CULTURAL HERITAGE AND URBAN TOURISM IN HISTORIC CITIES: CASE STUDY OF MELAKA, MALAYSIA, AND ISTANBUL, TÜRKIYE

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the sustainability of cultural heritage and urban tourism in historic cities. The study areas are Melaka, Malaysia and Istanbul, Turkiye, as both cities are rich in cultural heritage that attracts many tourists due to their historical significance. These cities face urban problems due to rapid population growth and economic development. Understanding the interaction between urban tourism development, cultural heritage preservation, and socio-cultural and economic repercussions on the cities may be learned through analysing cultural heritage and urban tourism in these cities. The objectives of this paper are; i) to analyse aspects of Melaka and Istanbul's preservation of their cultural heritage, growth of their tourism industries and general urban tourism experiences, and ii) to conduct a comparative analysis of each city's approach to cultural heritage and tourism. The method of this study is using reviews that include an analysis of texts on the history, philosophy, theory and concepts of cultural heritage and urban tourism in both sites. The findings of this study highlight Melaka's and Istanbul's strategic distribution and concentration of heritage attractions, effectively creating immersive urban heritage tourism experiences. Through character appraisals, these cities showcase the seamless integration of historical and contemporary elements, offering valuable insights into how distinct identities contribute to their success as vibrant tourism destinations.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Urban Tourism, Historic Cities, Melaka, Istanbul

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Urban heritage is essential for maintaining a nation's tangible and intangible cultural and historical identity. It encompasses architectural, historical, social, and cultural elements in cities, such as buildings, monuments, public spaces, and traditional neighbourhoods. Preserving urban heritage allows future generations to connect with their past, understand their roots, and appreciate the cultural heritage that shaped their nation. In most modern Asian cities, traditions, habits, and culture have all but disappeared, leaving just man as an urbanite by nature (Zubir & Sulaiman, 2004). More studies reveal the necessity of its indigenous architecture (Tengku Anis et al., 2018), unique urban structure (Kamariah et al., 2018), and culture (Kamaruddin & Said, 2011) to be preserved as part of the memory of the history of the city (Farhan et al., 2020).

Urban heritage contributes to the distinct character and identity of a city or region, making it more unique and attractive to residents and visitors. It also serves as a significant tourist attraction, attracting visitors interested in experiencing the cultural and historical aspects of a nation. Melaka, Malaysia and Istanbul, Turkiye are cities recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for their cultural and historical significance. To maintain the long-term viability of urban heritage tourism, it is necessary to comprehend the dynamics and characteristics of what makes the cities unique as they are (McKercher & Cros, 2002; Liu, 2017), so that they can sustain alongside modern developments in the future. As such, this study aims to appraise and compare the characteristics of Melaka and Istanbul to establish an understanding of

how the unique identity between both cities creates a sense of place and authenticity, which could be shared lessons learned for both cities and other heritage cities in the world.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage contributes to the shaping of national stereotypes and regional identity and it's a modern and post-modern reflection of the past (Grinell, 2018). Cultural heritage and urban planning must include a site's topography, geomorphology, ecology, and natural features, as well as its built environment, both historic and modern, its infrastructural patterns and spatial organisation, perceptions, and visual relationships, as well as all other elements of the overall urban structure and morphology (Jahn Kassim & Kamaruddin, 2023). Cultural heritage can be categorised into three distinct types; built environment (buildings, townscapes, archaeological remains); natural environment (rural landscapes, coasts and shorelines, agricultural heritage); and artefacts (books, documents, objects, pictures) (Ismail et al., 2014) (refer Figure 1).
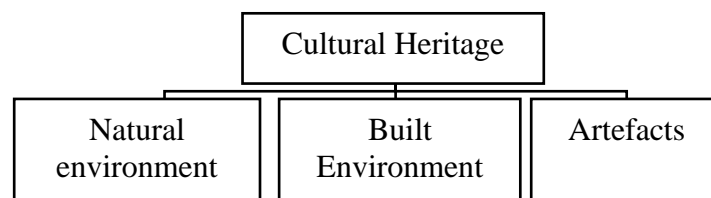
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Fig. 1: Categories of cultural heritage

The cultural heritage trend is evident in the rise of tourists who seek adventure, culture, history, archaeology, and interaction with local people (Ismail et al., 2014). Tourism helps to sustain the culture and natural heritage as spending circulates within the local economy, supporting businesses and livelihood. As a result, communities have the means to invest in the preservation and promotion of cultural and natural heritage. Tourists visit cities primarily for many reasons and cultural heritage visiting is one of the reasons due to their attractiveness. Besides, the tourists also engage in different heritage tourism-related activities, thus, heritage sites and monuments can be a remarkable attraction for urban tourists (Su et al., 2018). Responsible tourism practices, community involvement and conservation efforts are necessary to ensure that tourism benefits cultural and natural heritage in a balanced and sustainable manner.

