

THE MAKING OF JONKER WALK: NIGHT MARKET, PEDESTRIAN MALL OR CULTURE STREET?

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ABSTRACT

Jonker Walk, located in the heart of Melaka town, is one of the latest innovations of present-day Melaka state government. Conceptually, Jonker Walk, launched by the state government on June 19, 2000, combines the historical, economic and touristic characteristics of the state. Economically, Jonker Walk provides the avenue for its participants to select aspects of their ethnicity and cultural practices and transform them into economically productive activities. Touristically, this gathering of multi-cultural and multi-ethnic people of Melaka, each "selling" something from their culture along the same half-mile street, provides a prospective setting for promoting Melaka as a cultural destination. With these three conceptual dimensions, Jonker Walk exists on paper as a touristic culture street. But what is Jonker Walk in reality? Is it a culture street, night market, or a pedestrian mall? This question forms the underlying theme of this paper. It presents the concept and implementation of Jonker Walk from the perspective of its significant stakeholders, which are, the state government, Jonker Walk Organising Committee, Jonker Walk traders and tourists/visitors. The paper highlights several distinctive mismatches in making Jonker Walk a touristic culture street.

Keywords: *culture tourism, management, product development, Jonker Walk*

ABSTRAK

Jonker Walk, yang terletak di tengah-tengah bandar Melaka, adalah inovasi terbaru kerajaan Melaka untuk mempertingkatkan sektor pelancongan negeri

Melaka. Dari segi konsepsual, Jonker Walk mewakili kepelbagaian pensejarahan penduduk semasa negeri Melaka. Ciri istimewanya adalah setiap kumpulan etnik masih mengekalkan dan meneruskan amalan-amalan budaya dan bahasa pertuturan masing-masing. Dari segi ekonomi, Jonker Walk membuka ruang kepada mereka yang turut serta dalam pembangunannya untuk memilih dan mentransformasikan ciri-ciri etnik dan budaya kepada produk pelancongan yang berproduktif dan berfaedah ekonomi. Dari segi pelancongan, pengumpulan penduduk Melaka yang pelbagai etnik, masing-masing 'menjual' sesuatu daripada budayanya di suatu lokasi yang sama, mewujudkan suatu tapak pelancongan budaya yang menarik. Berlandaskan tiga asas ini, Jonker Walk wujud dalam teori sebagai tapak pelancongan budaya. Setelah pelancarannya pada bulan Jun 2000, persoalan timbul iaitu apakah bentuk Jonker Walk yang sebenar dalam kenyataan? Adakah ia pasar malam, tapak pelancongan budaya atau tapak jalanan pelancong? Persoalan ini menjadi tema utama artikel ini. Fokus penulisan adalah mengenai tanggapan empat golongan berkepentingan iaitu kerajaan negeri Melaka, Jawatankuasa Pengelola Jonker Walk, para peniaga Jonker Walk dan pelawat/pelancong mengenai Jonker Walk. Gejala yang ditekankan adalah perselisihan faham di kalangan golongan berkepentingan ini mengenai konsep Jonker Walk memandangkan perselisihan sebegini berpotensi menjejaskan pembangunan Jonker Walk sebagai tapak perlancongan budaya yang unggul di Melaka.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has received its fair share of criticism and praise from critics and supporters alike as to its role in bringing about change and development to all the parties involved in the tourism industry. These parties include the home and host countries, visitors, brokers and intermediaries. In our modern world, we see the mushrooming of tourism destinations and tourism products, and the proliferation of tourism businesses and media to promote these destinations and products to the tourism market. Tourism has become a highly sophisticated industry where destinations and products are brought to the attention of potential market via diverse and innovative use of media technology and communication channels. The emergence of the Internet as a major channel for information dissemination and transmission has made the world seem more accessible, extraordinarily captivating and well worth a visit.

Modern-day governments regard tourism as the panacea for their countries' economic woes or as an engine for economic growth. Tourism engenders investments in the development of tourism infrastructure, emergence of tourism-related businesses and services, and the creation

of employment opportunities in the host nations. National governments appraise tourism's role in terms of the volume of tourist arrivals and the amount of revenue this volume generates. Tourist arrivals mean tourist expenditure and this expenditure is revenue and income for the host nations. Such a positivistic and materialistic view of tourism depict tourism as something external, objective and quantifiable. The tourists, on the other hand, view tourism as an outlet to realise their motivations and expectations. Leaving the home environment for a different and unfamiliar destination stimulates the excitement of experiencing something extraordinary, exotic and exclusive. Tourists evaluate the worth of their touristic experience in terms of whether their choice of holiday destination was able to give them a value-for-money experience.

