

TOURISM SERVICE DESIGN: PROMOTING MALAYSIAN CULTURE THROUGH  
NATIONAL IDENTITY AT KUALA LUMPUR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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## ABSTRACT

Airport is a great place to exhibit local values and the spirits of a country. The purpose of this study was to explore how airports can become a potentially an immersive space that evokes the local culture to create a sense of place for travellers. Nine international participants were selected from Asia, Europe and America countries with different educational background. Qualitative data collection methods included one month ethnographic observation, service design workshop and interviews. The first phase of data collection methods consists of gaining customers' insight from various instruments such as persona, user journey map and role play simulation. These instruments were applied to understand the customer's journey and user experience from a specific persona's perspective. Followed by second phase, semi-structured interviews with a brand expert. The data were analysed using a qualitative data analysis program, NVivo12, to develop 'coding' process. Results show introducing the Malaysian culture in the airport through showcasing video of local attractions; games and arts; local music; providing a taste of local food; promoting on Borneo cultural features; providing local culture ambience; digitalisation; seasonal events; constructing identity through festivals and utilising various local musical instruments. The implication of this study will help the KLIA to promote our local culture and identity within the context of airport service environment and becomes one of the most important tourists' attractions for Malaysia.





## REKA BENTUK PERKHIDMATAN PELANCONGAN: MEMPROMOSIKAN KEBUDAYAAN MALAYSIA MELALUI IDENTITI NASIONAL DI LAPANGAN TERBANG ANTARABANGSA KUALA LUMPUR

### ABSTRAK

Lapangan terbang adalah tempat yang sesuai untuk memperlihatkan nilai-nilai tempatan dan semangat kebangsaan. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menerokai potensi bagaimana lapangan terbang mampu menjadi ruang imersif yang membangkitkan suasana budaya tempatan bagi mewujudkan rasa persekitaran sebenar kepada pelawat. Seramai sembilan orang responden antarabangsa telah dipilih dari negara Asia, Eropah dan Amerika dengan latar belakang pendidikan yang berbeza. Kaedah pengumpulan data kualitatif termasuk pemerhatian etnografi selama satu bulan, bengkel reka bentuk perkhidmatan dan temu bual. Fasa pertama kaedah pengumpulan data melibatkan pemahaman mendalam pelanggan melalui instrumen seperti persona, peta perjalanan pengguna dan simulasi main peranan. Instrumen ini digunakan untuk memahami perjalanan pengguna dari perspektif peribadi seseorang. Seterusnya adalah fasa kedua, iaitu temu bual separa berstruktur dengan pakar jenama. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan program analisis data kualitatif, NVivo12, untuk proses 'coding' yang dibangunkan. Kesimpulan kajian ini boleh digunakan sebagai titik permulaan untuk memperkenalkan budaya Malaysia di dalam kawasan lapangan terbang melalui tayangan video tempat-tempat menarik; permainan dan kesenian; muzik tempatan; merasai makanan tempatan; mempromosikan ciri-ciri kebudayaan Borneo; menyediakan suasana budaya tempatan; digitalisasi; acara bermusim, membina identiti melalui acara perayaan dan memperkenalkan pelbagai alatan muzik Malaysia. Implikasi kajian ini akan membantu KLIA bagi mempromosikan budaya dan identiti tempatan dalam konteks persekitaran perkhidmatan lapangan terbang dan menjadi satu daripada daya tarikan pelancong untuk Malaysia.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

3D Three Dimensional

CARD Collaborative Analysis of Requirements and Design

COO County Of Origin

KLIA Kuala Lumpur International Airport

MAHB Malaysia Airport Holding Berhad

PICTIVE Collaborative Technology Initiatives through Video Exploration

SDT Service Design Thinking

UX User Experience Design

## LIST OF APPENDICES

- A Semi-structured Questions
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- C Verification of Translation

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

The airport is not a destination for air travellers. This is the transition point that connects people to business and loved ones. Today's airport customers look forward to a modern and inspired airport to give a seamless, efficient and immersive experience from the moment they arrive at the airport. The customers' looking ahead to the advanced technology for check-in and boarding facilities, distinctive shopping and feasting experiences, a variety of ground transportation choices, state of the art communications and a feeling of place. The best airports are now constantly exceeding these basic requirements and are evolving to continuously improve the experience. Since airports are





the natural gateways and often the first point of contact with the local destination and local cultural, it is a popular concept to create a sense of place within and through the airport (Losekoot, 2015). Many airports are like a shopping mall, restaurant row and cultural experience – all under one roof. In addition to physical elements, visitors can extend their travelling experience by experiencing parts of the local culture without leaving the building and by consuming a lot of things through the trip.

