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Evaluation of Islamic City Image in Kota Bharu Islamic City: A Pilot Study and an Early Finding

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Abstract

Kota Bharu was rebranded from Cultural city to Islamic city, hence the urban design of the city in the direction of creating a city image related to Islamic identity. The existing literature on city image shows some discrepancies in the Islamic image perceived among residents, but to date, no research has been conducted from the perspective of visitors. This study objective is to evaluate the perception of visitors on Kota Bharu Islamic city image. A quantitative self-reporting survey consists of 62 questions divided into ten categories was created based on the existing literature. The attributes were Natural Environment, Social Need and Human Comfort, Religious Identity, Tolerant, Layout, Elements of Jannah, Intellectual and Knowledge, Cleanliness, Economic System, and Safety Setting derived from Islamic Built Environment framework. This paper aims to explore small sample data (n=40). Hence, instrument validity, reliability, and normality of the data were examined through a panel of experts and also by analysing the data with the aid of SPSS software. The result showed that the instrument is reliable and the data for preliminary study exhibit reasonable normality. The initial research discovery shows that visitors perceive the Islamic city image of Kota Bharu positively, reflecting the city is now representing the identity of the Islamic city. Based on experience and pilot test results, positive results are expected in the actual investigations. This research has provided early findings which will be beneficial to the administrators, designers and researchers and the researcher itself before conducting the actual full-scale study.

Keywords: City Image, Early Findings, Islamic City, Kota Bharu, Pilot Study

Introduction

A pilot test is considered "a dress rehearsal" in which a small-scale trial of a study is conducted before the full-scale research (Ibrahim, Ghani, Munir, & Salleh, 2013; Maiyaki & Mohd Mokhtar, 2010). Hence a pilot test was carried out in this study to achieve several objectives. Firstly, the mini-study was done to test the validity and reliability of the instrument of the study. Secondly, it aimed at obtaining an insight into the real conditions of the actual survey. Thus, the researcher would able to anticipate and adjust to potential problems during the full-scale research. Among the significant concern of a pilot test are the instrument validity and reliability. The validity of the measuring instrument is the extent to which the instrument is measuring a particular concept, while the reliability of a measure indicates how consistent and stable the instrument taps the variable and also across the various items in the scale (Sekaran, 2003).

To this end, this paper presents the result of pilot test with regard of natural environment, social need and human comfort, religious identity, tolerant, order, elements of Jannah, intellectual and knowledge, hygiene, economic system, and safety setting of the Islamic city image in the context of the Kota Bharu Islamic city.

Literature Review

A review of literature is done to discuss and elaborate the primary variables of Islamic City Image namely Natural Environment, Social Need and Human Comfort, Religious Identity, Tolerant, Layout, Elements of Jannah, Intellectual and Knowledge, Cleanliness, Economic System, and Safety Setting. Besides that, an overview of Kota Bharu city is put forward to understand the Islamic city formation process better.

Overview of Kota Bharu as an Islamic City

Kota Bharu is the Kelantan state capital in the country of Malaysia has become the central point for administration and business activities with a total population at 2010 is 491,237, and 95% of them are Malay ethnic (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2018). In 1991, Kota Bharu was declared as Cultural City and synonym with the tagline 'Kota Bharu Kota Budaya.' However, in 2005, it was officially announced by the state government as an "Islamic City" thus the image of the city is in the direction of creating a city which could be related to Islamic identity. As an Islamic city, it represents a symbolic icon in the urban development of the Islamic state of Kelantan. The city aim is if tourists were want to experience Islamic culture in Malaysia, Kota Bharu would be the right place to start due to the mostly appeared Islamic practices are more visible in the city- both physically and spiritually compared to any other cities in Malaysia.

