

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF UNIQUENESS, COMFORT, SECURITY AND SAFETY TO PLACE ATTACHMENT

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### Graphical abstract



### Abstract

Uniqueness, comfort, security and safety are attributes in a place that can influence the place attachment. Place attachment is the relationship of function and emotional components between people and place that creates meaning. Place attachment in public open spaces is usually related with the bond of the people and its physical environment and also the perception either negative or positive of the place. This research examine the role of uniqueness, comfort, security and safety as attributes which influenced the place attachment in the Kuching Riverfront Promenade (KRP), a popular public space among the locals people. Mixed method approach was using in this research to discovers the role of attributes to place attachment. A total of 165 respondents and 18 stall operators were interviewed, at the same time field survey was conducted in a selected area of the promenade. Findings indicated that the attributes: uniqueness, comfort, security and safety have a strong impact to respondents to identify the local environment and it exerts influence on the place attachment.

Keywords: Place attachment, uniqueness, comfort, security and safety

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Some of the different attributes and characteristics in a particular situation were believed create a place in a well-developed city. A number of attributes identifies in creating a responsive environment are permeability, variety, legibility, robustness, visual appropriateness, richness and personalization [1]. On a contrary another scholar recorded several attributes in creating a good place, such as: character, continuity and enclosure, quality of public realm, ease of movement, legibility, adaptability and diversity [2]. In addition, several of the attributes also described as a successful place: comfort, image, access, linkage, uses, activity and sociability [3]. Five dimensions to form a good city also revealed: vitality, sense, fit, access and control, efficiency and justice [4]. Subject to the question of developing quality for

place making consists of scale, intensity, permeability, landmark, adaptability, cognition, perception, information, diversity, vitality, transactions and cultural events [5].

This research was carried out at the KRP and it focuses on identifying the uniqueness, comfort, security and safety as attributes in a place and their characteristics that influence the place attachment. KRP is sited at the main street of the city that expands almost 1 mile along the south side of the Sarawak River, that linked the main business district that form the main precinct of the city center. KRP was officially opened on 3rd September 1993. The development of the riverfront also led to the diversification of activities for the community and visitors and also maintained the historical legacy of the beginning of Kuching town. The rich culture of the local also exposed through the art and craft of

the elements used in the two dimensional and sculptural design of the riverfront.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Uniqueness, comfort, security and safety are attributes in a place that influence the place attachment [2]. Uniqueness is a specific feature which is adopted in urban context, the dominant and unique that distinguishes it from other places [6]. Comfort is an attribute of a successful public space and a measure of public good [2], [7]. It relates to the dimensions of the environment (such as: relief from the sun, wind); physical facilities (comfortable and sufficient seating) and social and psychological comfort (depending on the character and atmosphere of the room) [2]. In psychology, safety and security (safety and security) concerning threats, fears and dangers that affect the city's image and the perception of consumers in a negative way. Crime, road safety, vandalism is a problem that affects the places in the city. However, the presence of people in open space areas was to improve the sense of security to reduce the suspicions [7].

## 3.0 METHODOLOGY

This research was focuses on identifying the uniqueness, comfort, security and safety that influence the place attachment. Mixed method technique applied in this research since urban design discipline is reflected as multi-dimensional aspects [8] [9], [10]. Accordingly, the mix-method approach is proper to be used in discovering the phenomenon of the place. Various sources of facts and data were collected from the field survey and interview. This method was used based on the assumption that the bias that occurs will be balanced when the sources and methods is triangulated [11]. Triangulation method is suitable for investigating each layer of phenomenon, finding the meeting point of the data in providing to enhance the scope and range of the research [11].

Complementary method such as observation and urban character assessment are used in the case study to create a more complete exemplification of the general physical appearances of the case study area. In this method, the researchers acted as outside observers (outsider), while the activity pattern was documenting by photographic and written documents. The urban character defined the criteria such as uniqueness, comfort, safety and security. Indicator for each attribute created for the evaluation is cross examining with the literature. The format of this assessment is planned based on a 5 point scale derived from the objectivity quality measurement.

165 respondents were accompanied in survey with consist of the mobile users (82) and static users (83). The static user are the shops-owner, the shops-

keeper and sidewalk vendors whereas the mobile users are the visitors, students and local residents who came to visit the place. However, 18 in depth interview were also carried out to the respondents.