Airport function in relation to national image. The national image may be comprehended as the total of people's beliefs and impressions of the place (Morgan et al., 2011). The image represents a number of associations and information simplifications associated with the place. They are the product of intermediate attempts in the process of



processing and extracting important information from a large data number of relevant locations. The image of a country comes from its history, music and art, famous citizens, proclamations, geography and other characteristics (Saunders, 2016). The media and the entertainment industry are particularly important part in shaping an individual's viewpoint about a place, particularly those who see them as negative (Morgan et al., 2011). Country images may affect individuals' investing, purchasing, voyaging, and changing residence decisions (De Sousa, 2014).

National image is important for tourism. Tourism is one of the fastest developing industries in the world. Malaysia has turned into a well-known travel destination for worldwide tourists in recent years (Lim, 2017). According to UNTWO World Tourism Barometer (2017), international tourists increased by 3.9% to 12.35 million in year 2016.



Malaysia is a very unique nation. Malays, Indians, Chinese and other ethnic groups live together in peace and harmony where Malaysia is a bustling melting pot of races and religions. Multiculturalism has not only made Malaysia a paradise for gastronomy, but it also made Malaysia home to hundreds of colourful cultural and religious festivals.

Today, branding concept is not just limited to products and services, but it is used to form the image of the country (Kyriacou & Cromwell, 2007). Branding is an important aspect of creating a strong brand image and creating brand awareness; it increases marketing communication efficiency, improving the productivity efficiency and generating customer loyalty (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003). A strong brand is not just between organizations and associations, but as well as for nations (Kotler et al., 1999; Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009). Strong country brands can increase tourism and other businesses, encourage investments, create visibility and generate a positive recognition of the nation, there are plenty of advantages to increase the economic revenue of a country (Fetscherin, 2010).

The first impression is essential in forming the feeling of a place on arrival. As stated by Chief Commercial Officer Budapest Airport, Kam Jandu, the airport is the first and last impression experienced by travellers. Thus, it must be a heart-warming experience (Budapest Airport, 2015). In order to encourage people to spend more time in the airport, the airport makes it possible to interact with multiple cultures and to the immersive space that evokes local culture, ecology, architecture, biology, worldviews and commerce where airport should become (Amadeus, 2012). Also, travellers highlight to the requirement for



consistency, control and manageability, customized experiences, and the need for an appropriate level of service strength (Aworì et al., 2012).

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Regardless of whether it is managed or not, it is assumed that there are images in all places (Fan, 2006; Anholt, 2003; Gilmore, 2002; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002). Based on the opinions of other parties, a place that does not associate with the branding process will often be positioned (Gilmore, 2002), since images are often based on earlier knowledge and personalized in individual comments, and it should not be appropriate information.

(Anholt, 2007). Positive brand image creates a great reputation for the company, which generates great profits, however negative brand image can lead consumers to ignore the product or services (Keller, 1993).

In addition, people may have a negative perception about the country due to historical events such as human or natural disasters (Jansen, 2008). A negative image most likely can last even after a crisis is over and impact a country over an extended period of time (Gilmore, 2002), this could be seen as a potential obstacle in their plan of attracting tourist to the country, especially since the image of the country is one of the key factors in the customers' decision making process of choosing one destination over another (MacKay & Fesenmayer, 1997). The major incidents involving airline crisis MH370 influence the public perception on brand image (Sing et al., 2014). In theory, place branding can boost





the country's reputation, it can be seen as a solution for countries that want to attract more tourists and enhance the brand image (Anholt, 2003).

Nevertheless, the impression of international travellers in certain countries is frequently affected by the first and last experiences at the gateway airport (Chao et al., 2013). In many cases, the passengers' impression of a destination is greatly influenced by their experience in the airport. Airport customer experience greatly affected on the processes and activities involved in their journey (Landrum & Brown, 2016). To achieve this goal, provides a new opportunity to promote the country and culture in the airport to deliver a seamless travel experience (Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Airport are really great places to exhibit the local values and the spirit of the destination (Svetlana, 2016). From



the differentiation of the concession program and the place sense in the regional airport, from the operation of the national brand at the airport nationwide (Airport Cooperative Research Program, 2011).