2.2 Character Appraisal for Urban Heritage Tourism

Character appraisal is crucial for urban heritage tourism as it can assist the city to recognise and evaluate the destination's distinctive cultural and historical characteristics. The presence of tangible and intangible components in the historical development of cities, such as historic structures, landmarks, customs, and local practices are cultural characteristics that may draw tourists seeking cultural experiences (Ebejer, 2018; McKercher & Cros, 2002). Urban heritage tourism is significantly influenced by the historical development of cities because history provides visitors with the chance to investigate and discover the past, fostering a feeling of connection and authenticity. Cities can create thriving cultural districts or heritage precincts that attract tourists by preserving and renovating historic buildings and areas (Lei & Zhou, 2022). By constructing visually appealing and distinctive urban environments, city morphology can generate a sense of authenticity to offer visitors a rich historical experience (Zakariya et al., 2020). The development of themed tours, walking routes and heritage trails throughout the city can provide an engaging experience for tourists.

Urban heritage tourism is also greatly influenced by building components, fenestrations, materials, and details, which allude to the architectural styles of buildings (Insani et al., 2022). Buildings also rely on green and open spaces, as landscape design can sustain the environmental qualities of the city and serve as a place where tourists can experience the outdoor settings and natural surroundings (Tang et al., 2019). These features provide focal places for urban historical tourism and landmarks, fostering a sense of place and identity. Preserving the cultural heritage value of old buildings requires maintaining their authenticity and integrity, where well-preserved structures can add to the heritage characteristics of the city (Wang et al., 2019). Character appraisal is crucial for the sustainability of urban heritage tourism to aid heritage conservation and management, destination marketing and promotion, and inform planning and development decisions (refer Figure 2).
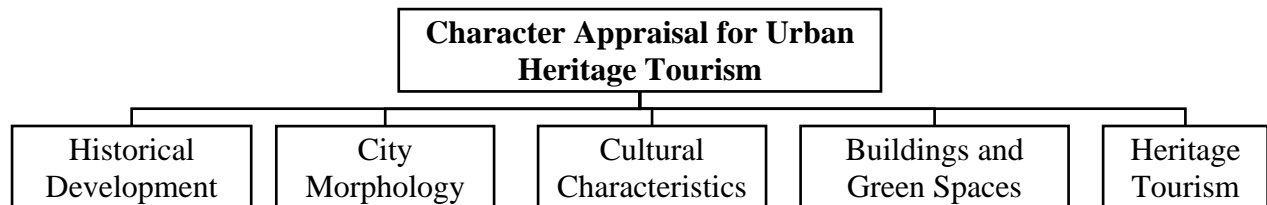

Fig. 2: Character appraisal for urban heritage tourism

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study examines secondary data from current literature to analyse and compare Melaka and Istanbul based on their characteristics for urban heritage tourism as shown in Figure 2. This study sourced academic papers, historical documents, maps, and data retrieval from official websites such as the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Governorship of Istanbul, Istanbul Historical Areas Field Presidency, Turkish Statistical Institute, and Melaka State Tourism Department. Both Melaka and Istanbul are UNESCO World Heritage Sites, where Melaka was listed in 2008 and Istanbul was listed 23 years earlier in 1985. The historical and cultural contacts between Asia and Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries were witnessed in the city of Melaka. Due to the differences between the timeline, as Melaka was established in the 1400s and Istanbul 8,000 years ago, the research will only consider the timeline since the 1400s (refer Figure 3). The researchers acknowledge that both cities also have different historical, cultural, and geographical backgrounds. However, there is much to be learned from comparing the cities as both are renowned heritage cities that have their ways of sustaining their cultural heritage and urban characters for tourism.
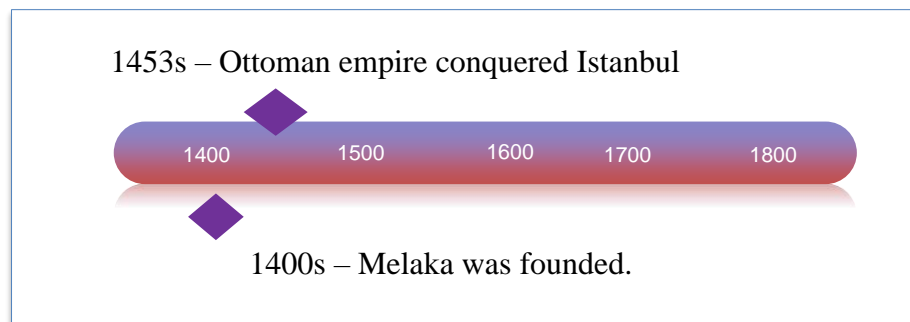