The subject of this paper is Jonker Walk, one of the latest sites to be added to the list of existing attractions in the state of Melaka to boost its image as a city of history. Mooted by the present Chief Minister of Melaka, Datuk Wira Mohd Ali Rustam, Jonker Walk was launched on the 9th of June 2000. Following the argument outlined above, the discussion in this paper centres on the conceptualisation and actualisation of Jonker Walk as a tourism site and the discrepancies between them. The paper argues that while product development for tourism is rooted on market orientations and consumption needs (that is, tourists' travel motivations), the element of subjectivity is not reflected in the types of product developed and marketed for tourism purposes. When this occurs, the hopes and aspirations of those involved in tourism development and promotion will not be actualised.

This paper is based on a small scale and short-term research project (one year from October 2000 - September 2001) carried out by the two co-authors. There are four categories of stakeholders involved in the making of Jonker Walk into a tourism attraction:

- (i) Melaka State Government, represented by three government departments, i.e. Melaka Municipal Council (MPMBC), Tourism Promotion Unit housed under the Chief Minister's Department, and Tourist Police Unit under the Melaka Police Department.
- (ii) Jonker Walk Steering Committee represented by nine Chinese cultural associations located at Jonker Walk.
- (iii) Business traders along Jonker Walk.
- (iv) Visitors (i.e. the consumers/tourists).

MELAKA STATE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Located on the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia, facing the Straits of Melaka, and sandwiched between Negeri Sembilan and Johor, Melaka is the second smallest state in Malaysia with an area of 1683 km². It is about 147 kilometers from Kuala Lumpur, the nation's capital. There are three districts – Alor Gajah, Central Melaka and Jasin. In terms of history, Melaka is said to play a significant role in the history of Malaysia for it is the state “*where it all began*” (emelaka.com, 2002).

Tourism plays a prominent role in the development agenda of the Melaka State Government. The government's website is testimony of its optimism in tourism's ability to boost investments in the state. With economic growth and prosperity as the ultimate goal (Melaka hopes to be a fully developed state by 2010), the state government adopts a two-prong approach combining the joint-roles of industry and tourism in the state. Both are perceived as high achievers in terms of revenue earnings. In the eyes of the state government, industrial and tourism development are like “finger nails and flesh” (to borrow an age-old Malay idiom, “*seperti kuku dengan isi*”). The development of one sector encourages the growth of the other.

To promote the image of Melaka as the *Mecca of Investment*, the Melaka State Development Corporation (MSDC) relies on *history* (one key ingredient for tourism development) to give Melaka that comparative edge over the other states of Malaysia with larger area and more resources. According to the Melaka State Government, Melaka features as a day or short visit destination in the tourism market (MPMBB, 1991-2010: 3-35). Hence, for the state's tourism industry to thrive and survive, the government has to establish tourism links with other Malaysian states, Singapore and elsewhere. For this purpose, it has adopted a Market Diversification Approach which necessitates (MPMBB Structural Plan, 1991-2010).

- Strengthening cooperation in the tourism industry between Melaka and Kuala Lumpur as Twin Cities through the propagation of a two-way interaction in terms of management, promotion and marketing of tourism
- Promoting and marketing Melaka as a domestic or regional tourism destination with special attractions such as development of recreational, infrastructural and support services of high quality (accommodation, food and beverage etc.), complemented by historical and cultural attractions

- Continuing promotional efforts to market Melaka as a day destination along with other tourism destinations in Malaysia as part of a long-term integrated visitation package
- Promoting and marketing Melaka as a half-way destination for visitors en-route to Singapore or neighbouring states or countries. For this, the state uses contrast as a theme to highlight the differences between Singapore in particular and Melaka. Singapore, as a developed and industrialised nation, may have lost its traditional and local Asian culture. Melaka, on the other hand, still has its local cultures intact hence will be able to offer visitors the local flavour rooted in the histories and cultures of the Asian people

The Melaka State Government's tourism promotion efforts have succeeded in increasing the tourist arrivals to Melaka from 1999 to 2000. A total of 1,713,115 foreign and domestic tourists visited Melaka in 1999. In the year 2000, the number increased to 2,169,987. In 1999, foreign tourists outnumbered domestic tourists, that is 883,707 and 829,408 arrivals respectively. In 2000, however, the situation was reversed: domestic tourists amounted for 1,129,467 as compared to 1,040,520 foreign tourists (MelakaCom.net. 2003). Domestic promotions and campaigns such as *Cuti-cuti Malaysia* (Holidays in Malaysia), regular *Mega Sale* promotions by commercial sectors, and *Tourism Fairs* held in various states provided easier access to Malaysians to travel and visit places in Malaysia itself. As the Historical City of Malaysia, Melaka is in a good position to take advantage of the Federal Government's high regard of the significance of tourism to the country and its efforts to encourage tourism development in every state in Malaysia. With its cosmopolitan population and proximity to Singapore and Indonesia, Melaka serves as an attractive destination for tourists from Singapore, Indonesia, China, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Europe, America, Australia and Philippines as shown in Table 1.