To promote Islamic tourism in Kota Bharu as a new cultural tourism product in Malaysia (Mohd Nasir & Salleh, 2014), the rebranding process acts as both a planning strategy (Mohammad Rusdi Mohd Nasir, 2011) and tourism strategy (Hassan & Ahmad, 2016; Hassan, Ahmad, & Che Aziz, 2017). The city rebranding also has significant implications for the development of the local community regarding image and changing economic and social environment to be more conducive and competitive with the values and philosophy of Islam. However, previous research among residents of Kota Bharu had detected confusion and misunderstood of residents towards the Kota Bharu Islamic city concept and branding (Mohd Yusof, 2011). Therefore, as suggested by Mohd Yusof & Yaacob (2013), a clear understanding

of Islamic city concept and image must be identified and explained to the community and also to the visitors to avoid confusion and misunderstood that might fail the whole process.

The Formation of Islamic City Image through Islamic Built Environment

Destination image consists of functional characteristics, concerning the more tangible aspects, and psychological features, concerning the more intangible issues of the destination (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). Ten years before, Gartner (1993) proposes the Destination Image Theory consisted of three components – cognitive, affective and conative – make up a hierarchical causal model. The theory is in line with Boulding's research (1956) which states that an image comprises what one knows and thinks about an object (cognitive), how one feels about it (affective), and how one acts using this information (conative) (Agapito, Da, & Mendes, 2013). However, the functional aspect related to tangibility (i.e., cognitive) and the psychological characteristics included intangible elements (i.e., affective) were more focused by researchers. These were in line with prior studies related to the definition and conceptualization of destination image, which suggested that destination image measurement consists of both cognitive (how people think) and affective (how people feel) aspects (Heidarzadeh Hanzaee & Saeedi, 2011).

A city needs to be promoted with its unique image and character as a tourism destination and should not only be creatively presented whether it is a logo or a symbol, graphic posters like a tagline but need to be fully supported by local people, government, and investors (Lau & Leung, 2005). The image of a destination is necessary to give positive messages to the public regarding security, political and economic stability, education and cultural diversity of the local community (Mohd Yusof, 2011). City image could be known as the images which are formed in the mind of visitors through perceivable objectivity consisted of the tangible and intangible image (Zenker, 2011). City image is read according to its physical and perceptible looks of the city's objects (Lynch, 1960), wherein this research referred to the city's built environment.

In Islam, Quran verses and Prophetic Reports mentioned about the nature of the environment created by Allah SWT, its functions and how people should deal with it, elucidated the impacts or the results of human intervention following its consumptions either reasonably or excessively, where the human creation in a modern world is called the built environment (Sarkawi, Abdullah, Md Dali, & Mohd Khazani, 2017). Some of the verses recorded in the study are Al-Furqan:1, Al-An'am:165, Al-Thoha:6, Al-A'raf:10, and Ar-Rum:41. The interpretation of the built environment in the study is governed by the theory of man as a caliph (khalifah) on earth evidenced in the Quran described above verses. Mohd Isa, Hj Zen, & Long (2014) had defined Islamic built environment (IBE) as a "setting that encompasses the combination of created elements (spaces, places, and structures) with the implementation of Islamic ideology to serve human needs and values." Nonetheless, in the context of this paper, the interpretation of the Islamic city image is reflected by the Islamic built environment perceived, adapted from the ten factors of Islamic Built Environment. The IBE factors are Natural Environment, Social Need and Human Comfort, Religious Identity, Tolerant, Order, Elements of Jannah, Intellectual and Knowledge, Hygiene, Economic System, and Safety Setting (Mohd Isa, 2015).

Methodology

Instrumentation and Measurement of Variables

Structured methodologies are attributed focused. In other words, the respondent is forced to think about product image concerning the characteristics specified by the scales (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). A structured questionnaire consisting of closed-ended multiple choice-questions were employed for the study. The quantitative self-reporting survey comprised of 62 questions divided among ten categories was created based on the existing literature. All ten sections were adapted from the factors of Islamic Built Environment (IBE) by Norliza Mohd Isa in 2015.

