

# JALAN AMPANG MUSLIM CEMETERY AS KUALA LUMPUR'S DARK TOURISM SITE: A TRANSFORMATIVE INSIGHT

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## ABSTRACT

*As the first established Muslim cemetery in Kuala Lumpur, Jalan Ampang Muslim Cemetery (JAMC) holds the city's past. Since the establishment of JAMC, the graveyard has not received much attention from the public authority, leading to its derelict state. Hence, there is a need to revive and highlight the existence of JAMC as more than a purpose of commemoration and a resting place for local celebrities, politicians, aristocrats, and royals. The study argues that this can be achieved by incorporating dark tourism at JAMC as a renewal measure. Apart from its historical significance, JAMC has also displayed an abundance of greenery within a highly urbanised area, which can attract public attention. This study evaluates the possibility of opening JAMC as a dark tourism spot based on the public's views. Partial least squares structural equation modelling analysed data from distributed questionnaires, and based on the research findings, the respondents, to some degree, agreed with making the historical cemetery a dark tourism site. However, some respondents are concerned about accessibility and the amenities available at JAMC. The results show that the opening of this historic cemetery as a place of interest is achievable by addressing these*



*two main issues.*

**Keywords:** *Historic cemetery, Dark tourism, Transformative, Public space, Urban planning*

## INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the concept of alternative and transformative development by maximising the use of Kuala Lumpur's dead space in the context of dark tourism. Dark tourism is the act of visiting places linked with death and tragedy (Pécsek, 2015; Young & Light, 2016). It encompasses visitors' interest in visiting cemeteries, battlefields, and catastrophic sites. The areas are counted as "unique" and use the symbol of death as an attraction. Visitors will experience various strong emotions in the areas, such as shock, anger, surprise, and a feeling of joy (Godis & Nilsson, 2018; Martini & Buda, 2020). Dark tourism offers an intriguing experience to gain knowledge or even to sense the unnerving atmosphere at the sites of death and disasters.

New socio-cultural practices throughout contemporary Western society have established ties with dark areas. According to Young and Light (2016), interaction with new relational spaces produced an affective atmosphere, emotions, and ritual practices in society. Dark areas are often associated with death, and local myths have thrived in the dark tourism sector. The site's popularity depends on the number of visitors, even though there is no precise data (number of visitors and revenue earned) on the present dark tourism market (Mionel, 2020). According to Light (2017), visits to places associated with tragedy, death, crime, violence, and suffering are known as dark tourism.

There was a consistent increase of interest among researchers in dark tourism between 1996 and 2016 (Light, 2017). Dark tourism is expected to gain much attention in the post-COVID-19 era due to the staggering number of dead worldwide, particularly in the cities where the pandemic hit hardest. Many COVID-19 victims were buried side by side at an incredible pace until the cemeteries ran out of space. This great tragedy will surely attract visitors worldwide to witness the devastating effects of the virus once the

pandemic subsides.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Dark Tourism at a Cemetery**

In the 19th century, cemeteries in Western society began to be considered areas that served as public parks, open-air museums, and centres of cultural institutions. Vast, well-planned cemeteries that are aesthetically pleasing started to be established in the outskirts of cities, as decomposing bodies in urban areas are a health hazard. Open green spaces are incorporated in the planning of cemeteries, making them suitable for public enjoyment and recreational needs. Ultimately, these areas have become an outdoor exhibition space due to various statues and sculptures displayed over the tombstones. Moreover, they also offer horticultural features, funerary architecture, and the conservation of flora and fauna, which have made cemeteries less intimidating and more attractive (Miller & Rivera, 2006; Mundt, 2015; Vanderstraeten, 2014).