Many airlines and airports today fail to provide a better customer experience (Fattah, Lock, Buller & Kirby, 2009). With the high number of travellers, airports face a number of challenges related to the quality traveller experience (Kamarudin, 2014). Although the airport shows a highly evolved flight efficiency, it does not pay sufficient attention to the passenger's experience (Fattah et al., 2009). Apart from global airport facilities, excellent customer service and efficient operations, airport experience is an improvement of people's connections and lives (Kamarudin, 2014). They argue that services can be transformed into experiences if there is a stage – and what better stage than





an airport (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). When it comes to persuading passengers to spend more time at the terminal, the airport can have a significant influence. According to Global loyalty experts of International Customer Loyalty Programmes (ICLP) report, approximately one-third (32%) said that if the airport provided attractive entertainment and exhibitions, they will arrive early (08 Sep 2017, Travel Daily News International). Passengers' experience is an important factor affecting airport success (Cheng et al., 2014).

As stated by Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad managing director, Bashir Ahmad bin Abdul Majid, the airport plays a critical role in bringing in people, but it is no longer limited to giving competitive rates, extensive connections and superior infrastructures (Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad, 2014). Airport has become



increasingly important to understand traveller in order to provide an experience that offers real appeal to travellers regardless of their reasons for travel, age or gender, this believe will drive a greater commercial gain (Travel Daily News International, 2017). Revenues are increased because the airport is giving passengers more of what they want, said Buchanan (Dallas Fort Worth International Airport, 2016). By involving intelligence to customers, there is a possibility of increasing non-aviation revenue in times when it was not a more important income source for airports (Travel Daily News International, 2017).

At the airport there is a great opportunity to celebrate each region, such as history, cultural offerings, tourism draws, natural wonders and art. Regardless of whether they are staying in the area for hours, visitors can experience all the areas provided without leaving the building (Wattanacharoensil, 2016). Without leaving an airport satellite building to





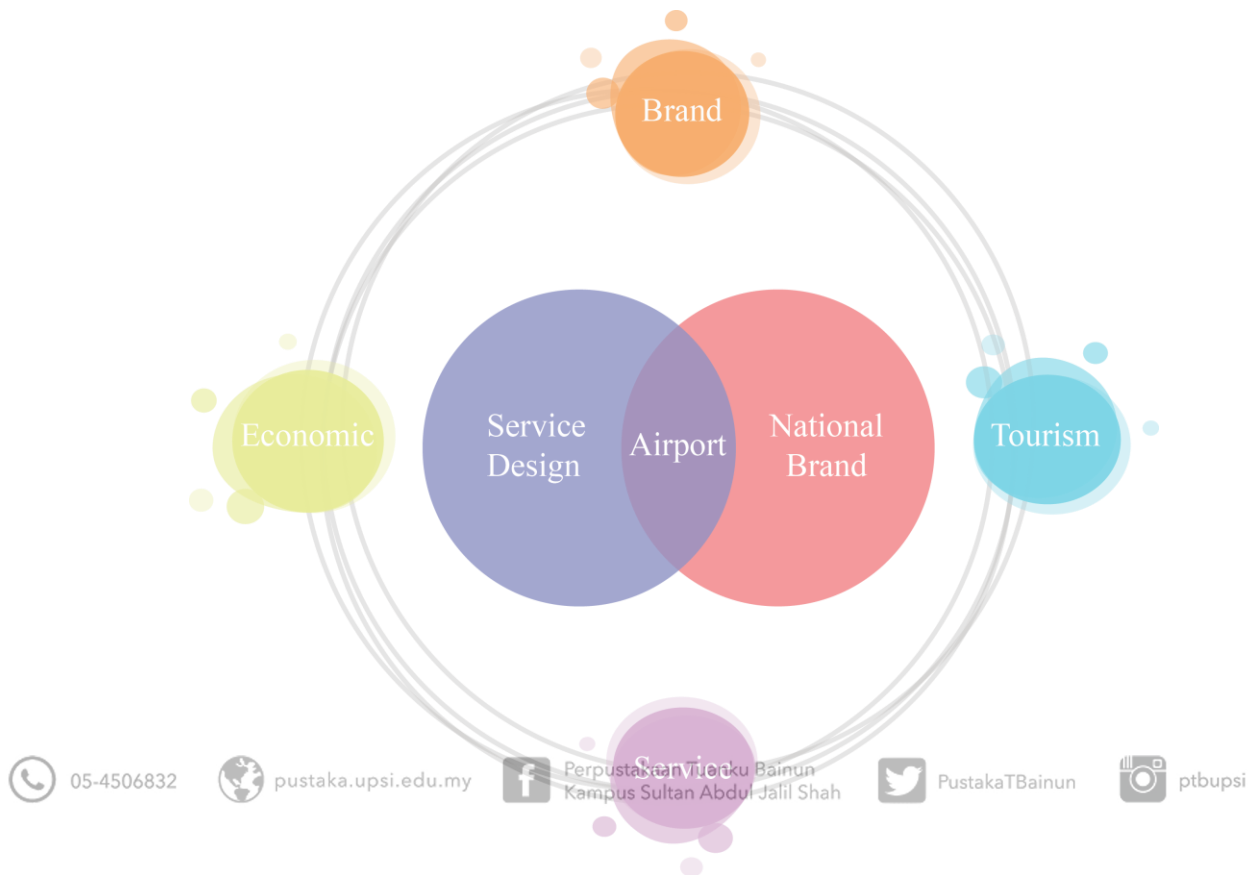
experience traditional Asian handicraft, get to know the variety of Malaysian costumes, explore the tropical rainforest and enjoy authentic multicultural dishes (The Star, 2010).