Fig. 3: Timeline for the study area

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
4.1 Historical Development

Melaka, a Malaysian trade hub since the 1500s, fostered cultural exchange between East and West. With a diverse population, it holds Malaysia's longest urban history, stemming from its 17th-century international port (Ismail et al., 2015). It housed Malays, Javanese, Chinese, and Indians pre-Melaka Sultanate, emerging as a commerce centre through its strategic location on the Strait of Melaka. Conquered by the Portuguese in 1511 and later by the Dutch in 1641, it thrived under British rule post-1824. Melaka's blend of architectural styles from Malay, Chinese, and European cultures attracted tourists and led to UNESCO recognition in 2008 (Figure 4), alongside Georgetown, Penang, Malaysia.

In Istanbul, Turkiye, the crossroads of Europe and Asia, a rich history unfolds, encompassing the Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman empires. As Turkiye's largest city, Istanbul boasts a layered heritage, merging indigenous roots with diverse cultures. Once inhabited by Thracians, Greeks, Byzantines, and Ottomans, it was Constantinople during Byzantine rule—a hub of art, culture, and Christianity. Becoming the Ottoman capital in the 15th century shaped its architecture and culture. Istanbul's unique blend of architectural styles, cuisine, music, and traditions stems from indigenous, Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman influences. It is a contemporary tapestry of languages, religions, and ethnicities, featuring UNESCO-listed sites like the Sulaymaniyah Mosque, Zeyrek Mosque, City Walls, and Sultanahmet Urban Archaeological Site (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2023).
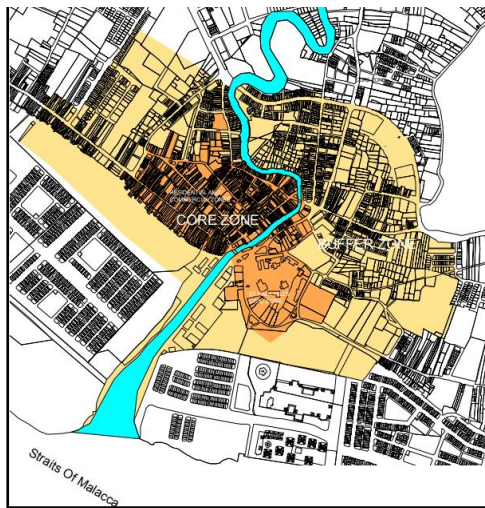

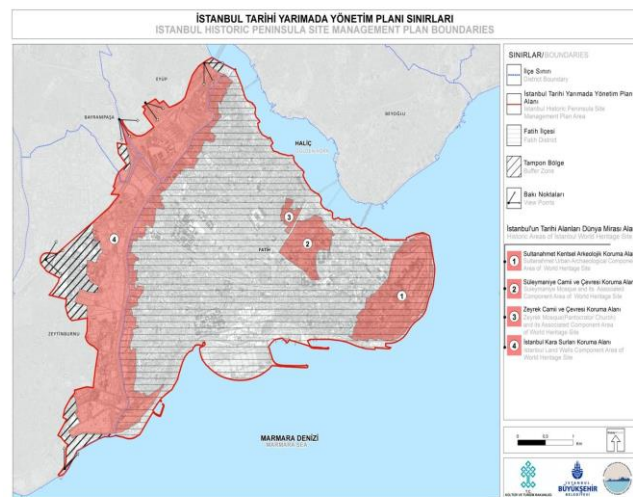**Fig. 4:** UNESCO site in Melaka (Source: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2023)

Fig. 5: Istanbul World Heritage Sites and their borders (Source: Istanbul Alan Baskanligi, 2023).