The Likert-type scale is considered more appropriate and reliable as most of the items in the questionnaire are targeted to measuring the respondents' perceptions and attitudes (Ibrahim et al., 2013; Maiyaki & Mohd Mokhtar, 2010). The scale is easy to administer, simple to code and the results can be analysed using sophisticated statistical techniques (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). The purpose of the instrument is to measure the key variables of the research using a 5-point Likert-type rating scale, ranges from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree.' As concluded by Maiyaki & Mohd Mokhtar (2010), the range of scale between 5 and 7 is established to be more reliable than otherwise and enables the researcher to make a more subtle distinction among the attitudes of various individuals regarding a particular object.

Content and Face Validity

This process ensures that the measure consists of an adequate and representative set of items that tap a particular concept. Put differently, and it involves a systematic assessment of the scale's ability to measure what is supposed to regulate. Hence, content validity entails consulting a small sample of typical respondents and panel of expert to pass judgment on the suitability of the items selected to measure a construct (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

Before distributing the questionnaires, the draft of the instrument of this study was circulated to six experts (three from the academia and another three from the industry) and also to the typical respondent for face and content validity. The selection of experts was made based on their qualification, experience, and position in the industry to get feedback on the suitability, content, layout, and adequacy of items designed to measure the under construction. Besides, some Ph.D. candidates who are familiar with the environmental context of the study are also contacted to examine the clarity of the research instrument. To this end, some questions were re-phrased to measure the constructs appropriately and also to be understandable to the potential respondents. It was also observed that some items are similar and therefore, two questions were recommended to be removed. The process of seeking expert opinion and face validity was completed within a three-week period. After taking into consideration the observations by experts, the researchers made an improved and revised version of the instrument administered for pilot testing.

Sampling and Pilot-testing

Once the survey form was complete testing was scheduled. The first test of this tool is designed to be completed in person rather than online to reduce external interference as suggested by (Bartlett, 2013) to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The investigation was conducted at different sessions to help researchers recall respondents' responses from previous tests, as well as to enhance the reliability of the assessment tool.

Participants were given ample time to complete the survey if they needed the time. However, most participants completed the testing in 10 to 15 minutes. Participants are given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher also had created a coding system so their answers would remain anonymous but the responses could be compared from one to the other. The code consisted of 4 digits and began with the alphabet D=Domestic and I=International, followed by the number of the questionnaire, i.e., D030 and I001.

As this study is a pilot test of an ongoing project, 40 visitors of Kota Bharu city was selected using the stratified random sampling during school holiday at major transportation hubs and tourist places of interest in Kota Bharu. The sampling size is in line with the recommendation by Roscoe, (1975) as cited in Sekaran, (2003) that the sample size for pre-test is ordinarily small. However, sample size higher than 30 is suitable for most research. Hence, a total of 40 copies of questionnaires were personally distributed, sufficiently and appropriately completed and thus, considered for analysis. At this stage, the respondents were also encouraged to make any comment or highlight any items in the questionnaire that they felt ambiguous or problematic. The very minimal feedback collected from the pilot test will be used to amend the survey where appropriate. The result of this process indicated that the instrument possessed content validity. The whole process has completed within four weeks.

Results of Validity, Reliability and Normality Tests

Reliability Test

Reliability measures the internal consistency of a set of scale items. According to Sekaran (2003), the most famous test of inter-item consistency reliability is Cronbach's coefficient alpha, which is used for multipoint-scaled items. Hence, Cronbach alpha test is employed in this study to measure the internal consistency of the instrument. The data were analysed using SPSS version 24. It is the extent to which items are "hanged together as a set" and are capable of independently measuring the same concept and how far the subject is correlated with each other.

