

THE EVOLUTION OF INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE OF LOBBY DESIGN IN HERITAGE HOTELS IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia is strategically located at the crossroad between East and West. Due to this ideal location, this country has been exposed to many foreign influences and cultures. The Portuguese was the first colonial power that set up their establishment in Peninsular Malaysia. This was then followed by the Dutch and later on the British. Among these three colonial powers, it was the British that ultimately secured their sovereignty over this land. Under British administration, Malaysia adopted their architectural styles with strong local identities that fit with the climate of the country. These influences can be observed in many heritage hotel buildings across Malaysia especially Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Perak and Melaka. This paper focuses on elements of heritage in colonial buildings, interior design of the landmarks and how these aspects exemplify the profound heritage of Malaysia's rich and long history. The purpose of this study is to identify the evolutionary features of the interior design and the sustainability of the original characteristics. This research studies heritage colonial buildings and their interior architecture's requirements. Ultimately, recommendations and guidelines in designing interior architecture in colonial buildings in areas with strong heritage inspiration can be published. In conclusion, this study discusses the condition or criteria of the interior architecture in heritage buildings for future references.

Keywords: *Boutique Hotel, Colonial Building, Heritage Building, Interior Architecture, Design & Build*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the National Heritage Malaysia Act 2005 (Act 645), heritage building is a building or groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science. Heritage is generally defined as something of significance or value that is inherited from one generation to another JWN (2017). In 2017, Malaysia received a total of 25,948,459 international tourists and recorded a 0.1% growth in tourist receipts, thus contributing RM82.2 billion to the country's revenue (Tourism Board of Malaysia, 2017). It shows that the hotel industry in Malaysia is growing at a faster rate. Some of the structures in colonial time hotels in Malaysia were built in 1932. An icon of Malaya's boom years leading to World War II, hotels became the place for glamorous social events, government receptions and the residence for prominent international visitors. The anticipated growth in the tourism industry will require the expansion of tourism related infra-structures and facilities and thus offers wide ranging investment opportunities for entrepreneurs, particularly the hotel sub-sector. To further facilitate the growth of the tourism industry, the government has taken efforts to re-examine its regulations and procedures so that they will be streamlined to reduce bureaucracy and increase efficiency. Among the initiatives taken is the improvement made to the approval and licensing

requirements to start a hotel business. (Stages of Approvals in Starting the Hotel Business, 2009). Heritage buildings turned into boutique hotels are now popular and in trend because of their unique architecture especially the physical nature of the buildings.

2. HERITAGE BUILDINGS & HISTORICAL COLONIAL BUILDINGS IN MALAYSIA

Heritage buildings form a significant part of the heritage industry around the world. The transformation of heritage buildings to boutique hotels nowadays has become a trend especially in major cities across Malaysia. The conservation method as adaptive reuse in converting boutique hotels is becoming trendy and attracting visitors to stay in colonial buildings. The evolution of heritage buildings turned boutique hotels focused on the physical aspect of the building especially interior design. This research will focus on the preservation, prevention and consolidation of interior design in heritage buildings. Besides that, the researcher also focuses on economic strata of the area after renovation of heritage buildings into boutique hotels. Value changes of hotels is one of aspects identified by the researcher in studying the impact on social value. This study also identifies interior designs based on aspects of the layout plans in heritage buildings and the function of every space provided by the architect. It will also determine the concepts of interior design to include materials and finishings used in the heritage buildings. These numerous design schemes and the characteristics of the case study that is implemented in heritage hotels will be documented as a reference for future development of heritage hotels and for those who are interested to study these topics in the future. According to Heritage of Malaysia Trust (1990), the architectural style of Malaysia has been classified according to the building styles. It consists of influences by the European, Chinese, Malay and Indian sources that were a mixture of various styles modified to the Malaysian environment. These included Indian Kingdoms (7th-14th Centuries), Malay Vernacular (pre-15th Century to present), Straits Eclectic (15th Century to mid-20th Century), Chinese Baroque (19th Century to early 20th Century), Chitya Indian Vernacular (15th Century to Mid-20th Century), Colonial (17th Century to mid-20th Century) and Modern (1950s – 1980s).