In the context of cemeteries, the attraction of dark tourism is rarely associated with the ordinary people who died of natural causes, but commonly because there are famous figures buried there (Pratt et al., 2019). Père-Lachaise Cemetery is well known not only for the renowned figures buried there, but also for the impressive green environment that has earned the cemetery a nickname as "the city of the dead" (Daul, 2018; Roark, 2018). Besides visiting famous figures' tombs, dark tourism also attracts visitors fascinated by stories of haunted cemeteries. For example, the La Recoleta Cemetery in Buenos Aires, Argentina, attracts visitors due to its chilling ghost stories and haunted legends. According to Millán, Rojas, and García (2019), some entrepreneurs took advantage to generate or stimulate the tourism industry by manipulating the non-visualised entity that is only visible due to the psychological effect on the human mind. This can be seen through the famous French Quarter Ghosts and Legend Tour in New Orleans fed by legends and ghost stories focusing on "dark tourists" like paranormal investigators and videographers. Visitors also have the opportunity to visit "Cities of the Dead", which include multiple above-

ground cemeteries along Canal Street, Cypress Grove, and Greenwood and the Katrina Memorial (Foley, 2021).

Sallay, Mikházi, Geccséné Tar, and Takács (2022) found that Hungarian populations are still hesitant to engage in activities other than funerals and visiting graves. The case is similar to Malaysia's social environment. However, Hungary has endeavoured to attract visitors to cemeteries, such as through small train troupes and organising children's instrumental concerts at Fiumei Cemetery. This was done to educate the community to visit the cemetery with the support of the Budapest Funeral Institute (Sallay et al., 2022). Cemeteries have an ideal atmosphere to support a specific tourist profile that values cultural heritage, is interested in the human psyche, and acknowledges individual accomplishments. Cemeteries have potential as part of dark tourism, given that tourists can wander along the internal routes and discover the heritage landscape of a hidden treasure of art, architecture, and history (Millán et al., 2019). Tourism planners utilise cemeteries as urban regeneration tools by promoting visits to these places to preserve the landscape design and architectural features and to conserve the local ecology (Stone, 2006). Moreover, dark tourism has served as a medium of heritage and cultural preservation and helps to preserve the moral spirit and awareness of contemporary society, leading to a distinct cultural identity (Salehuddin Mohd Zahari, Hafiz Hanafiah, & Syafeera Syed Mahboob, 2016; Seaton, 2009; Stone, 2009).

## **Dark Tourism in Malaysia**

Dark tourism in Malaysia started to flourish after many sites of tragic events were opened and restored, such as the Penang War Museum, Jerejak Island, and Kellie's Castle (Mandal & Vong, 2016; Salehuddin Mohd Zahari et al., 2016). Malaysia was one of the Southeast Asian countries involved in the Japanese occupation during World War II. The Penang War Museum and the WWII Sandakan–Ranau Death March are among the areas that witnessed the darkest moments in Malaysia, which became an area of torture that claimed lives during the Japanese rule. However, not much research has been done on the area despite its great potential to be a product of dark tourism in Malaysia (Mandal & Vong, 2016). The Sandakan–Ranau site has become an attraction for international tourists because most of the victims were foreigners, such as the Australian soldiers who participated in the

Sandakan death march (Ware & Hudson, 2010).

Penang Island has been identified as a potential dark tourism site with many interesting historical spots available to visitors. The Old Protestant Cemetery and the Roman Catholic Cemetery on the list of potential dark sites in Penang have shown that cemetery areas indeed possess interesting relics waiting to be discovered (Tan & Lim, 2018). However, the Penang Jewish Cemetery has not been recognised on the list. This left out the only Jewish cemetery in Southeast Asia, which dates back to 1805. There is no doubt that the ongoing conflict between Palestine and Israel has stirred hatred among the locals for quite some time. This political tension explains why the Penang Jewish Cemetery is not promoted in mainstream tourism by the Jewish Trustee Board. The board's primary concern is protecting this piece of land through conservation and from becoming a target of antisemitism. Yet, no case of vandalism has been reported. Perhaps the Penang Jewish Cemetery should be recognised as a tourist destination to promote tolerance and solidarity towards others among the Muslim majority in Malaysia. This will evoke the notion that the formation of Georgetown has embraced diversity in a plural society.

