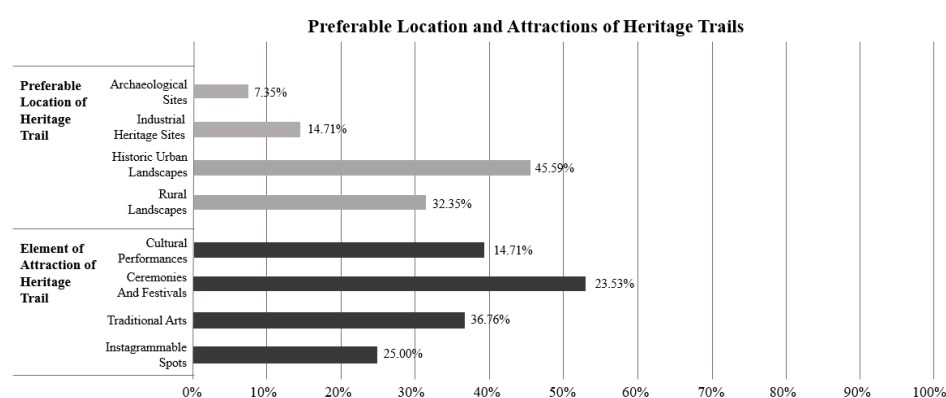


Figure 7: Preferable location and attractions for proposed heritage trail.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the list of significant heritage buildings located in Kampung Kuchai, it is undeniable that this area still possesses the identity of the community that once lived in this kampong. In addition, all the criteria that existed in Kampung Kuchai fulfilled the elements highlighted in the *National Heritage Act 2005 (Item 67: Declaration of National Heritage)*, which are:

a) the historical importance: Kampung Kuchai, which was founded in 1900, represents the early settlement and the establishment of the Old Town of Ipoh, Perak;

(b) the good design or aesthetic characteristics: This element has been portrayed in the design of the mansions, traditional houses, mosques, school buildings, government clinics, and shophouses which still carry the original features of the early 1900s architecture;

(c) *social or cultural associations*: Masjid Panglima Kinta and its compound for example, still being the important nuclei for social and cultural activities of Kampung Kuchai;

(d) *the potential to educate, illustrate or provide further scientific investigation in relation to Malaysian cultural heritage*; and

(e) *the importance in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features* (*National Heritage Act 2005* (Act 645), 2006).

Findings gained from this research should be implemented as part of the main criteria for establishing a successful heritage trail of Kampung Kuchai. By taking into consideration all of these elements, Kampung Kuchai could potentially be recognized as the first historical Malay Heritage Enclave in Ipoh. Again, the co-creation of trails between stakeholders, local residents, and visitors is essential in enhancing the cultural experience for all users (Nayan et al., 2021). With the proper action taken by the local authority, the community's involvement, and a better understanding of visitors' choices pattern (Amir, Osman, Bachok, & Ibrahim, 2014), this will enhance the image and sense of place in Kampung Kuchai and boost the economy among the local residents.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thanks to the Centre for Knowledge & Understanding of Tropical Architecture & Interior (KUTAI) for sponsoring 50% of the PMJ Special Edition 2022 publication fees. May this effort encourage more scholars to publish in Index-Journal in the future.

REFERENCES

- Aburamadan, R., Moustaka, A., Trillo, C., Makore, B.C.N., Udeaja, C., Gyau Baffour Awuah, K. (2021). Heritage Building Information Modelling (HBIM) as a Tool for Heritage Conservation: Observations and Reflections on Data Collection, Management and Use in Research in a Middle Eastern Context. In: *Rauterberg, M. (eds) Culture and Computing. Interactive Cultural Heritage and Arts*. Springer, Cham.
- Amir, S., Osman, M. M., Bachok, S., & Ibrahim, M. (2014). Understanding of Tourists' Preferences Pattern: A Study in Melaka, Malaysia. *PLANNING MALAYSIA: Urban Planning and Local Governance*, 3(1), 81-94.
- Cantillon, Z. (2020). Urban Heritage Walks in a Rapidly Changing City: Tensions between Preservation and Development on the Gold Coast, Australia. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 15(2), 149-163.

Nadiyahanti Mat Nayan, Nur Huzeima Mohd Hussain, Suriati Ahmad, David S Jones, Ismail Hafiz Salleh
Highlighting the Potential of Kampung Kuchai, Ipoh, Perak through a Heritage Trail

- Chen, C.-F., & Chen, P.-C. (2009). *Exploring tourist preferences of heritage attractions: Evidence from discrete choice modeling in Taiwan*. Paper presented at the Travel and Tourism Research Association Conf., Hawaii.
- Ghani, I., Rahman, N., Nayan, N. M., & Bahaluddin, A. (2018). Experiential Virtual Urban Environments: A Preliminary Investigation. *PLANNING MALAYSIA: Journal of the Malaysian Institute of Planners*, 16(1), 25-37.
- Google Earth (Cartographer). (2021). Kampung Kuchai, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia
- Jabatan Perancangan Bandar dan Desa. (2012). *Draf Rancangan Kawasan Khas Pekan Ipoh - Bandar Warisan Bijih Timah 2020*. Majlis Bandaraya Ipoh.
- Khan Academy. (2022). Common types of mosque architecture.
- Liu, Y. (2020). Evaluating visitor experience of digital interpretation and presentation technologies at cultural heritage sites: a case study of the old town, Zuoying. *Built Heritage*, 4(14).
- National Heritage Act 2005 (Act 645)*. (2006). Kuala Lumpur: The Commissioner of Law Revision, Malaysia.
- Nayan, N. M., Jones, D. S., Ahmad, S., & Khamis, M. K. (2021). Exploring the built-environment: heritage trails, values and perceptions. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 881, 1-10.
- New South Wales Heritage Office. (1995). *Heritage Information Series: Guidelines for Heritage Trails*. Sydney: New South Wales Heritage Office.
- Talib, F. S. (2021a). *Cadangan Pembangunan Semula Warisan Melayu di Kampung Kuchai dan Kawasan Sekelilingnya oleh Persatuan Keluarga Kulop Kinta*. Persatuan Keluarga Kulop Kinta. Kuala Lumpur.
- Talib, F. S. (2021b). *Status dan Cadangan Bangunan Lama Kampung Kuchai*. Persatuan Keluarga Kulop Kinta. Kuala Lumpur.
- Timothy, D. J., & Boyd, S. W. (2015). *Tourism and Trails: Cultural Ecological and Management Issues*.
- Yunus, N. M. M., Endut, E., & Said, S. Y. (2021). Cultural Mapping and Heritage Trail in Kuala Kangsar. *PLANNING MALAYSIA: Journal of the Malaysian Institute of Planners*, 19(1), 127-137.

Received: 30th June 2022. Accepted: 12th September 2022