Both Melaka and Istanbul, despite differing geographies and cultural interactions, possess significant historical and cultural importance. Melaka, a pivotal trade hub since the 1500s, fostered East-West cultural exchange due to its strategic location along the Strait of Melaka. This history resulted in a diverse population and UNESCO recognition, reflecting its role as a vibrant crossroads. Istanbul, straddling Europe and Asia, acted as a centre for empires like Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman, influencing its art, culture, and architecture. Both cities' roles as crossroads enriched their cultural fabric, showcasing a blend of architectural styles and traditions, despite geographical disparities.

4.2 City Morphology

Melaka's city structure reflects its history, culture, and urban planning, featuring elements like the historic core, street layout, waterfront, conservation areas, mixed land use, open spaces, and expansion. Emerging in the 1400s under Parameswara, pre-colonial Melaka's growth was influenced by riverine trade, with significant sites like the palace, fort, mosque, and "padang" along the river (Ibrahim et al., 2020). During the Sultanate, the palace and mosque served as central points, while a developing fort and market drew commerce to the area. The wet market is aligned with the river's transportation role (Ibrahim et al., 2020). The grid street network, though not uniform, reflects the city's history (refer Figure 6). However, Portuguese colonization in 1511 led to destruction, repurposing former structures into forts after fires razed buildings, including the palaces and mosques.

Fig. 6: The morphology of Melaka [1515s (left); 1900-1910 (middle) and 2009 (right)]
(Source: Shamsuddin & Sulaiman, 1992)

Istanbul's morphology reflects Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, and Turkish Republic influences, with a history dating back to its Byzantium origins. Archaeological findings suggest settlement around 8000 years ago at the Yenikapı site. In the Byzantine era, strategically positioned along the Marmara Sea, it thrived as a small trading city (Istanbul Valiliği, 2020). Evolving under Byzantine rule, it became a cultural and Christian centre, marked by structures like Hagia Sophia and the Basilica Cistern. City walls defended against invasions, and landscape elements adorned roads and squares. Islamic rule reshaped the city organically, introducing mosques, madrasahs, and hammams. Over time, Istanbul's unique blend of influences set it apart (refer Figure 7).
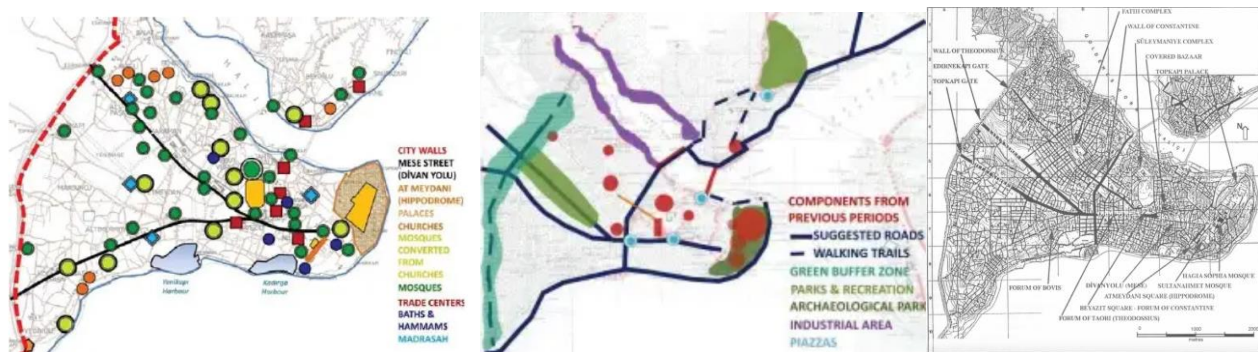

Fig. 7: Istanbul urban morphology (15-16 CE – left), 1937 (middle) and present-day (right)
[Source: Kubat 2014 (left and middle); Kubat 1999 (right)]

Both cities share a common theme of serving as historical crossroads where cultures and influences converged. Melaka's role as a trade hub enabled cultural exchange between the East and West, while Istanbul's strategic location between Europe and Asia facilitated interactions between empires and civilisations. Their architecture, from mosques and palaces to forts and churches, was shaped by their historical contexts. Melaka's development was marked by colonisation, resulting in a blend of architectural styles, while Istanbul's evolution encompassed multiple empires, leading to a unique mix of cultural and religious structures. Both cities' morphological journeys were influenced by their geographical locations and historical circumstances, resulting in distinct urban fabrics.