Tourism planners will try to capitalise on every tangible and intangible heritage available in the urban area as part of the national tourism product. This plan might include historic cemeteries to avoid Kuala Lumpur's threatening rapid urbanisation. In this case, dark tourism can become a mechanism to revive these old cemeteries from their derelict state. Apart from providing the necessary infrastructure to support the industry, Masanti (2016) stressed that the branding of dark tourism needs to be carefully planned and thought out before it is implemented to avoid misinterpretation among visitors and the local culture. In this regard, the main motivation for dark tourism to be tested at Jalan Ampang Muslim Cemetery (JAMC) is to honour and celebrate the famous figures who rest there eternally by understanding the local knowledge of the subject.

In Malaysia, dark tourism has never been implemented at Muslim cemeteries. However, there has been some evidence of its existence. An initial search on websites such as Tripadvisor, Foursquare, and Flickr has shown that JAMC has been getting visitors from the local community and overseas (Foursquare, 2017; Restnrileks, 2009; Tripadvisor, 2020).

Even though there has been no official promotion or support from the administration for such activity to occur in any urban cemeteries within the Kuala Lumpur metropolitan area, dark tourism has already taken place at JAMC in an informal manner, which cannot be neglected.

## **STUDY AREA**

Not many studies have focused on the origin of Muslim cemeteries in Kuala Lumpur. Even though many established cemeteries have now become inactive, they hold memories of the city's past that should be cherished and treasured. However, this will be impossible if this historical part of the city is not made accessible to the public, including JAMC. JAMC, which opened in 1819, is close to reaching full occupancy. This momentous landmark is a resting place of Malaysian celebrities (Tan Sri P. Ramlee and his wife, Puan Sri Saloma) and aristocrats (Raja Muda of Selangor, Raja Mahmud Ibni Sultan Muhammad Shah). According to Mazalan (2018), Jalan Ampang recorded the highest information search among foreign tourists planning to visit the country. The Japanese Ambassador to Malaysia, Dr Makio Miyagawa, who is among Tan Sri P. Ramlee's hardcore fans, visited the artist's grave in Jalan Ampang. Clearly, JAMC has great potential in attracting tourists in dark tourism mainly because this is where some Malay film legends are buried. A sanctuary-like atmosphere makes JAMC suitable as a place of retreat for those who wish to seek refuge from the city's hectic life. Nevertheless, regulations prevent people from entering at their own will. A trip to a cemetery is nothing more than a visit to a grave for most people, and any form of leisure activity is forbidden. Such practice is perhaps non-pragmatic in today's urban context because it does not fully use the available resources that JAMC has to offer. Spatial consumption of public cemeteries such as JAMC should be optimised for the common good without degrading their cultural significance and while upholding their religious association.

This study proposes a plan for a historic cemetery in Kuala Lumpur to direct it toward sustainable development. Integrating hybrid functions into cemeteries is one of the ideas emphasised in response to the United Nation's call to achieve the objectives of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11. SDG 11 aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive,

safe, resilient, and sustainable by 2030 (United Nations, 2021a). The hybrid functional approach will change the landscape of cemeteries in urban areas by making the space accessible for public use as an open green area. This strategy has been outlined in SDG 11.7, which calls for universal access to green and public areas that are safe, inclusive, and accessible to all. The utilisation of hybrid cemeteries will require a drastic approach in the establishment of green spaces and recreation areas in moving towards sustainable development in Malaysia (United Nations, 2021a; 2021b, pp. 48-49).

Historic cemeteries are considered heritage areas, where the integration of cemeteries into open green areas has indirectly achieved the target of SDG 11.4. SDG 11.4 calls for stronger efforts to protect and safeguard natural heritage, which is aligned with many environmental conservation efforts. The establishment of open green spaces in historic cemeteries will effectively promote heritage assets as well as attract the attention of the authorities in focusing on efforts to preserve the country's heritage (United Nations, 2021a). In addition, there has been an effort to promote the well-being of people within the heritage indoor spaces through the integration of greeneries such as in George Town, Penang. Heritage spaces can be adapted and transformed to improve human psychology and productivity (Ming Hui & Bahauddin, 2019). However, it is also important to guarantee that this new proposition will not be abused just like what happened to public spaces in George Town, Penang. JAMC needs to be protected from being dominated by traders or hawkers as this will result in conflict between their business opportunities and the sanctity of the cemetery (Ferdhaus, Zainol, Abd Rahim & Muhammad, 2021).

