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*"Cultural Sustainability in the Built and Natural Environment"*

## Between Tourism and Intangible Cultural Heritage

Nur Izzati Mohd Rodzi\*, Saniah Ahmad Zaki, Syed Mohd Hassan Syed Subli

*Faculty of Architecture, Planning and Surveying, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450 Shah Alam, Malaysia*

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### Abstract

Malaysia sees a tremendous rise in tourist arrivals in Malacca with the listing of Melaka on UNESCO's world heritage list in 2008. Its cultural tradition is one of the outstanding universal values that contribute it to gain its place on the list. Nevertheless, there are studies that have suggested this positive outlook may have its downside. The aim of this paper is to present past studies on tourism in relationship to intangible cultural heritage and examines their positive and negative views on the importance of tourism and cultural heritage. It is hoped that the outcome of this paper will guide an on-going study that not only looks at tourism and intangible cultural heritage in Malacca, but also develops a cultural map in an early effort towards safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

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### 1. Introduction

We begin this paper by questioning: How can intangible cultural heritage be sustained with the effects of tourism development? What are the effects of tourism development? It is believed that tourism is the largest industry in the world based on its contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP). It has since reported an increase of international tourist arrivals from 939 million in 2010 to a total of 990 million in 2011 by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). In fact, UNWTO is expecting further increase in tourist arrivals by the end of 2012. Asia (South-Asia and South-East Asia) is expected to lead the growth ahead of Europe and America. Instead of being a part of the economic contributors, Goeldner, Brent Ritchie & McIntosh (2000) also agree that tourism is able to improve the quality of life

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\* Corresponding author. Tel.: 0196914564.  
E-mail address: [nurizzatirodzi@gmail.com](mailto:nurizzatirodzi@gmail.com).

and enhance physical development and infrastructures. Although tourism has a positive outlook, it also has its downsides. Engelhardt (2007) for example, reported there are some issues emerged between cultural tourism and intangible cultural heritage such as the ‘dumbing-down’ of heritage interpretation, de-contextualization of the heritage and disconnection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Most of the previous studies which looked at the impacts of tourism have shown that tourism activities can bring both positive and negative impacts towards the economic, physical, social, cultural and the environment. If it does bring impacts, what is the extent of the positive impacts compared to the negative impacts of intangible cultural heritage? This paper attempts to discuss on the positive and negative aspects between cultural tourism and intangible cultural heritage. In doing so, a very clear understanding of the general term of cultural tourism and intangible cultural heritage is needed as a preamble to the discussion.

## **2. Methodology**

Building on the current concern and awareness of sustaining local cultural heritage, this research is trying to adapt a new method on conserving intangible cultural heritage introduced by UNESCO as cultural mapping. By exploring the potential of tourism development, in terms of authenticity of intangible cultural heritage and the pattern of tourist and host behaviours, relevant Authorities can use it to construct future framework for cultural heritage and tourism management. Although the existing law and enactment on conserving heritage is useful, yet it is still insufficient to conserve both tangible and intangible heritage. For this matter, cultural mapping is an alternative to make the culture more visible, hence it can be utilised in new way for further development of cultural planning. This study uses multi – disciplinary approach to integrate theories and concept relevant to the research goal. Combining literature study from existing theories and current articles with on-site study, and professional interviews, will lead to a production of intangible cultural heritage map. This also provides strategies for sustaining cultural heritage as well as tourism development. This paper is part of a preliminary study of the above research. The next section is divided into two parts: 1) definition and 2) previous research on tourism development and cultural heritage.

## **3. Analysis and findings**

### *3.1. Definition of cultural tourism and intangible cultural heritage*

Bob Mckercher and Hillary du Cros (2002) stated that cultural tourism involves four elements which are: tourism, use of cultural heritage assets, consumption of experiences and products, and, tourist. To understand how all these four elements are related to cultural tourism and intangible cultural heritage, clear definition of the elements is needed.

#### *3.1.1. Tourism*

The World Tourism Organization official definition of tourism is: “Tourism comprises the activities of person travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than consecutive one year for leisure, business and other purpose”. Thomas lea Davidson (1994) looked at tourism from three perspectives. The first perspective, tourism is a social phenomenon, not a production activity. Second, the sum of expenditures of all travellers or visitors for all purposes not the receipt of a select group of similar establishment; and, third, the experience process, not a product, but an extremely varied experiences. Basically, tourism encompasses many forms such as seaside, mountain, sport, health, shopping, and heritage. Out of these, cultural tourism is the most familiar forms among tourists. The term

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