In line with its major theme of promoting Melaka as a historical city and a cultural state, the state government has listed as its first priority the task of the preservation and conservation of heritage buildings, historical sites and cultural practices. Moving beyond the traditional method of promoting these historical sites and buildings as static attractions (i.e. presenting the sites as unilateral observable objects), the government proposes to introduce these sites as 'living museums' (MPMBB, Structural Plan. 1991-2010). The living museum concept creates an interactive environment as the simulated cultural histories

allow the visitors to participate in the construction of meanings and interpretations.

Table 1
Top Ten Tourist Arrivals in Melaka, 1999 and 2000

Countries	1999	2000
Singapore	355,129	431,630
China	256,100	295,420
Europe	77,358	75,439
Japan	64,302	66,842
Taiwan	23,672	24,685
Hong Kong	23,086	47,190
Indonesia	17,749	31,740
America	17,143	17,262
Australia	11,450	12,280
Philippines	4,778	4,798

Source: Revised from MelakaCom.net, (2003). Tourist Arrivals in Malaysia / Melaka.

Heritage Zone Action Plan

The demarcation of heritage zones (Melaka State Government, 1994) reflects the seriousness of the Melaka State Government to implement its conservation and preservation policy and its living museum concept for historical sites and cultural practices. One of the heritage zones demarcated is the area along Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock (previously named Heeren Street) and Jalan Hang Jebat (previously named Jonker Street, then Jalan Gelanggang). This Heritage Zone bounded by Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock and Jalan Hang Jebat is the oldest heritage zone in Melaka. The State's Plan to develop this Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock-Jalan Jebat Heritage Zone is in line with two objectives:

- (i) preservation and conservation of historical legacies found within the Heritage Zone
- (ii) resource for product development for Melaka's tourism industry

The use of history and culture complements the efforts of the Melaka State Government to enhance Melaka's image as a historical city. On

the 15th of August 1989, the Federal Government conferred upon Melaka the status of Historic City (*Bandaraya Bersejarah*). This declaration is very appropriate as Melaka has a rich and colourful history. Historical bases contributing to the historical image of Melaka include:

- the pre-Malay sultanate era, represented by the *orang asli* (original natives or first people);
- the Malay sultanate era, founded in the early 15th century by a Palembang prince, Parameswara. Parameswara left his home town, Palembang in Sumatra, settled at Temasik (renamed Singapore), and escaped to Melaka after an invasion;
- the colonial era, beginning with capture of Melaka by the Portuguese (1511-1640), then the Dutch (1641-1795) followed by the British (1795-1957) interspersed with the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945); and
- the post-colonial era, beginning with the declaration of independence for Malaya in 1957, followed by the formation of Malaysia (Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak) in 1963 till the present-day

Each of these eras in Melaka's past gives Melaka a distinctive characteristic. Together they embody the special status of Melaka as the oldest state in Malaysia (among 13 states and 3 Federal Territories) with features not found in other Malaysian states or Federal Territories (for example, The Melaka Sultanate with a Chinese Connection; sub-ethnic groups such as Babas, Chittys and Eurasians; colonial legacies and pre-war buildings). This rich past contributes two salient ingredients towards Melaka's distinctiveness:

- its historicity (the link between the present and past remains obvious, enabling the people of Melaka to know their roots and stimulating a sense of continuity)
- its cultural make-up (the cosmopolitan population serves as a cultural reservoir for Melaka as well as symbolising its openness and geniality)

These two ingredients – *historicity* and *cultural make-up* – lay the foundation for the making of Jalan Gelanggang (a.k.a. Jonker Street and Jalan Hang Jebat) into a tourism site.

Jonker Walk: From Street to Walk

"Hang around Jonker Street till night time on Fridays through Sundays and you'll be duly rewarded by the weekly night market. Six pm sees vendors putting their goods up for display as tourists and locals pour into the street, all ready to shop, shop, shop. Hang onto your purse strings while you look through the astonishing variety of snacks, clothes, souvenirs and antiques here. Jonker Street will definitely keep you going strong till the wee hours of the night (Yong, 2000)"

From a Street to a Walk - this is the transformation of Jonker Street into Jonker Walk every Friday evenings, Saturday evenings and Sunday evenings from 6.00pm – 12.00 midnight. What is the meaning of this concept, Jonker Walk? To answer this question, we will have to know about its 'biological mother' - Jonker Street, to understand how Jonker Walk comes to be born out of this multi-faceted and highly versatile street.