## 4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Uniqueness and Comfort

Observation noted that apart from the general characteristics, every specific open space has its own quality. The results of the interviews have shown that the popularity of the KRP is supported by the diversity and activity. KRP is successful maintaining its popularity that has been identified as open space with historic character surroundings and generally maintains the pattern of traditional transaction. Table 1 shown an above average result which suggests that the place has been considered as a unique riverfront promenade in the city center.

Different quality [12] and uniqueness [6] influences the respondents to identify the attributes of the place. Results of the survey showed that respondents identified the promenade as a unique open space as an attractions than any other places. The uniqueness of KRP is contributed by the community who work and depend on the business in the area. Despite constant changes in the type of products and prices the core business and present of consumer have not changed. This can be explained by the ability of the place to establish an identity of the promenade that formed by business activities to serve the people respected by the socio-cultural background of the users and sellers.

**Table 1** Characteristics associated with uniqueness based on average value

ELEMENT	STATEMENT		AVG VALUE	
			KRP	STD. DEV
UNIQUENESS N=165	01	Have attractive open space (attractive)	2.58	.682
	02	Different with any aother place (different)	2.82	.540
	03	Unique atmosphere (unique)	2.96	.537
	04	Better known as historic promenade in the city (historical)	2.96	.540
Response format: 1 = strongly disagree 4 = strongly agree			Average Value	2.83

The findings suggest that the respondent engagement and the attachment to the promenade, is faithfully related to human and their cultural diversity. The following statement described the cultural characteristics of places: "It is a privilege to be here and watch all kinds of human behavior especially during weekends" (Respondent 2: Hawker; 13 years of engagement) KRP

Respondents identified several people from different. It has been observed that the kinds of

character suitable to the needs of specific cultural groups and user support a different atmosphere. That contributes to the place attachment. Defined by the expression of the local people, theory explains that the object and quality is manifested in place experience to control public perception of the uniqueness, strength and authenticity of the identity of the place [6].

**Table 2** Relationship between uniqueness and emotional attachment

PLACE	ATTACHMENT	UNIQUENESS (N=165)			
		impressive	different	unique	historical
KRP	ATTACHED	57.0%	79.7%	75.9%	75.7%

Note: Percentage indicates the level of agreement

Table 2 indicated the strong relationship between the uniqueness and emotional attachment of the place. The majority of respondents noticed KRP as different (Statement 02: "Unlike other places") and unique (Statement 03: "The atmosphere is unique") also sensed that they had been tied to a place (tied: "I bonded with this place"), while those who consider the place is rich in of historical context (Statement 04: Known as both historical promenade City Center) also agree that they have an attachment to the place. It shows the importance of different images in influencing emotional attachment.

Urban character assessment for the uniqueness is shown in Table 3 Scale of 3.50 (68%) indicated that the KRP is successful in the aspects of uniqueness. It is argued that the images of the places can influence the user attachment. It is closely related to the emotional and feeling aspects of place attachment, associated with the unique elements of the local culture, history and memory of place, especially the riverfront promenade which makes it quite different from other places.

**Table 3** Urban character assessment: Uniqueness

IMAGE_Uniqueness		KRP	
Criteria	Performance Indicator	Rating (1-5)	Total % average
UNIQUENESS Quality of differences, unique	01 Attractive open space	4	14/20 (68%) 3.50
	02 Differ with any other place	3	
	03 Unique atmosphere	3	
	04 Better known as historic promenade in the city	4	
Rating scale: 5: extremely succeed - 4: succeed - 3: fairly succeed - 2: less succeed - 1: not succeed			

Comfort is one of important elements that affect attachment which is identified by the respondents. Physical, psychological and environmental comfort contributing to user satisfaction, ease and comfort

with an atmosphere will encourages longer period of interaction and engagement. Scale 2:50 as shown in Table 4 suggest that the perception of respondents to the characteristics associated with comfort is about the same. KRP physically was seen as the most comfortable open space. The majority of respondents sensed that the promenade has high quality public facilities and goods.