4.3 Cultural Characteristics

Melaka, located on Malaysia's west coast, boasts a diverse cultural heritage shaped by historical interactions (Shamsuddin, 2012). The well-preserved historic centre showcases a blend of architectural styles, reflecting its colonial history. The UNESCO-listed heritage zone encompasses landmarks like St. Paul's Church, A'Famosa fortress ruins, Stadthuys, Jonker Street, Cheng Hoon Teng Temple, and traditional shophouses. This designation highlights Melaka's role as a port and its cultural amalgamation that influenced traditions, architecture, and life. The multi-ethnic population contributes to various cultural heritage, visible in monuments, buildings, and the fusion of diverse cultures like the Baba-Nyonya, Chetti, and Portuguese Eurasians. The state government safeguards heritage through designated villages like Kampung Morten, Kampung Chetti, and Kampung Portugis (Abdul Aziz, 2017). Melaka is renowned for Baba-Nyonya culture, originating from Chinese-Malay intermarriage in the 15th century, and its unique Peranakan cuisine. Museums like the Baba-Nyonya Heritage Museum and Maritime Museum provide insights into its rich cultural tapestry.

Istanbul, a global metropolis strategically spanning Europe and Asia, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, boasts historic districts embodying the capitals of the Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman Empires. Iconic landmarks like Hagia Sophia, Sultanahmet Mosque, and Topkapi Palace showcase their architectural and cultural heritage. The city's identity is forged through symbolic religious, cultural, and modern structures, alongside key transportation hubs and entertainment venues such as Sulaymaniyah Mosque and Galata Tower. With approximately 35,000 registered structures (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, 2023), Istanbul's significance is indisputable. Its heritage sites exemplify a cosmopolitan history shaped by diverse cultures and religions, dating back to the Ottoman Empire's transformation post-conquest. The legacy of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities endure, as seen in UNESCO-designated historic districts. Migration from Anatolia introduced new traditions, enriching commerce and services around the peninsula (Alvarez & Yarcan, 2010). These sites bridge the gap between the Byzantine and Ottoman eras, encompassing landmarks like Sulaymaniyah Mosque, Zeyrek Mosque, City Walls, and Sultanahmet Urban Archaeological Site.

Both Melaka and Istanbul share intricate cultural characteristics resulting from their historical significance and diverse influences, although they differ in terms of geographic context and historical timeline. Melaka's cultural heritage underscores its position as a melting pot where historical remnants reflect its diverse cultural tapestry. In contrast, Istanbul's cultural characteristics highlight its role as a historical and modern cosmopolitan centre. The narrative acknowledges the city's evolving identity due to migration, encompassing diverse traditions and values from Anatolia and beyond. Both cities represent cultural crossroads where diverse cultures, religions, and influences have converged. Melaka's historical significance as a trade hub brought together various ethnic groups, fostering a rich blend of architectural styles and traditions. Istanbul, meanwhile, exemplifies a metropolis that has evolved over the centuries, shaped by empires and migrations, resulting in a

cultural amalgamation seen in its iconic landmarks. While Melaka's cultural fusion stems from trade interactions, Istanbul's identity has evolved through conquests, migrations, and modern influences, reflected in its architectural marvels and modern urban fabric. Both cities embody cultural diversity and historical depth, serving as captivating windows into the interactions of civilisations across time.

4.4 Buildings and Green Spaces

Melaka's architectural heritage, shaped by colonial, Peranakan, and traditional Malay styles, encompasses key elements like colonial features, building facades, the Peranakan influence, and traditional Malay houses. Colonial buildings showcase thick walls, ornate detailing, and decorative mouldings, while traditional structures feature distinctive windows like louvred, casement, sliding, and shutters. The Peranakan architecture blends Chinese and Malay elements, and traditional Malay houses boast large windows and adjustable shutters. Modern styles with glass facades, sleek windows, and minimalist frames enhance the city's allure. Jonker Street preserves diverse architectural styles, while the waterfront, influenced by the Melaka River and Strait of Malacca, connects historical buildings with scenic promenades. Urban expansion has added newer neighborhoods following modern planning principles. The array of architectural styles is significantly visible within Melaka's heritage core (refer to Figure 8).