JONKER STREET: THE LEGACY OF MELAKA'S HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL PAST

Jonker Street, once called the Noblemen's Street (Tachimoto, undated: 7), or *Kampung Belanda*, Dutch Quarter (De Witt, 2001), represents a rich era of Melaka's historical past. Renamed after the famous Malay warrior, Hang Jebat, present day Jonker Street is a conglomeration of economic, social and religious activities, as represented by the antique and curio shops selling English or Dutch porcelain pieces, Chinese vases, Malay kris and daggers, *Peranakan* silverware, opium beds, and furniture, wooden carvings and collectibles, coffee shops, cafes, silversmiths, artisans and craftsmen, temples, ancestral halls, clan buildings, guild and trade halls, longevity shops, and funeral parlours.

The lengthy and spacious residential buildings, the antique shops, the clan and dialect associations, the narrow roads with no sidewalk or pedestrian walk – all these features give Jonker Street its exclusivity in being the street with a difference in the whole of Melaka.

- Buildings, many dating back to the seventeenth century, with elaborate architectural designs and motifs; length of houses (at least 50 meters long) with courtyards within the confines of individual houses.

- Owners and residents of these pre-war houses used to be the Babas and Nyonyas who are Chinese but not quite Chinese. Their inhabitation of these buildings give the street a conspicuous ethnic and cultural flavour steeped with history and mystery.
- The antique shops plying their wares along the length and breadth of Jonker Street adds credence to the status of the street as one of the oldest streets in Melaka. The antiques act as a link between Melaka's present and her past as many of the antiques displayed have connections with Melaka's reputation as a great trading centre, her colonial era, and her cosmopolitan population. They also serve as a window to the future of Melaka as a developed state rooted in cultural history and economic modernity.
- The clan and dialect associations, and funeral parlours of the Chinese community serve as a gateway to the understanding of the emergence of a plural society in Melaka in particular and Malaysia in general. These associations with their continuing perseverance in representing the needs and interests of their respective members also exemplify the collective responsibility and commitment of human beings over the welfare of fellow human beings in unfamiliar and often intimidating environments.
- The Hang Kasturi and Hang Jebat mausoleums link the present to the era of Melaka sultanate and the social structure of the Malay people.
- Nearby, the "harmony street", renowned for having three streets each represented by a house of worship for the three main ethnic groups of Melaka – Malays, Chinese and Indians. The existence of these three houses of worship reinforces the rich cultural history of Melaka and the Jonker Street Heritage Zone in particular. Jalan Tokong (Temple Street) has the Cheng Hoon Teng Temple, the oldest Chinese temple in Malaysia, built in 1646 with materials brought from China. The temple's main deity is the Goddess of Mercy. Jalan Tukang Emas (The Goldsmith Street) has the Kampung Kling Mosque built in 1748. Jalan Tukang Besi (The Ironsmith Street) has the Sri Poyyatha Vinayagar Moorthi Temple built in 1781. These three houses of worship serve as a living example of the workability of a plural society living and working in a shared space.

TRANSFORMATION: INITIATIVE, CONCEPT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Jonker Walk is not a Night Market

This reproach by the Chief Minister of Melaka, Datuk Wira Mohd Ali Rustam, places the concept of Jonker Walk into perspective (Mingguan Melaka, 6-12 August 2000). The Chief Minister issued the statement in response to the claims by local tourists that Jonker Walk was more like the night markets than a pedestrian mall or culture street with antique settings. The Chief Minister said that the *pasar malam* concept "is not what the government had in mind when the idea was first mooted" (The Star, 12 May 2001). He then reproached the traders at Jonker Walk for not understanding the concept and purpose of Jonker Walk, as specified by the State Government.

According to the Chief Minister, the State Government has defined Jonker Walk as "an antique street, where people could sit and have a drink while enjoying cultural shows as well as take in the splendour of the 18th and 19th century historical buildings lining the street" (The Star, 12 May 2001). Its purpose is to introduce tourists to Melaka's history as well as contemporary lifestyle. Traders at Jonker Walk are supposed to set up businesses along this concept. They are required to sell products associated with or reflect the cultural history and multi-ethnic population of Melaka. For example, if a trader sells drinks, then he or she could prepare the drinks using traditional utensils. Or a trader who sells food could prepare the food in traditional way using traditional methods. Besides savouring the ethnic delicacies, visitors could also observe and learn the traditional methods of preparing and cooking these ethnic foods.

The Chairperson of the Jonker Walk Organising Committee joined the Chief Minister in his reproach of the Jonker Walk traders. He dismissed claims that Jonker Walk looked more like a night market. According to the Organising Chairperson, there is a distinctive difference between night markets and Jonker Walk as a pedestrian mall-cum-culture street. Night market (or *pasar malam*), is a merger between a wet market (selling fresh foods such as vegetables, fish, meat, fruits, cakes, groceries, and dry foodstuff) and a departmental store (selling household products, toiletries, clothes and shoes, VCDs and cassette tapes, drinks and food). Night markets are weekly events held at strategic locations at various housing areas during the evenings (usually between 4.00p.m – 10.00p.m). The main objective of the *pasar malam* is business: selling and buying of goods.