The morphology of the cemetery is shaped by the layout of the city. Usually, the archetypal association between Muslim cemeteries and human settlements is threatened by rapid urbanisation, and it is expected to diminish in the future. According to brief interviews during fieldwork in collecting questionnaire data, the JAMC and Kampung Baru areas were once united. This situation is exemplified through the division of land resulting from the construction of highways between the Malay settlement of Kampung Baru and its burial ground, JAMC. The Ampang Kuala Lumpur Elevated Highway (AKLEH) has become a borderline that separates the two, as shown in Figure 1. This has resulted in the conventional relationship

between the local community and the cemetery being broken. However, JAMC still reserves funeral plots for Kampung Baru residents (anak kariah). Modern city planning has brought JAMC into further isolation through the physical barrier and visual segregation. The oldest Muslim cemetery in Kuala Lumpur has been alienated by the surrounding development that overlooks this forgotten land parcel. Therefore, there is a need to establish a new correlation between urban cemeteries and the surrounding context, and dark tourism can be seen as an attractive proposition.



Figure 1. Map of Jalan Ampang Muslim Cemetery (JAMC)

Source: Google Maps, (2022)

## METHODOLOGY

There are two main limitations in this research, the first one is the absence of precedent studies in Malaysia and the selection of respondents only selected from the Muslim background. Even though there are examples of dark tourism existing abroad in the West such as in the European region, the idea of promoting cemeteries as part of tourist attraction is not a norm within the context of local socio-culture. So far, no examples of this kind of hybrid function between inactive Muslim cemeteries and tourism have been formally implemented in Malaysia. Moreover, there have been no studies conducted to measure the level of acceptance among users of this hybrid function to be practised in Asian countries with a predominant Muslim faith. Hence, this research will be among the first attempts to study the potential and initiative between the two. As for the respondent, the data collection has been gathered from people of Muslim background which does not represent



the views of Malaysians in general pertaining to this research interest. There is also a need to protect the sanctity of JAMC to be considered since it is a dedicated resting place for departed Muslims. The question of whether it should only remain exclusive to Muslim visitors and not to all is subject to future undertaking.

A quantitative method was used in this study. It involved the distribution of questionnaires to the public, and then data were extracted using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) for statistical data. PLS-SEM is a measuring tool that allows researchers to test theories by analysing complex models that contain relationships between latent constructs simultaneously (Ramli, Latan, & Nartea, 2018). PLS analysed the data obtained from the questionnaire to test the theory of the study. Questionnaires were distributed to the target audience and focused on the probability of opening a historic public cemetery (JAMC) in an urban area as a place of attraction. Since this study involves a Muslim cemetery, the questionnaire was distributed to around 150 target respondents who met certain criteria: Muslim, over 18 years old, and a Malaysian citizen. This is because some of the questions are related to acts that require understanding and knowledge of Islamic law.

## **Research Model**

The research framework of this study was formulated based on a diagram adapted from Project for Public Spaces (2009), which promotes the desirable characteristics for the creation of successful public spaces. The same variables are used in Figure 2 to test whether the case study is appropriate to be open as part of a public space. “Sociability” has been used as an important factor representing the suitability of the case study (JAMC) as a dark tourism spot.



Figure 2. What makes a great place?

Source: Project for Public Spaces, (2009)

The four variables in “What makes a great place?” have 33 elements, as shown in Figure 2. These elements are used to measure the feasibility of public spaces for public use (Project for Public Spaces, 2009). However, cemeteries in Malaysia are considered special areas and are not regarded as part of public open space. After considering applying the “What makes a great place?” concept to the cemetery, only 11 of the 33 elements were used. These elements are accessible, connected, proximity, safe, clean, green, sittable, useful, activities, welcoming, and interaction. The elements are organised according to their respective variables, as shown in Figure 3. The questionnaire was designed based on these elements and presented to the respondents in the form of a Likert scale. Table 1 shows the structure of the questionnaire and the indicators of each element that will enable sociability to be achieved at the cemetery.