Fig. 8: Architectural styles of the A'Famosa, Stadthuys and shophouse (left to right)

Istanbul's architectural heritage spans diverse eras and elements, including Roman stone aqueducts, Byzantine brick churches, Ottoman wooden mansions, and palaces. Streets are meticulously planned based on significance, such as Via Ignatia connecting Constantinople to Rome. Modern materials like steel and glass reflect the financial era. This unique blend of constructions and materials is evident along city streets, showcasing the harmonious relationship between users and structures. Buildings reflect this in their façades, size-height ratio, and consistency. The historic city centre's settlement radiated from Hagia Sophia mosque's core, while Galata resembled Mediterranean colony cities, and Uskudar featured a harbour-parallel avenue structure (Sarihan, 2001). The architectural styles in Istanbul reflect the combination of Ottoman architecture and Roman buildings (refer Figure 9).
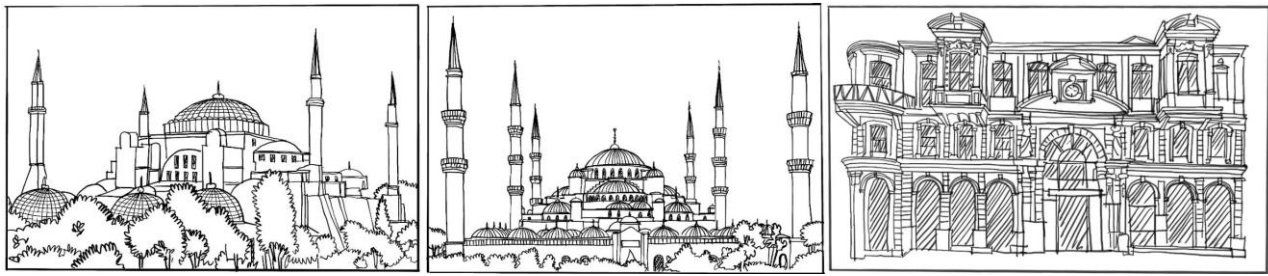
Fig. 9: Architectural styles of the Hagia Sofia, the Blue Mosque and a building on Istiklal Street (from left to right)

Both Melaka and Istanbul possess diverse and historically rich architectural heritage, yet they exhibit distinct characteristics in terms of building styles and urban planning. In Melaka, a convergence of colonial, Peranakan, and traditional Malay architectural styles is evident, with elements such as distinctive windows, shutters, and decorative mouldings. The city's core, exemplified by Jonker Street, showcases a harmonious blend of these styles across different periods. Istanbul, on the other hand, boasts a tapestry of architectural elements spanning Roman aqueducts, Byzantine churches, Ottoman wooden mansions, and palaces. The comparison reveals a contrast in materials, with Istanbul introducing modern steel and glass constructions in its financial era. Both cities prioritise urban organisation, with streets planned based on significance serving as historical arteries. The cities also showcase their unique relationships with water bodies - Melaka's waterfront along the Melaka River, and Istanbul's connection to the Bosphorus and Mediterranean. While both cities preserve their historical cores, Istanbul's more expansive urban spread demonstrates a nuanced growth pattern. Despite their differences, the intricate blend of historical and modern architectural elements contributes to the unique character of each city, enhancing their allure for residents and visitors alike.

4.4 Heritage Tourism
Tourist arrivals in Melaka and Istanbul have demonstrated their enduring appeal as vibrant cultural and historical destinations. Melaka's UNESCO recognition has significantly boosted its tourism sector, with a notable increase in tourist arrivals. In 2022, the city witnessed a rise in tourist arrivals of more than 6 million tourists, compared to 2.6 million tourists in 2021 (Liana Sahabudin, 2023). Similarly, Istanbul remains a top global tourist hotspot. In 2019, Istanbul welcomed approximately 15.5 million international tourists, making it the tenth most visited city in the world (Romino, 2019). The allure of Istanbul's rich history, iconic landmarks, and vibrant cultural scene continues to draw visitors from around the world, contributing to its status as a renowned tourist destination.