If Jonker Walk was a night market, it would exhibit similar features like any other night markets in the country. It would be a purely commercial business venue, selling foodstuff and products similar to what were sold at the wet markets and departmental stores. Jonker Walk, as the Organising Chairperson emphasised, did not sell most of the things sold at night market. For example, fresh fish, vegetables and meat were not sold at Jonker Walk. How then could Jonker Walk be like a night market.

According to both the Chief Minister and the Organising Chairperson, traders at Jonker Walk were not supposed to turn Jonker Walk into a purely commercial site. They were also not supposed to view themselves as mere commercial traders, intent on making profits per se, but as *cultural ambassadors* of the state of Melaka. Their products and services had to contain the cultural and historical ingredients that would accentuate the promotion of Jonker Walk as an antique and culture street, which would then contribute towards the image of Melaka as a historical city.

A Merger of Two Realities – Museum and Habitat

In theory, Jonker Walk is supposed to be an 'authentic' showcase of the historical and cultural realities of Melaka. This conceptualisation was to be presented through the *living museum* concept, somewhat like the Beamish Open Air Museum at Beamish, Newcastle, England. In this open air museum, historical traditions and cultural practices of a community of people living in a particular period (1901) are brought to life through staged activities and performances of employees of the enterprise. Jonker Walk as a living museum, was to revive and represent the customs, traditions and history of the past generations of Melaka but no longer practised by the present-day residents. "If need be," said the Chief Minister of Melaka, "traders can wear the traditional clothes of traders of yesteryear while conducting their business at Jonker Walk" (Mingguan Melaka, 6-12 August 2000).

In theory too, Jonker Walk was envisaged to be a *living habitat*, somewhat along the concept of a cultural village (for example, the Sarawak Cultural Village at Kuching, Sarawak). The tourism product at Jonker Walk - Jonker Street - is not a fabricated, staged presentation per se but represents the real life scenario of the daily activities of the people of Melaka. Far from being a 'lost street' or relic of the past, Jonker Street represents the hub of the commercial, cultural, and community activities of the people of Melaka.

As a living museum-cum-living habitat, Jonker Walk, as hoped by the Melaka State Government and the Organising Committee, will be a tourism site with a difference as it embodies the historical traditions and cultural realities of the Melaka people, past, present and future. To what extent is this aspiration realised in the development of Jonker Walk as a culture street-cum-heritage site.

Enabling or Disabling Development? Conservation versus Commercialisation

The state government of Melaka has embarked on a campaign to bid for a World Heritage listing for Melaka. In conjunction with this bidding, the Unesco Asia-Pacific representative, Elizabeth Vines, visited Melaka from February 14-17, 2001 for a monitoring mission (The Sunday Mail, 18 May, 2001). Vines commented that Melaka is ideal for tourism with the many historical sites and heritage buildings that would attract the attention of potential visitors. However, she was somewhat alarmed by her observations on the activities carried out in the name of tourism development and promotion by the State Government and private tourism businesses. Expressing her uncertainty on the government's stand on conservation and preservation of historical sites in the state, Vines cautioned that for any tourism project in the state to be successful and sustainable, it has to take into account Melaka's "character, soul and authenticity". It is easy for any tourism developer, government or private, to lose sight of this salient factor, for tourism is but a commercially-oriented industry. However, both the government and private sectors, in their eagerness to make Melaka a successful tourism destination, have to be aware of the effects of commercialisation on conservation. Vines particularly singled out Jonker Walk as an example of "uncontrolled development" and total disregard of conservation. According to Vines, Jonker Walk is beautiful and historic but commercial tourism has detracted tourists from Jonker Walk's original character. Instead, Jonker Walk has been converted into a commercialised tourist attraction. Is this what is happening to Jonker Walk? Do the various stakeholders involved in the making of Jonker Walk share Vines' view on the imbalance between the importance of conservation and the economic interests of the state authorities and tourism businesses?

MELAKA STATE GOVERNMENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Represented by the Chief Minister of Melaka, Datuk Wira Mohd Ali Rustam, the Melaka Municipal Council, Tourism Promotion Unit in

the Chief Minister's Department, and the Police Department of Melaka, these respective government authorities are responsible for the overall tourism development of Melaka. The Chief Minister of Melaka laid the groundwork for the making of Jonker Walk when he proposed the Jonker Walk concept and succeeded in launching his proposal on the 19th of June 2001. The Melaka Municipal Council acts as the voice and executor of the state policies and programs. Hence, it is the main government authority responsible for the conservation and preservation of historical buildings and sites, the provision, development and maintenance of infrastructure, public facilities and services in Melaka town, its beautification and cleanliness programs, welfare and well-being of the Melaka townspeople; and facilities to facilitate businesses, in particular tourism-related facilities and services. In the context of Jonker Walk, the Melaka Municipal Council lists its responsibilities as follows:

- Provision and maintenance of infrastructure, for example, roads at Jonker Walk.
- Provision and maintenance of public facilities and services such as public telephones, public toilets, parking bays, street lighting, cleanliness and clearing of rubbish and drains, public transportation and the inspection of food eateries and drink outlets.
- Ensure proper maintenance and conservation procedures of the historical and cultural heritage of Jonker Street.
- Encourage the appropriate product development in line with the concept of Jonker Walk as a culture-cum-heritage site.