Table 1. The structure of the Questionnaire

Variables	Elements	Indicators
(Y1) Access and linkages	(1) Accessible	(1a) Use as a shortcut
		(1b) Access for leisure activities
		(1c) Promote easy movement
	(2) Connected	(2a) Connected to surrounding areas
		(2b) Close to public transportation
	(3) Proximity	(3a) Respondents' living/walking distance from the cemetery

(Y2) Comfort and image	(4) Safe	(4a) Provision of lighting and CCTV for crime prevention
		(4b) Influence of urban legends
	(5) Clean	(5a) Maintenance
	(6) Green	(6a) Green factors
		(6b) Landscape as an attraction
(7) Sittable	(7a) Quality of benches and gazebo	
(Y3) Uses and activities	(8) Useful	(8a) Gathering purpose
		(8b) Access to facilities
		(8c) Income generation
		(8d) Integrate the management office
	(9) Activities	(9a) Type of activities available
(Y4) Sociability	(10) Welcoming	(10a) Provision of signages and a main entrance
	(11) Interaction	(11a) Frequency of visits
		(11b) Social activities engagement

Source: Author

The primary variables in the research framework are shown in Figure 3, namely, “access and linkages”, “comfort and image”, “uses and activities”, and “sociability”. These four main variables will be used to evaluate the case study as a public place, in this case as an attraction spot for dark tourism. “Access & Linkages” refers to the ability of a place in terms of accessibility to its surroundings. “Comfort & Image” is interpreted as the ability of a place to offer a comfortable space with a good image. The comfort of a place includes factors of safety, cleanliness, and the provision of a place to sit. “Uses & Activities” refers to the ability of a place to provide people with activities in which they can participate. “Sociability” is interpreted as the availability of social interaction between the communities within the place that makes them feel they belong to the area. Figure 3 illustrates the research framework model of this study, where a series of hypotheses was tested based on the selected elements (i–xi) gathered from the diagram in Figure 2. Therefore, three hypotheses (H1–H3) were established based on the indicators (i–xi);

H1: There is a significant relationship between “access and linkages” and “sociability”.

H2: There is a significant relationship between “image and comfort” and

“sociability”.

H3: There is a significant relationship between “uses and activities” and “sociability”.

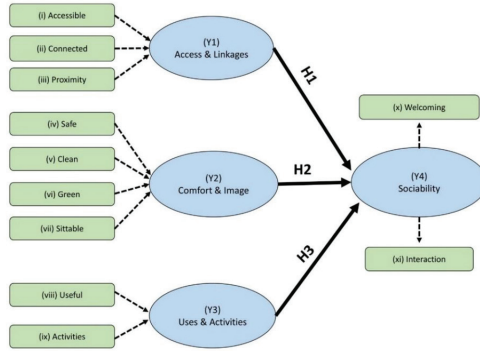


Figure 3. Research framework

## Data Collection

Questionnaires were distributed to the public from 24 September 2020 to 23 October 2020. Initially, the online survey was performed using Google Forms. Questionnaires were made available online to the public living nearby the study area via Facebook pages and WhatsApp groups. Subsequently, fieldwork was conducted using the same questionnaires to facilitate data collection. Questionnaires were distributed at the study area following the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) during the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 150 responses were received, and 8 were rejected after initial screening for usability and data reliability.

## Empirical Analysis and Results

PLS-SEM is required for statistical analysis to interpret more complex relationships between latent variables using SmartPLS3 software. Prior to conducting the analysis, the respondents' questionnaire data were interpreted in Microsoft Excel to obtain a reliable assessment for PLS-SEM. Once the data were validated, the data were transferred to PLS-SEM for thorough analysis.

## Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model (outer model) illustrates the relationship between the constructs and the indicator variables (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011; Hair Jr, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). According to Henseler, Hubona, and Ray (2016), measurement models should meet the minimum requirements for reliability and validity so that the structural model assessment can be considered “good” and proceed. According to Hair et al. (2016), composite reliability and outer loading values should be equal to or above the common threshold of 0.7 or 0.6 for the exploratory study level, and the average variance extracted (AVE) values should be above the threshold value of 0.5.

## FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The measurement model for JAMC shown in Table 2 found that only four indicators exceeded the threshold value of 0.7 for outer loadings, and the AVE value for each structural model was below 0.5. Therefore, the construct’s convergent validity cannot be established, and indicators with an outer loading value below 0.7 need to be discarded. However, removing an indicator with outer loading values less than 0.7 requires careful consideration, as it will alter the composite reliability and AVE, affecting the entire content validity of the construct. According to Hair et al. (2016), indicators with outer loading values between 0.4 and 0.7 will be maintained based on their contribution to content validity.

**Table 2. Measurement Model Results for JAMC**

Constructs	Indicators	Outer loadings	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
(Y1) Access and linkages	(Y1)	0.414	0.140	0.145
	Access and linkages	-0.244		
	(Y1)	0.496		
	Access and linkages	-0.396		
	(Y1)	0.200		
	Access and linkages	0.443		

(Y2) Comfort and image	4a	0.726	0.814	0.429
	4b	0.786		
	5a	0.523		
	6a	0.681		
	6b	0.692		
	7a	0.460		
(Y3) Uses and activities	8a	0.636	0.770	0.404
	8b	0.760		
	8c	0.577		
	8d	0.624		
	9a	0.563		
(Y4) Sociability	10a	0.775	0.709	0.453
	11a	0.656		
	11b	0.571		

Source: Author

Based on Table 3, a new measurement model was established after several indicators were carefully removed by evaluating the values of composite reliability and AVE. The composite reliability value exceeded the minimum 0.6 for the exploratory study value, and the AVE value was higher than 0.5. Therefore, the convergent validity of the constructs for the measurement model was confirmed.

**Table 3. New measurement Model Results for JAMC**

Constructs	Indicators	Outer loadings	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
(Y1) Access and linkages	1a	0.916	0.750	0.519
	1c	0.729		
	2b	0.434		
(Y2) Comfort and image	4a	0.727	0.810	0.524
	4b	0.905		
	6a	0.674		
	6b	0.543		
(Y3) Uses and activities	8a	0.774	0.781	0.543
	8b	0.761		
	8d	0.672		
(Y4) Sociability	11a	0.910	0.866	0.763

	11b	0.836		
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Source: Author

The discriminant validity was evaluated to measure how the construct differs empirically from other constructs in the structural model (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019). Discriminant validity with cross-loadings was assessed by ensuring that the indicator’s loading value in the specified construct is higher than cross-loadings in other constructs (Hair et al., 2016). Table 4 shows that cross-loadings for the study have been verified. Therefore, discriminant validity for the study was confirmed for structural model assessment.

**Table 4. Cross-loading Results**

	(Y1) Access and linkages	(Y2) Comfort and image	(Y3) Uses and activities	(Y4) Sociability
1a	0.916	0.107	0.267	-0.174
1c	0.729	0.373	0.309	-0.107
2b	0.434	0.295	0.292	0.016
4a	0.206	0.727	0.202	0.080
4b	0.123	0.905	0.312	0.166
6a	0.249	0.674	0.423	0.074
6b	0.220	0.543	0.281	0.056
8a	0.262	0.241	0.774	0.057
8b	0.169	0.401	0.761	0.049
8d	0.313	0.241	0.672	0.035
11a	-0.172	0.143	0.091	0.910
11b	-0.143	0.112	0.014	0.836

Source: Author

### Structural Model Assessment

The structural model can be measured by the coefficient of determination (R2 value) and structural model path coefficients. The R2 value measures the predictive power of a structural model, and the value is between 0 and 1, where a high value indicates higher prediction accuracy (Hair et al., 2016). Based on Figure 4, the R2 value indicates a low predictive power of 0.201.

Table 5 shows the path coefficients, t-value, and p-value for each hypothesis. Hypotheses are identified based on each t-value higher than its critical value, while p-values are lower than their critical value (Hair et al., 2016). Based on data analysis, only one hypothesis (H2) is supported by empirical data: H2 – There is a significant relationship between “image and comfort” and “sociability”.