Figure 10 shows the number of total foreign tourist arrivals to Melaka from 2004 to 2022. The figure showed an increasing pattern from 2004 to 2019, and a drop drastically from 2020 to 2022. However, the number stagnates from 2021 to 2022, as the majority (93 per cent) of the tourists are domestic tourists (Liana Sahabudin, 2023). Figure 11 also shows an increasing pattern of total tourist arrivals to Istanbul from 2004 to 2019. In 2020, the trend decreased and managed to rise drastically from 2021 to 2022. Both trends at the lowest point in 2020 were due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
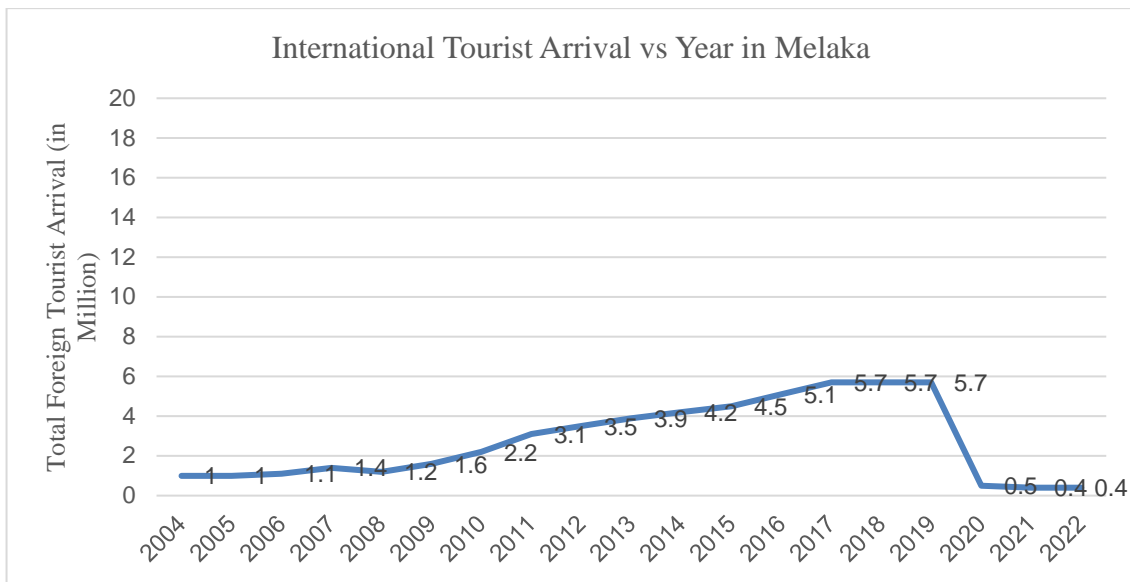
Fig. 10: Number of total foreign tourist arrivals to Melaka from 2000 to 2022.
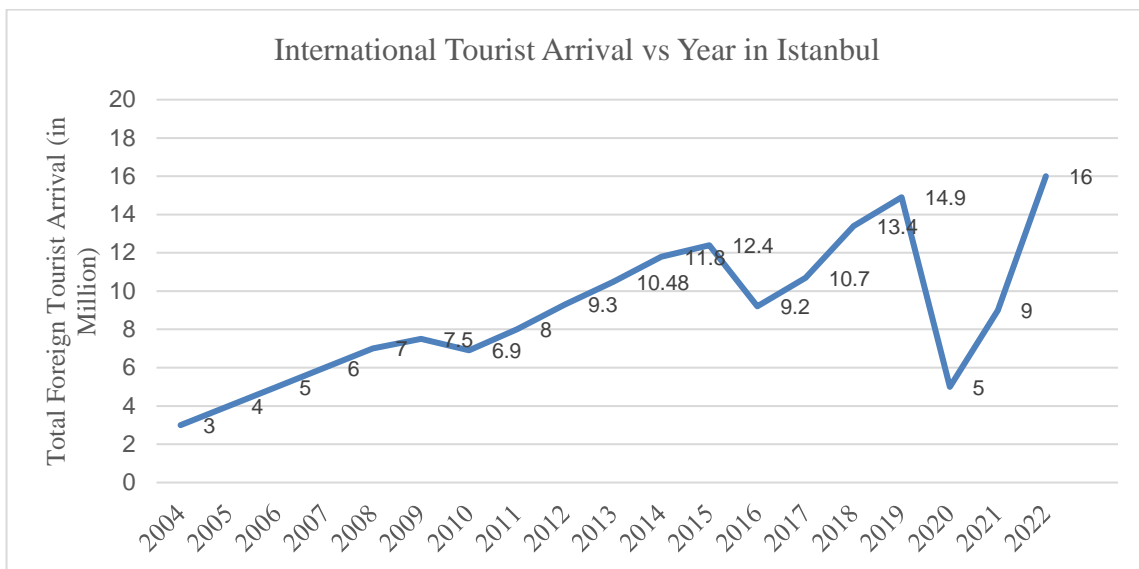(Source: Zulfikar Mohd Yusof, 2023; Liana Sahabudin, 2023)

Fig. 11: Number of total foreign tourist arrivals to Istanbul from 2004 to 2022.
(Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2022)

Melaka's UNESCO recognition has boosted tourism, drawing local and foreign visitors for cultural experiences and economic benefits (Ertan & Eğercioğlu, 2016). As a prime destination, Melaka's heritage tourism contributes significantly to Malaysia's tourism industry. Preserved historical sites, museums, festivals, Jonker Street, traditional architecture, culinary heritage, and Melaka River Cruise are key attractions reflecting its diverse heritage, including landmarks like A Famosa, Stadthuys, and St. Paul's Church. The Melaka Historical City Council safeguards architectural heritage, while outdoor activities, shopping, and cultural performances engage residents and visitors in the city's traditions and modern life. There are numerous tourist attractions distributed within the heritage core, offering tourists a wide variety of sites and activities (refer Figure 12).