The Melaka Municipal Council has also assisted in organising activities for visitors to Jonker Walk. For example, once a month, the Council will stage a cultural dance performance by the respective ethnic groups of Melaka. The Council has also directed several agencies under its jurisdiction to take charge of the tourism development plan of Jonker Walk in particular. These agencies are the Preservation and Conservation Department, Special Budget Fund and Management Corporation. The Preservation and Conservation Department has a pertinent role in ensuring that the development of Jonker Walk as a tourism attraction is not carried out at the expense of conservation and preservation requirements. The Council has also mandated the formation of a Committee, known as the Jonker Walk Committee, to be directly responsible for the smooth development and effective functioning of Jonker Walk.

For the Tourism Promotion Unit, its sole responsibility is to carry out efficient and effective promotional campaigns for tourism in Melaka. The Unit is guided by the following objectives:

- to promote Melaka as an international tourism destination
- to create awareness among the youths of Melaka concerning the value of historical sites and buildings in Melaka, its cosmopolitan population and multi-cultural heritage
- to encourage research and development in the history and culture of Malaysia and Melaka in particular, so as to provide valid and authentic data
- to promote a network between foreign and local researchers to facilitate exchange of ideas and collaboration of research

The Police Department of Melaka also has a significant role in the development of the tourism industry in Melaka, and Jonker Walk in particular. Under the State Government's embarkation of an aggressive tourism development policy, a special Tourist Police Unit has been set up to provide protection and safeguard the safety of tourists and visitors to Melaka. The Unit also serves as an important source of information about Melaka and places to visit. On Jonker Street, there is a Mobile Police Unit which plays an active role every weekend, Fridays to Sundays, when Jonker Walk comes alive.

Jonker Walk Cultural Associations' Perspective

There are nine Chinese clan and dialect associations on Jonker Street. The existence of these associations can be traced back to the coming of the Chinese from mainland China to Malaya and Melaka, in particular during the mid 19th to early 20th centuries. In essence, these clan and dialect associations acted as a lifeline for the thousands of Chinese migrants who embarked on their perilous and uncertain journey as a lone traveller with the barest possessions and skills. The formation of these clan and dialect associations was a response to the solitude and miserable plight of these early Chinese migrants. Through them, these migrants found a place to belong, share their life experiences and hopes and establish a system of mutual-aid and community development. The nine clan and dialect associations therefore have a pertinent contribution towards the making of Jonker Walk as a historical and culture street. The database on the history, origin and development of each of these associations adds to the attractiveness of Jonker Street/ Jonker Walk as a tourism site.

Some of these associations have actively participated in the Jonker Walk venture. The Hokkien Association for example, organises Chinese calligraphy classes for those interested to learn. The Teochew Association organises lessons for learning Chinese musical instruments. The Hainanese Association sets up a business venture in the form of selling the famous "Hainanese Chicken Rice".

Among the cultural activities organised by the Committee during the period of research (July 2000 – March 2001) were New Year's Eve celebration, Ponggal festival, official lighting of the street lanterns along Jonker Walk by the Chief Minister of Melaka in anticipation of the Chinese New Year celebration; a program called the Asia Family was organised for disabled children and orphans in conjunction with Chinese New Year, Tai Chi presentation by Tai Chi organisations in Malaysia; Wu Shu (Chinese martial arts) exhibition by 15 Wu Shu Organisations; and playing host to representatives and ambassadors from ten foreign countries (Thailand, Philippines, Italy, Bengal, Romania, Chile, Nigeria, Peru, Burma and Hungary).

Some of the clan and dialect associations have also organised activities in the weekends for the visitors. The Char Yang Association and Lai Association, for example, conduct dancing classes in their respective buildings every Friday evening. The Teochew Association offers lessons for learning Chinese classical instruments every Saturday evening. The Hainan Association organises karaoke sessions for the public to participate. Some associations do not organise activities but assist in the decorations for the Chinese New Year. In addition, since the official launching of Jonker Walk as a permanent tourism attraction in Melaka, the Committee has built a permanent stage for performances. As an incentive to encourage an active calendar of activities at Jonker Walk throughout the year, the State Government has waived the requirement for a state permit for any cultural activities held at Jonker Walk.