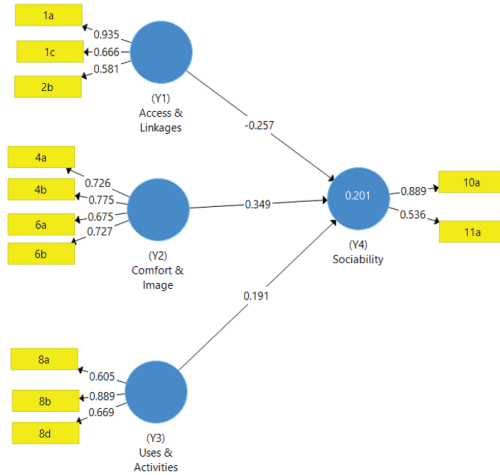


Figure 4. Path coefficient Results

Source: Author

Table 5. Hypotheses Testing Results for JAMC

Hypothesis	Path	Path coefficient (B)	t-value (critical value = 1.96)	p-value (critical value = 0.05)	Remarks
H1	Y1→Y4	-0.257	1.641	0.101	Unsupported
H2	Y2→Y4	0.349	4.127	0.000	Supported
H3	Y3→Y4	0.191	1.945	0.052	Unsupported

Source: Author

## DISCUSSION

The analysis results will be discussed based on the path coefficient results, as shown in Figure 4. The indicators removed during this analytical process were weak and insignificant. The result showed that visitors are attracted to JAMC mainly due to the comfort and images of the area, not as much in



terms of access and linkages and uses and activities.

### **(Y1) Access and Linkages**

(Y1) access and linkages demonstrated no significant influence on (Y4) sociability. This showed that JAMC does not have good pedestrian access despite its close location to the newly constructed Saloma Link Bridge. Visitors expressed difficulty accessing JAMC even though there is a side entrance near the Saloma Link Bridge leading to Kampung Baru district and Kampung Baru LRT Station.

JAMC recently upgraded the pedestrian walkway, and visitors expressed that it facilitates movement in the area. JAMC's strategic position as an intermediary between Kuala Lumpur's Central Business District (KLCBD) and Kampung Baru, and the LRT station, has the potential to be used as a shortcut. However, the side entrance leading to Saloma Link Bridge is closed, causing JAMC to be marginalised by the public.

The research is also aware of the restriction imposed by the cemetery management prohibiting the public from entering JAMC except to visit graves, which can only take place during set hours. This is another factor that has contributed to this result. Therefore, the cemetery management needs to consider opening multiple entrances to allow visitors into JAMC and visiting hours if dark tourism-related activities are going to be introduced here.

### **(Y2) Comfort and Image**

Based on the conducted analysis, the result exhibited by (Y2) comfort and image is the most significant construct in promoting (Y4) sociability at JAMC. The results showed that respondents expressed that safety was a critical factor in welcoming visitors. Visitors will feel more comfortable if the area is provided with surveillance cameras and appropriate illumination. There is a possibility of crime occurring at any time because the cemetery is rarely visited in large numbers, making visitors feel unsafe. The study also discovered that urban legends have a substantial impact on sociability. Respondents perceived the cemetery as a scary place, and it is anticipated that this view may discourage visitors from visiting the area alone.

There are two external factors that distinguish the image of JAMC apart from the other urban cemeteries in Kuala Lumpur. Firstly, JAMC's status as the resting place of well-known departed figures and royalty has heightened its image. Secondly, the strategic location of JAMC in the vicinity of KLCC is a prominent factor that makes this place noticeable among the public. Famous landmarks such as the Petronas Twin Towers and Saloma Link Bridge as well as the city's lively ambiance around JAMC have played a role in influencing the image of JAMC.

A clean and green environment has also been found to be part of the indicators that help create a space conducive for social interactions. JAMC contains mature trees that help to maintain its distinctive green identity, and the view of the city's skyline can be appreciated from within the area. The atmosphere inside JAMC is exquisite, with a vast number of greeneries while improving the urban ecology at the same time. The interaction between users within JAMC's compound can be achieved through facilities such as a gazebo (wakaf) and benches. These features will add value in making this place more welcoming for people to linger and enjoy themselves.

