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INVESTIGATING THE COMPLIANCE OF SIGNAGE BOARDS FOR TWO-STOREY SHOP LOTS IN PEKAN MENTAKAB, PAHANG DARUL MAKMUR

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ABSTRACT

This aims to evaluate the compliance of signage boards on two-storey building facades in Pekan Mentakab. In Mentakab town, signage boards are commonly used for communication and shop identification. However, inappropriate signage board design can deface the appearance of the building's facade. Ideally, signage boards should integrate harmoniously with the overall architectural design rather than stand out as separate elements. Surprisingly, there seem to be no existing guidelines for installing signage boards on buildings. Therefore, this study seeks to identify the guidelines provided by local authorities for signage board installations on business shop lot buildings and examine the enforcement of these guidelines in Mentakab town. The focus will be on shop lot buildings located on Jalan Mok Hee Kiang, Mentakab. The research methodology involves extensive observation, photo collection, and various studies to gather and analyze relevant data. The findings indicate that the majority of business shop lot owners show little concern for proper signage boards, as well as the safety and comfort of both building occupants and passersby. This highlights the importance of adhering to signage board guidelines to preserve the aesthetic appeal of building facades and ensure public safety and comfort. Despite being a seemingly small component, signage boards have a significant impact on the building and its environment.

Keywords: signage boards, building façades, local authority's guidelines, shop lot buildings

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INTRODUCTION

Mentakab, a town and commune in the Temerloh district of central Pahang, Malaysia, is approximately 9 kilometres northwest of Temerloh and 82 kilometres northeast of Kuala Lumpur. Known initially as Pasir Rawa in the 19th century, Mentakab was proposed as the future capital of Pahang to replace Pekan. However, due to its challenging terrain, Kuala Lipis was ultimately chosen as the state capital in 1898 and later replaced by Kuantan in 1955 ("Mentakab," 2022). Mentakab has become a hub for urban swiftlet farming, with several upper floors of town shop lots being converted for this purpose. Successful urban farming ventures can yield substantial profits, as the collected swiftlets' nests can be sold for as much as US\$2000 ("Mentakab," 2022). Nevertheless, only a few have achieved such success, and there are drawbacks for urban residents. The downsides include the risk of spreading diseases like bird flu and the issue of excessive bird droppings, which can outweigh the economic benefits.

The town of Mentakab features rows of terraced shops, some of which were constructed before the 19th century. While some buildings have been demolished and rebuilt, a few old structures remain, each with historical significance. Among the notable areas in Mentakab, Jalan Mok Hee Kiang is well-known among residents. This street attracts a significant portion of the population due to its diverse range of dairy products. Additionally, a daily night market along Jalan Mok Hee Kiang closes to vehicular traffic around 5 p.m. to accommodate hawkers. The row of shops on this street boasts an attractive facade and retains the original architectural charm; however, it has been marred by haphazardly placed signage. This situation undermines the town's uniqueness and represents a missed opportunity to showcase its distinctive character. Based on PLAN Malaysia (Department of Urban and Rural Planning), signages are interpreted as the nameplates of a place including areas and companies. PLAN Malaysia has provided and were approved these guidelines on 18 November 2016 to control the installation of signage in local authorities (PBT) areas around Peninsular Malaysia for the purpose of improving urban environment more aesthetically pleasing and visually appealing.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Signage boards are crucial in introducing and promoting businesses operating on various premises. In business districts, these boards are eye-catching features that inform and attract customers (Nafisur et al., 2020). However, many signage board designs cover a significant portion, around 90%, of the building facade, thereby impacting the architectural characteristics of the building (Kamal & Farooq, 2020). Unfortunately, most shop lot owners fail to adhere to the guidelines established by the

authorities for signage board installations (Kamal & Farooq, 2020). Consequently, this research addresses the issues faced by the town of Mentakab concerning signage boards.

RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVE

This study aims to evaluate the compliance of signage boards on two-storey building facades in Pekan Mentakab. The objective is to examines the guidelines provided by local authorities such as PLANMalaysia (Department of Urban and Rural Planning) and the Temerloh Municipal Council (MPT) for installing signage boards. Additionally, it seeks to explore the extent to which these guidelines are enforced in the structure of signage boards on shop lot buildings in Mentakab town. The is to ensure that shop lot owners adhere to the authorities' guidelines and install appropriate signage board designs that do not obstruct or cover the building facades. The research will specifically target the two-story shop lots on Jalan Mok Hee Kiang in Mentakab. These buildings are fascinating as they are prominently located along the main road. Despite undergoing renovations, the owners have preserved the historical value and original architectural features of these shop lots.