Jonker Walk Traders' Perspective

The discussion on Jonker Walk traders will be divided into the following subsections: role of traders at Jonker Walk; type of trade and reason for choice of trade selected; level of satisfaction; problems encountered; and perception on reasons why visitors come to Jonker Walk.

Jonker Walk Traders as Cultural Ambassadors.

Traders are encouraged to regard their trading activities at Jonker walk not as a business venture per se, but as part of the state government's

effort to promote tourism in Melaka. When traders apply for their trading license, the committee would brief them on the concept of Jonker walk and the traders' role to convey this concept through their products. For example, a trader intending to sell traditional *nyonya kuih* (nyonya savouries or cakes) may consider demonstrating the method of preparing the *kuih* with traditional utensils and serving the final product the traditional way, for example, with banana leaves and not plastic bags. Traders are also encouraged to sell good quality products at reasonable prices to attract the visitors' attention and motivate them to purchase these products.

Type of Trade and Reason for Choice of Trade at Jonker Walk.

Most of the traders in the survey had a permanent business which they operate during the daytime. Out of the total 120 traders, 105 traders had a full-time business and regarded their trading activities at Jonker Walk during the weekends as a part time activity. Only fifteen of them said their trading activity at Jonker Walk was a full time activity. As for ethnic composition, all but four traders were Chinese. There were only two Malay traders and two Indian traders.

In terms of type of trade these traders engaged in, the list below indicates the broad spectrum of products sold at Jonker Walk by these traders:

- food and drinks. The type of food and drinks sold were *nasi lemak* (coconut milk rice), banana fritters, fruits, *machi* (glutinous rice cut into tiny pieces and rolled with groundnuts), Hainanese savouries and sweets, mutton soup, steamboat, pineapple tarts, kaya jam, biscuits, flour noodles, coffee powder, food specialities of Melaka such as *dodol*, *titbits*, *cincalok*, baked sponge cakes, shrimp paste (*belacan*), laksa Melaka, *kuih bakar*, *popia* nyonya, and chicken rice balls. The type of drinks sold included sugar cane drinks, *lo han kuo* and fruit juices
- books and magazines
- antiques
- groceries, house accessories and kitchenware
- souvenirs (necklaces, earrings, bracelets) and clothes
- toys
- handicraft
- vases

- fortune telling
- decorative clogs, ornamental jewellery and sunglasses
- bric-a-brac including baskets, handmade accessories, umbrellas, and massage equipment
- Chinese herbal medicine

Reasons for Trading at Jonker Walk.

The traders' responses to this question indicated that they were more interested in the profit making prospects of Jonker Walk rather than its tourism objectives. The traders set up their businesses at Jonker Walk to earn additional income; to gain more experience in business; because there was only the need to apply for a licence from the Committee and not from the state government; flexible working hours as Jonker Walk only operates during the evenings every Friday to Sunday. Jonker Street is a tourist attraction, so trading at Jonker Walk promises good prospects. Operating costs are also low as there are no specific trading rules and no overhead expenses. The products they intended to sell, for example, nyonya and Chinese food, corresponded with the concept of Jonker Walk as a historical and culture street.

Some traders said their houses were located on Jonker Street itself, hence it was a good opportunity to take advantage of the opportunity to open a stall in front of their houses. A couple of traders said they were approached by the Jonker Walk Committee to participate as their family business was in line with the cultural content of Jonker Walk. Some traders said they had nothing to do in the evenings hence trading at Jonker Walk was a way to spend their leisure time. Also, some traders were members of the clan and dialect associations and they decided to open a stall at Jonker Walk after seeing other clan members doing so or when their friends encouraged them to do so.

Hence, from the traders' responses, we would not be surprised if these traders did not demonstrate any effort to present the traditional, historical and cultural content of the goods sold.

Traders' Perceptions on Visitors' Choice Of Jonker Walk.

The traders' responses to this question indicated a high level of attribution of visitor motivation upon the cultural and historical content of Jonker Walk. According to these traders, visitors chose to come to Jonker Walk because they wanted to see the:

- rich cultural environment;
- cultural performances and participate in the cultural activities;
- historical buildings with elaborate carvings;
- Chinese traditional food sold at open air food stalls surrounded by historical buildings;
- traditional ethnic-based products such as decorative clogs, handmade beaded shoes, figurines, and trinkets;
- Baba-nyonya heritage;
- 'Street of Antiques'; and
- 'Recreation Street'.

From the responses outlined above, can we say that there is an apparent gap between the traders' own motivations to trade at Jonker Walk and their perceptions of the visitors' motivations to visit Jonker Walk? While the traders were moved by the desire to earn money, the visitors according to these traders, were interested in the historical and cultural content of Jonker Walk and savour whatever was on offer at a leisurely pace, in line with its image as a culture street and pedestrian mall. Would the visitors be able to experience culture and history through the commercial products? The responses of these visitors to be presented below will enlighten readers on this question.