Istanbul has famous attractions like the Grand Bazaar, Topkapi Palace, Blue Mosque, and Hagia Sophia, where the heritage sites are concentrated and clustered near one another (refer to Figure 12). The city capitalises on cultural tourism to attract visitors and investment, generating income vital for sustaining cultural products (European Travel Commission & World Tourism Organization, 2005). Istanbul's diverse heritage, cosmopolitan lifestyle, social activities, mega-events, gastronomy, and Bosphorus contribute to its unique appeal, reflecting both Asian and European cultures (Baş & Delaplace, 2022). The city's population has grown due to migration, resulting in foreign influences evident in restaurants, markets, and languages. Modern-traditional architecture and events like the Istanbul Biennial and Jazz Festival highlight its cultural diversity. The preservation and promotion of its indigenous past and contemporary layers are crucial for Istanbul's distinct identity.

Fig. 12: The red dots represent the distribution and concentration of heritage tourism attractions in Melaka (left) and Istanbul (right)

Both Melaka and Istanbul have successfully established themselves as sought-after tourism destinations by strategically distributing and concentrating their heritage attractions throughout their cities. This approach maximises the visitor experience while preserving the historical and cultural essence of each place. Both cities have effectively harnessed their heritage attractions by strategically distributing and concentrating them within their urban fabric. This approach creates a seamless blend of historical sites, architectural treasures, and modern amenities, ensuring an engaging and immersive experience for visitors. Melaka's compact layout allows for easy exploration of diverse landmarks, while Istanbul's larger scale integrates its heritage with the city's dynamic energy. The success of both Melaka and Istanbul as tourism destinations lies in their ability to curate a captivating journey through time and culture by thoughtfully distributing and concentrating their heritage attractions.

5.0 CONCLUSION
Governments, city authorities, and communities should prioritise the preservation and conservation of urban heritage. By proactive planning, policies, and investments, a nation can safeguard its cultural and historical identity for future generations, fostering a stronger sense of national pride and cohesion. Melaka and Istanbul have developed and promoted their cultural heritage sites for tourism. The development of heritage quarters in both cities is used as a tool to boost the local economy and

to contribute to anticipating the seasonal and geographical spread of tourism. They possess a rich and diverse cultural heritage that sets them apart from other destinations.

Even though there is a threat for Turkiye due to the instability in the Middle East region because of civil war and other security problems, there are also some opportunities for tourism and the labour force. Turkiye is still a safe, peaceful, and cosmopolitan country compared to the other countries in the region from the Balkans to the Middle East regions. Besides, Turkiye has developed its infrastructure since 2000 in terms of transportation, health, industry as well as tourism. Cultural activities also increase in Turkiye, partly in Istanbul, either nationally or internationally. This proves that Istanbul, Turkiye are capable of organising mega-events perfectly. One of the handicaps of increasing tourism activities is making the preservation of cultural heritages difficult. Tourism increases the level of income by bringing more money, but at the same time, the usage of the cultural heritage is increased. So, if the heritages are not protected correctly, deterioration and extinction happen due to misuse over time.

This paper has been an effort to understand the similarities and differences of cultural heritage in Melaka and Istanbul over time by attending to analysing them in terms of their historical development, city morphology, cultural characteristics, buildings and green spaces, and heritage tourism. Character appraisals for Melaka and Istanbul serve as invaluable lenses for comprehending the intricacies of urban heritage tourism. Both cities, with their rich historical and cultural tapestries, have strategically harnessed their distinctive architectural heritage buildings by distributing and concentrating attractions. Melaka's compact layout and concentrated heritage sites create an immersive experience, while Istanbul's expansive canvas weaves ancient treasures with a modern cityscape. Through character appraisals, it becomes evident that these destinations capitalise on their unique identities to curate engaging journeys for visitors, showcasing the harmonious coexistence of heritage and contemporary life, ultimately making them exceptional models for successful urban heritage tourism.

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