**Table 4** Characteristics associated with comfortable based on average value

ELEMENT	STATEMENT	AVG VALUE	
		KRP	STD. DEV
COMFORTABLE N=165	01 Very comfortable space to sit and relax (comfortable)	3.04	.472
	02 Very good quality of facilities (facilities)	2.31	.820
	03 Clean air and environment (environment)	2.96	.491
	04 Well maintained and managed (maintain)	2.14	.832
Response format: 1 = strongly disagree 4 = strongly agree		Average Value	2.50

KRP is responsive to users and pedestrians for achieving comfort and convenience. Ease of open space is easily understood and accessible for pedestrians to enhance a sense of direction and orientation of the area. The main elements that support the pedestrian experience along the promenade are the provision of seating and canopy for different activities such as resting, eating, drinking, waiting and watching people. Sidewalks with shade a trees create a sense of protection from the adjacent traffic flow.

**Table 5** Urban character assessment: Comfortable

IMAGE_Comfortable		KRP	
Criteria	Performance indicator	Rating (1-5)	Total % average
COMFORTABLE comfortable place, relaxed and convenient.	01 Comfortable place to sit and relax	3	27/40 (68%) 2.78
	02 Sufficient parking	2	
	03 Good connectivity to walk	4	
	04 Good quality of facilities	3	
	05 Clean air and environment	5	
	06 Well managed and maintained	3	
	07 Short distance to transport mode	4	
	08 Street lights	3	
Rating scale: 5: extremely succeed - 4: succeed - 3: fairly succeed - 2: less succeed - 1: not succeed			

Results of the interviews clearly showed that psychological comfort expresses comfortable sense

to the environment because of the high level of familiarity with the place or the people in it. Integration of period and familiarity with the place can influence the level of comfort, it is important to develop an attachment on it.

Table 5 displays the results of urban character assessment of comfort which is consistent with the pattern of the survey results. In summary, the environmental comfort will influences user attachment to the open space. This is consistent with the argument that cleanliness is a priority to generate people attention to visit the place and its implementation can encourage a longer place engagement [13].

#### 4.2 Security and Safety

Security and safety are the two main characters closely related to the physical and psychological comfort. The results in Table 6 showed that the respondents identified KRP as safe and secure place (average scale: 2.38). This study has identified that the safety and security of a place is closely associated with fear of crime, the presence of illegal user or seller, illegal trading activities and social unhealthy phenomena are were observed by the secure of officer in the area.

Interview with tourist police officer on duty in the area revealed that the number of crimes increased during weekends and public holidays, especially late midnight. It is caused by the increasing intensity of buyers and visitors who frequent the area. Crimes are often committed by drug addicts and immigrants workers. A feeling of discomfort and fear expressed by respondents related to their static drug activity at night affecting sense of security and safety of the promenade and increased vandalism to public facilities. *"I am not satisfied with the situation here, the theft problem such as a handbag snatching are commonly happen."* (Respondent 2: Hawker, 25 years of engagement) KRP.

**Table 6** Characteristics associated with security and safety based on average value

ELEMENT	STATEMENT		AVG VALUE	
			KRP	STD. DEV
SECURITY & SAFETY N=330	01	Secure and safe (secure)	2.27	.856
	02	There are people in pedestrian and environment (pedestrian)	2.50	.670
Response format: 1 = strongly disagree 4 = strongly agree			Average Value	2.38

The survey suggests that the intensity and continuity of pedestrian influences the sense of security and safety. The survey found that a variety of activities such as street hawkers, the existence of eating place on the promenade and the presence of tourist police has contributed to a sense of security. It can be associated with psychological

comfort due to the presence of people around. This is in line with the ideas of the presence of the public to form its natural informal surveillance (eye upon the street) developed through various activities and functions [13], the presence of safety guard [8], [12], enhances the confidence of the spirit of safety to remain in open space. Figure 1 shows the unique atmosphere in KRP, Figure 2 demonstrates the comfortable place to sit and relax in KRP



**Figure 1** Unique atmosphere in KRP



**Figure 2** Comfortable place to sit and relax in KRP

Ac can be seen from Figure 3, there is good connectivity for walking in KPR.



**Figure 3** Good connectivity for walking in KRP

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

Attributes related with the uniqueness, comfort, security and safety plays an important role in supporting the attachment function of the promenade. All available attributes were almost deeply distinguished by respondents in KRP, therefore, it can be a reason to conclude that KRP has a vigorous place attachment and showed robust function and emotional attachment. The whole results of the urban character assessment indicated that the KRP is measured success. KRP also received a positive perception from the respondents. The uniqueness and comfort plays an important role in enhancing the ability of the promenade as a place for work and leisure. Whereas variety of activities

such as street hawkers, the existence of eating place on the promenade and the presence of tourist police has contributed to a sense of security and safety

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