RESEARCH APPROACH

This study's primary data collection will involve on-site observations of signage boards installed on the shop lot facades along Jalan Mok Hee Kiang in Mentakab. Photographs will be taken to support and document the gathered data. In addition to the on-site observations, secondary data will be collected through an external desk study using online research. This method will involve accessing readily available data through online media. The two data collection methods, on-site observations and online analysis, will be interconnected to understand the topic comprehensively.

Types and Purposes of Signage

Signs serve various purposes in marketing communication, including wayfinding, advertising, and branding (Calori & Vanden-Eynden, 2015; Taylor et al., 2005; Bitner, 1992). They come in different forms and sizes, ranging from large banners, billboards, and murals to more minor street signs, street name signs, sandwich boards, and lawn signs. With technological advancements, digital or electronic displays are also used in signage. Among outdoor advertising methods, hoardings are considered highly effective, cost-efficient, durable, and visually appealing (Kamal & Farooq, 2020).

The primary function of signage is communication, providing information that aids individuals in making informed decisions (Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary, 2010). Signage serves multiple objectives: promotion, identification, information provision, wayfinding, and enhancing safety awareness. For example, signs help us identify specific places or brands, guiding us towards restrooms or providing crucial safety information and warnings about hazards or threats.

Signage and Building Façade: Exploring the Connection

Signage is also important because of the fullness of the data and guidance required in the space or buildings ensured by the signage system. An urban sign is an essential component of urban design, which refers to the city's visual look as a well-organized spatial structure (Sokolova, 2018). Signage, in terms of the city's architectural characteristics, impacts the built environment, urban space, people, and the main street. Based on Portella (2007), visual quality refers to the level of order among the physical aspects of built space, such as architectural features and commercial signage.

In the context of shop lots, signage boards are commonly used for shop name identification, and they are considered an essential element for a complete building. According to a survey conducted by Wan Ismail et al. (2020), respondents believed that building signage considerably influences the attractiveness of streets. They also associated the appearance of a continuous building facade with building signs.

Signs that indicate the location of businesses are vital for design, as they contribute to the personality, scale, and atmosphere of public places. Effective signs are designed to capture and maintain people's attention while being easily understandable, recognizable, and positively critiqued as marketing tools.

The Relationship Between Shop Lots and Signage: Exploring The Impact to Town Visual

Signage board has a significant impact on the visual appearance and aesthetics of a town or city. The way signage is designed, placed, and integrated into the urban landscape can contribute to the overall character and identity of the area.

Signs are frequently misunderstood, badly designed, and disproportionately numerous as stated by Kamal & Farooq (2020). The owner of the shop put a sign board on every space that the building has until it covers all the façade, including lighting and ventilation devices such as window and breeze blocks. According to recent research by the Delhi-based Institute of Road Traffic Education, 70% of signage on major city roadways is incorrectly constructed and situated (Kamal & Farooq, 2020). Delhi, according to architects, urban planners, and graphic designers, lacks an efficient wayfinding system, and most road signage is out of pace with the city's character.

Based on Wan Ismail et al. (2020) interviews and observations revealed that the multiple signs in one location, as well as excessive visual design, make it difficult for pedestrians to differentiate between streets. This makes the streetscape less appealing since the look of the unappropriated size, number, placement, and inconsistent building signage design obscures the facades of the historic shophouses.

Furthermore, many cities have a visual congestion of house facades: a huge number of multi-coloured, multi-format, multi-style signs and billboards become a distracting issue rather than an attractive feature (Sokolova, 2018). Commercial signs including components connected to façade silhouette, facade details or facade articulation are considered damaging structures (Portella, 2007).

This study draws upon an example of case study conducted by Nafisur et al. (2020) in Cincinnati, Ohio, focusing on signage design solutions for local buildings. The researchers examined on-premises signs displayed on building facades and storefronts in three selected town: Clifton, Clifton Heights, University Heights and Fairview (CUF), and Hyde Park. The signs' typographic styles, forms, materials, sizes, scales, colours, and other attributes were recorded and analysed.