Jonker Walk Consumers' Perspective

The total number of consumers interviewed in the research was 180 people. Of these, 90 were local Malaysians and 90 were foreign tourists. Most of the Malaysians were Melaka residents, and most of them were from the Chinese community. Very few Malays or Indians were seen visiting Jonker Walk. Among the foreign tourists frequently encountered were Europeans, Americans, Canadians, English, Australians, followed by Singaporeans, Filipinos, Koreans, and Japanese.

Almost all the visitors interviewed travelled with family members or friends. Three foreign visitors said they were with a tour group while another said he was travelling alone. On how they knew about Jonker Walk, the sources of information was as follows in order of frequency: friends; family members; tourist guides/tour operators; tourism brochures/maps; own transport; by chance through stroll; website; taxi; hotel staff; and general media like newspapers, magazines, television and radio.

On why they chose to visit Jonker Walk, most of the respondents said they were attracted by the descriptions of Jonker Walk as a *culture street* and an *antique street*. These respondents thought they would be able to learn something about the people of Melaka and their cultures through Jonker Walk. In line with this perception, the respondents said they expected to see old and ancient buildings, temples, and pre-war shop houses; traditional products such as antiques, ethnic food and handicrafts, souvenirs, and cultural performances such as traditional dances, games and activities.

While the majority of the visitors interviewed thought Jonker Walk was a *culture street* depicting all the cultures and ethnic groups of Melaka, some visitors said that they expected Jonker Walk to be a *Chinatown* in line with the brochures and information sheets on Jonker Walk. There were to be Chinese cultural performances especially in conjunction with the celebrations for Chinese festivals, colourful street lighting using Chinese red lanterns and Chinese-based decorations.

The visitors also thought they would be able to buy a wide range of products at reasonable prices as Jonker Walk was described as a pedestrian mall. These visitors had expected to see stalls lined up along the length and breadth of the street, offering customers bargain prices.

They expected Jonker Walk, as a pedestrian mall, to be sensitive to customer needs and as such, to be more consumer friendly. They therefore expected to see tourist information booths, proper signboards and tourist guide services at Jonker Walk to assist the uninformed visitors. These visitors also expected to find public toilets, parking lots, public telephones especially those with International Direct Dialling Service, proper lighting with bright streetlights, and abundant parking lots. As a pedestrian mall and culture street, the visitors expected to take their time to stroll and amble through the street of Jonker Walk without fear and hassle of traffic.

Were the expectations of these visitors met when they visited Jonker Walk? The majority of the visitors interviewed expressed satisfaction with Jonker Walk and what was available. One visitor described Jonker Walk as "a walk with a difference as unlike the Chinatowns of Bangkok and Vietnam," here at Jonker Walk, they were able to enjoy a peaceful walk. They were not forced by the traders to buy their products. Furthermore, they were not hassled by beggars and street children who would pull at their clothes and arms to force them to buy their products.

The visitors were also satisfied with the products sold at Jonker Walk. The goods were of good quality with reasonable prices. In terms of ambience, the visitors said the overall environment and atmosphere at Jonker Walk was lively, friendly and clean. The pre-war buildings and unique architectural styles enhanced the historical dimension of Jonker Walk.

However, for those visitors who thought Jonker Walk was a Chinatown, they were disappointed with the reality. Although there were Chinese cultural performances and traditional food, the emphasis of traders was more on the final commercial product and not on the 'traditional' process of production. On the other hand, for those who thought that Jonker Walk was a culture street, they too were disappointed as the traders and the products were dominated by the Chinese. Many of the local visitors made the observation that the Muslims in particular, and non-Chinese people in general might be reluctant to visit Jonker Walk. Muslims might be unwilling to buy food from Jonker Walk as they had to take into consideration their religion's food prohibitions (*halal-haram* requirement).

In terms of infrastructure, most of the visitors had also expressed a high level of dissatisfaction. There was only one public toilet available and when the visitors (as well as traders) needed to use the toilets, they had to approach the clan and dialect associations or the shops at Jonker Walk. Insufficient streetlights, parking bays, public transportation, signboards, rubbish bins, public telephones ranked as the most common grievances forwarded by the visitors interviewed.

CONCLUSION

The State Government and the Jonker Walk Committee have the unenviable task of making sure that Jonker Walk sustains its novelty as a culture street, the first of its kind in Melaka. To achieve this, the Committee has to work hard to educate the traders on the concept of Jonker Walk and the use of culture and history as its basis for product development. This endeavour is an unenviable task as the meaning of Jonker Walk as a *culture street* is nebulous.

On paper, Jonker Walk is presented as a culture street and not a night market. The closing of the street to traffic has also lent support to the notion of Jonker Walk as a *pedestrian mall*. Visitors are able to stroll leisurely along the length and breadth of the Walk, enjoying the stalls

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