After running the data using SPSS version 24 for Windows, it was found that all the measures possess high-reliability standard ranging from 0.791 to 0.968. The result is consistent with the benchmark that an instrument with a coefficient of 0.60 is regarded to have average reliability while the ratio of 0.70 and above shows that the research tool has a high-reliability standard (Sekaran, 2003; Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

Table 1

Alpha Value for each variable in questionnaire design

Section	Variables	Alpha Value
B	Islamic city image	0.791
C	Natural environment	0.949
D	Social Need and Human Comfort	0.945
E	Religious Identity	0.936
F	Tolerant	0.875
G	Order	0.816
H	Elements of Jannah	0.940
I	Intellectual and Knowledge	0.968
J	Cleanliness	0.929
K	Economic system	0.853

L	Safety setting	0.943

Table 1 shows a summary of the results of reliability. It can be seen that the pioneer test results show that the Cronbach alpha values for the under construction are all above 0.70. Consequently, given the established benchmark of 0.70, all the constructs are reliable and therefore, there was no need to delete any item based on the Alpha value. Therefore, based on alpha value showed in the table above, the researcher decided to proceed with all items in the variables but had made some improvements and modifications on the size of the font, layout of the questionnaire, and title of some sections. The instrument will then finalised.

Normality Test

Most of the inferential statistical techniques require the fulfillment of normality assumption (Maiyaki & Mohd Mokhtar, 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Normal data is symmetrical, bell-shaped data with the highest frequency of scores in the middle and smaller distribution towards the extreme ends. An inspection from the regression standardized residual histogram presented by Figure 1 revealed that the data is normally distributed while Figure 2 was also found to be normally distributed whereby the observed and expected values were found along the line, without any significant departures from it.

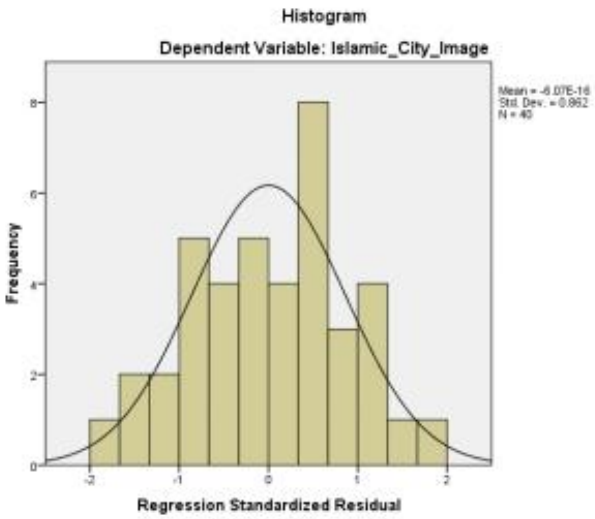

Figure 1. Regression standardized residual histogram

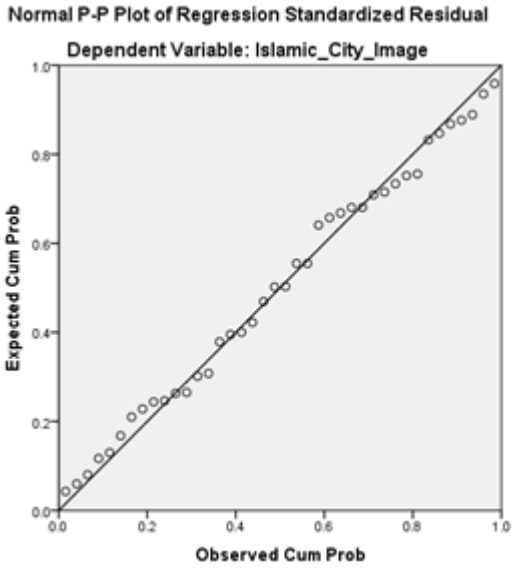

Figure 2. Normal P-P plot of regression standardized residual

Data Analysis and Early Findings

Profiles of Respondent

Table 2 demonstrates the demographic background of the visitors. Out of 40 respondents, female dominating the sample with 55% compared to the male counterpart, with a majority (75%) of them were Muslims. Majority of the respondents (92.5%) have a tertiary level of education while the rest have finished their secondary school. 57.5% of them are married, and 65% of the respondents were working, followed by students (15%) and self-employed (10%).