### **(Y3) Uses and Activities**

(Y3) uses and activities does not significantly influence (Y4) sociability, which means the facilities and amenities at JAMC were not meant to attract visitors. For example, a field observation conducted during data collection found that JAMC has no space to accommodate gatherings. Due to its area located within Kuala Lumpur's Central Business District (KL CBD), the provision of facilities and amenities at JAMC is considered insignificant when competing with the surrounding area.

Moreover, inaccessibility is another factor that causes people not to be able to take advantage of the existing facilities and amenities in JAMC. (Y3) uses and activities also negatively affected (Y4) sociability, which signifies the absence of recreational activities. There are no significant leisure activities that can take place in the area. The results showed that visitors felt that no or limited activities could be carried out in JAMC, which is caused by inaccessibility and a better opportunity for them to engage in interesting activities in nearby locations with better facilities. JAMC is surrounded by a modern development of KLCC, which offers passers-by

diverse types of activities.

The integration of the management office in JAMC is already in place. Based on a brief interview with JAMC officers on duty during the distribution of the questionnaire, JAMC was considered full, and the remaining plot space was reserved for the residents (anak kariah) of Kampung Baru. In response, a large cemetery named Kuala Lumpur-Karak Muslim Cemetery (KLKMC) was established to accommodate the burial needs of the growing population.

### **Cemeteries as Social Space**

The idea of making an urban cemetery in Malaysia as a part of dark tourism attraction and leisure space is not considered to be mainstream. This finding aligns with Craig & Duncan's (2016) views on the compatibility of cemeteries as an alternative space for dark tourism. The injection of dark tourism as part of established cemeteries and social space is still being perceived as highly ambiguous due to different views and beliefs that people have. The interconnection between cemeteries and dark tourism is still uncertain. Nevertheless, there has been some evidence of its existence and the potential for it to thrive in this country. This niche industry is not only contributing to the growth of the economy but also helping to promote the local heritage to a wider audience. The very first step to achieve this would be to let multiple entrances into urban cemeteries which enable users to experience the abundance of its greeneries.

In other parts of the world, cemeteries have managed to attract vast numbers of tourists through well-planned routes and careful design of user experiences and involvement (Babić & Bingula, 2015). In recent decades, the UK government policy was amended to avoid urban cemeteries from being abandoned by offering amenities and green space within the compound for users' enjoyment (The Stationary Office, 2001). Copenhagen municipality has taken a similar approach by welcoming people to use urban cemeteries for their recreational needs (Nordh & Evensen, 2018, Nordh et al., 2022). In the meantime, the local authorities should think about how to regenerate inactive urban cemeteries and sustainably integrate such places into the city's future development as well as maintaining these urban remains from being completely forgotten. Further isolation of such places due to

rapid urbanisation does not seem to be progressive and unable to respond to the main spheres of sustainable development.

## **CONCLUSION**

As a reputable urban cemetery, it is hard for JAMC to retain its status and popularity on the map of Kuala Lumpur due to stiff competition from surrounding development. It is time for JAMC to be given a new purpose and direction through a hybrid function. The integration of dark tourism as part of JAMC would give this place a fighting chance for survival. JAMC has now reached its maximum capacity for burial. Therefore, this area must have a secondary function. The area should be able to offer visitors a recreational alternative in which they are allowed to share their interest in cultural heritage. JAMC can be adapted as one of the dark tourism spots in Kuala Lumpur. Yet, a few things need to be addressed by securing visitors' safety and providing multiple entrances and various types of amenities within the cemetery. The area needs CCTV and conducive lighting. This will encourage visitors to use the area as a shortcut while allowing them to use the facilities available there at the same time. Indirectly, this will also put JAMC on the map as a tourist destination in the KL CDB. Therefore, stakeholders should focus their attention on these critical factors to permit the integration of urban tourism in such places. Finally, further studies are required to explore the feasibility of urban cemeteries with a hybrid function by involving the authorities to understand the situation from their perspective. It is crucial to have cooperation from policymakers to transform the conventional use of cemeteries into contemporary use.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to the design of the research, the questionnaire, and the write-up. The on-line survey, data cleaning and tabulation was undertaken by University Sains Malaysia. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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