These three towns were chosen based on their commonalities and distinct characteristics. Each community featured pedestrian-friendly commercial streets with low vacancy rates, where businesses prominently displayed their signs. The accessibility of these town, along with ample on-street and nearby parking options, facilitated ease of movement for pedestrians. Despite these similarities, each community exhibited significant physical, cultural, and financial differences. The study focused exclusively on on-premises signage commissioned by building owners or business owners, excluding temporary signage, art murals, and graffiti. The researchers identified and examined over 150 signs across the three communities (Nafisur et al., 2020). Detailed analyses and examples of signage from Clifton, Clifton Heights-University Heights-Fairview (CUF), and Hyde Park can be found in Figures 1, 2, and 3 respectively.



Figure 1: The main street of Clifton (Source: Nafisur et al., 2020)



Figure 2 : One of the commercial streets of CUF (Source: Nafisur et al., 2020)



Figure 3: A view of business district of Hyde Park (Source: Nafisur et al., 2020)

FINDINGS

Table 1.1 shows the comparison between gathered data from site observation of the placement of signage boards on 2-storey shop lots buildings and PLANMalaysia guidelines. It is strategically positioned for easy visibility and access in urgent circumstances, inappropriate positioning might cause confusion.

Table 1 : Placement of Signage Boards on 2-Storey Shop Lot Buildings

Shop Lot	PLANMalaysia Guidelines	Note	
	Guidennes		
A. Terrace-shaped businesspremises (non-heritage)	Horizontal Signage Board		
RESTORM RES	i) It was only permitted for installation on the "beam" of the building, which was allocated for signage placement.	i) Figure 4 and Figure 5 show the signage board covering half of the building's window and façade.	
Figure 4 : Signage board on a 2-storey shop lot	ii) The signage placement should provide 6 inches of space on the left and right of the building.	ii) Figure 4 indicates that the shop lot owner does not employ the proper size for a signage board.	
Figure 5: Signage board on a 2-storey shop lot	iii) Avoid covering the building's mirrors, windows, and façade.iv) The signage placement is not allowed above the roof level of the building.	iii) Figure 6 shows that the signage board covered 100% of the building's façade. No lighting or ventilation may enter the second floor.	
Figure 6: Signage board on a 2-storey shop lot	9	iv) Figure 7 show that the signage boards were installed on the beam of the building and did not cover the building's windows.	
WIDTCITE RODONG STEARHOUSE			
Figure 7: Signage board on a 2-storey shop lot			

Table 2 shows the comparison between gathered data from site observation of the content and visual of signage boards on 2-storey shop lots buildings and PLAN Malaysia guidelines. Non-uniform signage board content and visual display such as business and company name, business permits and product or service information will affect the visual quality of the signage board.

Table 2: Content and Visual Display of Signage Boards on 2-Storey Shop Lot Buildings

	-	bullaings		
Shop Lot	PLANMalaysia		Note	
	Guidelines			
A.Terrace-shaped business premises (non-heritage) SOON CHEONG 順日配號所	i)	The text or visuals should be balanced, acceptable, and not exceed 2/3 of the board sign's height.	i)	Figure 8 shows that the shop lot's owner follows the local authority's guidelines.
PUSAT HARVAN PELIHARAAN HAPPY PUPPY GR ** MING HOME 大之乐 宏 物美 容 之 屋 ©016-935 2788	ii)	The name of the company or business firm registered with the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM) should be on the signage board.	ii)	Business permits are displayed in the lower right corner of every signboard.
RESTORAN Iliau yê kaya lişi lanı Yümü MAKANAN LAZAT CINA MUSLIM MAKANAN LAZAT CINA MUSLIM	iii)	If the brand is the main focus of the signboard, the company name should be positioned under the brand.		
Heda Baragin Bayi Ora one dash Baby Home Marku M AVENT Pigeon FIFFY Stamo S	iv)	On the top left of the board sign, business activities must be written in Bahasa Malaysia and easily read.		
RESTORAN RODONG STEAKHOUSE RESTORAN MAKANAN BARAT DAN MELAYU TEMPONDALAMAT RESTORAN MAKANAN BARAT DAN MELAYU TEMPONDALAMAT	v)	The font size of the preferred brand should be larger than the font size of the business activity.		
Figure 8: Content and visual display on the signage boards	vi)	Local authority permit approval must be indicated at the bottom right of the signboard.		