Table 2
Demographic profile of respondents

Items	Frequency (N = 40)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	18	45.0
Female	22	55.0
Age		
18-25 years	7	17.5
26-40 years	22	55.0
41-56 years	8	20.0
57 and above	3	7.5
Marital Status		
Single	17	42.5
Married	23	57.5
Religion		
Muslim	30	75.0
Others	10	25.0
Residence		
Domestic	30	75.0
International	10	25.0
Education Level		
No formal education	-	-
Primary school	-	-
Secondary school / high school	3	7.5
College / University	37	92.5
Others	-	-
Occupation		
In employed	26	65.0
Self-employed	4	10.0
Not working	1	2.5
Retiree	3	7.5
Student	6	15.0

Descriptive Statistics

An essential start to any statistical analysis is to obtain some descriptive statistics for the data collected is the means and the standard deviations (Sekaran, 2003). Table 3 revealed that the respondents have rather high inclinations towards all variables of interest with all of them were above their respective midpoints (means more than 3.00) based on Sekaran & Bougie (2010). Regarding the independent variable under study, the element of Order garnered the highest mean score of 4.08. It is worth noting that the Cleanliness variable clearly showed the lowest mean rating of 3.04. The independent variable, Islamic city image obtained high score close to 4.00 (3.87) indicates that visitors perceived overall Kota Bharu city image as represents the Islamic city image.

Table 3
Descriptive statistics

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Islamic city image	3.87	0.78
Natural environment	3.39	1.03
Social Need and Human Comfort	3.13	0.90
Religious Identity	3.76	0.83
Tolerant	3.68	0.75
Order	4.08	0.73
Elements of Jannah	3.29	0.97
Intellectual and Knowledge	3.20	1.11
Cleanliness	3.04	1.02
Economic system	3.55	0.73
Safety setting	3.28	1.01

Conclusion

Kota Bharu status as an Islamic city as it dominated by Muslim Malay majority gives this city a unique identity. This study has evaluated the level of Islamic urban image perceived by visitors on a set of indicators at some of the popular tourist attractions in Kota Bharu. The value of validity and reliability is critical in assessing the accuracy of a survey questionnaire from being exposed to disability. Quantitative methods very much require initial assessment such as pilot study before actual evaluations conducted on field subjects. This process is carried out to identify the use of questionnaire structures in a comprehensible and precise way in dealing with respondents of various background. High value ensures the accuracy of data obtained in the effort of producing quality research.

Analysis of the data revealed that Cronbach's alpha values indicated an outstanding measurement of reliability with all variables exceeded the 0.7 benchmarks. Normality test using histogram and regression standardized residual (normal P-P plot) revealed that the data were normally distributed. All the variables in this study can be maintained in a real questionnaire, and only a few purifications are needed on the structure of use, and the selection of each word to be friendlier and relaxed in conformity with respondents consisted of visitors. The descriptive findings are convincing where all the variables' mean score positively which are higher than 3.00. Based on survey experience and results of the pilot test, positive outcomes are expected in the actual investigations.

In conclusion, the survey instrument tested in this pilot study was reliable and valid derived from a small sample size of 40 respondents. The practicality of this research tool in determining Natural Environment, Social Need and Human Comfort, Religious Identity, Tolerant, Order, Elements of Jannah, Intellectual and Knowledge, Hygiene, Economic System, and Safety Setting in evaluating Kota Bharu Islamic city image among visitors will be uncovered after the full-scale study is carried out using a larger sample size covering visitors in Kota Bharu. More statistical analysis like t-test, analysis of variance, correlation analysis, and regression analysis will be deployed to meet the objectives of this study. The significance of this research is it confirmed the practicality of the research tool (questionnaire) and delivered early findings which could be referred by the administrators, and also guide the

designers and researchers to design and generate a better and suitable process of realizing the concept of Kota Bharu Islamic city image.

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