There is a lack of communication roles in distributing the intended messages and in promoting the Malaysian cultures (Hassan, 2014). Promoting the uniqueness of Malaysian art, culture and heritage as a major catalyst for culture fields and tourism growth (Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC), 2017). Malaysia is known as a country rich in culture, natural resources and history, but we should make further efforts to strengthen its capabilities (Othman et al., 2014). Local brand is gaining a presence at the airport (Assies, 2014). Global travellers do expect more, they want to experience local brands and culture that reflect the true atmosphere of the city an airport serves (Assies, 2014). Every international airport in Malaysia must incorporate ethnic handicraft, local traditions and the unique culture of the place to preserve the unique features of that particular destination (The Star, 2010). As stated by senior general manager, Mohammad Nazli Abdul Aziz, a ‘sense of place’ is going to be the in-thing with travellers wanting a taste of their destinations at the airports (MAHB, 2017).

Therefore, with all the supporting statements above, it is imperative to ensure that every passenger at our airports will be able to receive a positive impression of the national brand and to experience the beauty of Malaysia through promotional strategy provided by the airport management. Airport acts as a key element influencing the national profile. Thus, it is important to promote the positive image of Malaysia and to overcome any potential negative image.



### 1.3 Conceptual Framework



*Figure 1.1.* Conceptual Framework

Airport does not only provide facilities and services, but also on non-aeronautical side such as customer experience. Airport is a strength of connectivity towards economic, tourism, brand and service. Country's brands can profoundly shape its economy and tourism. Thus, the airport plays a major role in the economic growth and development of regions and cities. For tourism goals, service design is a framework for empathically understanding the experience of travellers. This research will highlight the importance of promoting national brands through built environments in the airport, which can potentially promote local unique cultures and values through creating a memorable experience for visitors.



## 1.4 Research Objectives

This research is set to have a better understanding of Malaysia's national brand and the way Malaysia's cultural is being explored or communicated through its national brand. Thus, the purpose of this research is to examine the development concept of service design, and to see how Malaysia's identity through national brand is being implemented. Service design is used to organize and plan service components to enhance the national brand Malaysia. Enhance awareness and the image of Malaysia as a diverse, exciting and premier travel destination to the global travellers.

This research proposes with two objectives:

1. To identify the potential use of service design and national brand towards enhancing customers' experience of the Malaysia International Airport.
2. To suggest a promotional strategy for Malaysia's own national brand in KLIA.



## 1.5 Research Questions

The specific research questions addressed in this study includes the following:

- 1.1 What are the elements used in national brand that reflect the right expression or values of Malaysia?
- 1.2 How can service design helps to improve customers' experience?
- 2.1 What is the existing national brand strategy used by the KLIA?