Figure 2.1: Sultan Abdul Samad Building in 1920

Source: "Malaysia: A Pictorial History 1400-2004" Wendy Khadijah

3. HISTORY OF HOTEL LOBBY DESIGN

According to A. Rutes (2001) the history of hotel lobby began in the past century, the lobby area was actually as a hub for hotel activities, giving access to all or most of the public's facilities as well as to the guestrooms. All lobby area is actually similar regardless of types of hotels. Among the many public areas of the hotel, the lobby makes the single greatest impact on the guests and visitors to the hotel. The design of the lobby, whether intimate or expansive, formal or casual, sets the tone for the hotel or resort. (A. Rutes, 2001). For most of the past century, until the Hyatt Regency Hotel opened in Atlanta Georgia in 1967, most hotel lobbies were relatively small, designed along the same economic principles as the rest of the hotel. However, in the 1970s emphasis shifted toward larger lobbies, not only in convention hotels and mixed-used complexes, but also in smaller hotels built in suburban areas and at airports. The end of the twentieth century, with the increase in hotel specialization, showed evidence of a return to more intimate interior space, especially in the super-luxury all-suite, and conference-centered categories (A. Rutes 2001).

3.1 Development of the Hotel Lobby in Malaysia

Development of the hotel lobby in Malaysia followed the guideline by Malaysia Association of Hotels (Ministry of Tourism Malaysia, 2001), where the minimum requirement for stars rating in hotels are based on (Malaysia Association of Hotels Minimum Requirement for Star Rating of Hotels, 2002). That included the reception area (hall, lounge, lobby) main entrance, facilities for the disabled also well-appointed & well-decorated spacious lobby/lounge with sitting for reading and writing areas commensurating with the size of the hotel with sitting facilities. Besides that, having a suitable main entrance with special provisions for the disabled and non-smoking area must be made available.

3.2 Spatial Organization

Spatial organization is actually how well space is utilized and organized. Organization is systematic arranging or coordinating parts into a coherent unity or functioning whole (K. Ching 1995). The extension of lobby areas is to widen the hotel and each hotel is different in design and approach at the lobby area. Large hotels, which need to attract public interest, usually emphasize the expansive, even spectacular, extension of space as in the atrium design. In this case, the lobby usually includes restaurants, bars, kiosks, and lounges-on one floor or with mezzanine levels-sharing the same space (Lawson1995). The space for lobby area must follow the architectural character, space and functions to be accommodated (*ibid*).

3.3 Planning Requirement

The planning requirement of lobby area depends on the design, planning and types of hotels. The designer must be consider the part of the design, circulation and planning in the lobby area. According to A. Rutes (2001), the planning objectives for the lobby include entrances: consider additional exterior entrances for the main lobby, banquet facilities, restaurants, health club, or other high traffic areas. Front desk location: locate the desk so that it is immediately visible to the entering hotel guest and so that desk personnel can visually oversee access to the passenger elevators. Office's access: provide entrances to the front offices, safe deposit area, executive offices, and sales and catering offices. Guest's elevators: locate elevators close to the front desk and the main entrance and provide sufficient elevators lobby space for handling luggage. Seating area: provide a seating area near the desk and entrance including some private seating groups; locate additional seating contiguous with the lobby bar. Circulation: establish clear paths to the front desk, elevators, restaurants and bars, meeting and banquet areas; where possible, separate hotel guest traffics from convention-oriented visitors. Retail areas: provide lease space convenient to the guest circulation areas or with exterior frontage. Bellman/luggage: position bellman station near the front desk, elevators, and front entrance; locate luggage storage nearby. Support functions: locate such accessory functions as toilets, coats, house phones, public phones, meeting directory and assistant manager's desk conveniently in relation to other areas.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the evolution of the interior architecture of lobby design in Malaysian heritage hotels need to be studied in more detail for future reference. As shown in this study, the hotel lobby represents the identity of high end hotels and the classification of different types of hotels. The authenticity of design in the lobby area applied the same of concepts in different approach style but the method of design as historical building is the same. The designs of British colonial buildings in Malaysia have their own character. Many older hotels designed their lobbies to become easier to use and more efficient in creating a homey environment for travelers. Retail, lobby bar, car rental, concierge and business center services are few outlets have become standard lobby fixtures (Worcester 2000). The researcher will continue the research based on the topic in the future.

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