B. Heritage business premises



Figure 9: Content and visual display on a signage board





Figure 10: Content and visual display on the signage boards



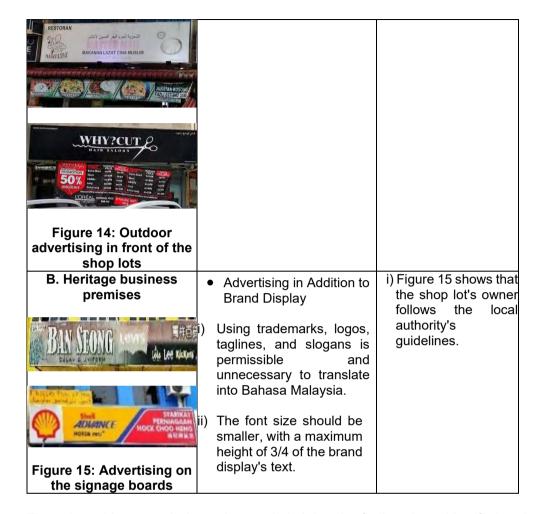
Figure 11: Content and visual display on the signage boards

- i) Figure 9 shows a signage board that is not using Bahasa Malaysia to explain the business activities.
- Figure 10 shows the content displayed on the signage is not straightforward and difficult to read.
- iii) Figure 11 shows that the shop lot's owner follows the local authority's guidelines.
- iv) Business permits are displayed in the lower right corner of every signboard.

Table 3 shows the comparison between gathered data from site observation of the advertising on 2-storey shop lots buildings and PLANMalaysia guidelines. The advertising is to promote the brand, services and product of the business.

Table 3: Advertising on 2-Storey Shop Lots Buildings

Shop Lot	PLANMalaysia Guidelines	Note				
A.Terrace-shaped business premises (non-heritage) Kedal Baragan Bayl Baby Home of Makku and AVENT pigeon FIFFY Simus Control on the signage boards	Advertising In Addition to Brand Display i) Using trademarks, logos, taglines, and slogans is permissible and unnecessary to translate into Bahasa Malaysia. ii) The font size should be smaller, with a maximum height of 3/4 of the brand display's text.	i) Figure 12 shows that the shop lot's owner follows the local authority's guidelines.				
Figure 13: Outdoor advertising on top of the shop lot's roof	Outdoor advertising i) The placement of billboards above the roof level of the building is not allowed. ii) Banner ads that aren't permanent are allowed to cover at least 30% of the openings to the building that let in light and ventilation.	i) Figure 13 shows the owner installed a permanent billboard on the building's roof. iii) Figure 14 shows that the owners of shop lots use temporary banner ads and only cover 30% of the building openings in front of their shops.				



Throughout this research, it can be concluded that the findings have identified and reviewed the signage installation guidelines prepared by local authorities and compared them to data gathered from site observation at Jalan Mok Hee Kiang, Mentakab. It is shown that the local authorities have provided guidelines for the owner of the shop lots to install suitable signage without deforming the façade of the building.

However, it was observed that shop lot owners often disregard the importance of signage, neglecting its potential to enhance the building's overall appeal. This indifference extends to the safety and comfort of individuals inside and outside the building. For instance, in emergencies such as fires, excessive signage obstructing windows can hinder rescue operations by firefighters. Although most signage boards partially meet the requirements, issues arise regarding their size and placement, as these aspects are frequently disregarded. Furthermore, the installation of inappropriate signage on heritage buildings has led to the disappearance of the building's architectural characteristics.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aims to evaluate the compliance of signage boards on two-storey building facades in Pekan Mentakab. Based on the aim of this study, it has identified that compliance of installing signage boards was not followed by most of the owners. Majority of the business owner followed the scope of guidelines but neglected on the placement of signage boards.

Based on the research findings, the recommendations can be considered to address the issues related to signage boards. Firstly, the study suggests that shop owners can resolve the problem of signage boards covering the building's facade by adhering to the regulations established by the local authorities. Shop owners must follow the guidelines and standards set by the authorities to ensure proper installation and placement of signage boards.

However, effective enforcement from the local authorities is crucial to tackle this problem. They should actively monitor the shop lots in Mentakab to identify signage boards that do not comply with the provided standards. By conducting regular inspections and taking necessary actions, the authorities can ensure that shop owners adhere to the guidelines and maintain the visual integrity of the buildings.

Implementing these recommendations offers significant benefits. Firstly, it prevents the disfigurement of the building's architectural features caused by improper signage placement. Secondly, it promotes visual harmony by ensuring signage design aligns with the building's aesthetics. Ultimately, these measures contribute to enhancing the overall appearance of the building while maintaining its architectural integrity.

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