

BRANDING MELAKA AS A COMPLETE GREEN CITY FOR STATE IMAGE ENHANCEMENT

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ABSTRACT: The Melaka state government is embarking its vision towards Green City (GC) state by 2020. However, Melaka faces several related sustainable issues such as traffic, public transportation, health problems and others that are big challenges for the Melaka state to implement a complete Green City Branding (GCB). This study was to examine the factors that influence Melaka state towards a complete GCB and to investigate strategies of Melaka state towards a complete GCB. A qualitative approach was utilized by conducting a case study at the Melaka Green Technology Corporation (MGTC) and a semi-structured in-depth interview session was done among fifteen executives to obtain the primary data. Thus, by preventing the Melaka state from being harmed, the benefits of embarking on a complete GCB may be beneficial to the social and economic well-being for the sake of current and future generations. Future studies should be focusing on the hurdles faced by the Melaka state government in implementing a complete GCB because the state government is serious in aiming for the Green City State status.

KEYWORDS: *Green City Branding; Melaka; Qualitative Research; Case Study*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In 2010, the Melaka state government sets a vision of becoming a green technology city and be a 'green city' within 10 years [1]. Green City (GC) has been set as a new agenda for urban planning which aims to reduce the carbon footprint of the city or state by improving the livability [2]. The Melaka state government has been reacting towards the GC concept of branding the state with a slogan "Melaka

Maju Negeriku Sayang, Negeri Bandar Teknologi Hijau” in order to achieve the vision by 2020.

Green City Branding (GCB) is defined as an approach to integrate the city planning to respond to their climate change and locations by optimizing the availability of natural assets [3] and to promote economic development while maintaining the city biodiversity [4]. The concept of GCB is one of the competitive measures to differentiate the city from others by enhancing the sustainable development objectives [5]. While moving towards GCB, Melaka faces several related sustainable issues such as traffic, public transportation, health problems and others that become big challenges for the Melaka state government to implement a complete GCB [6]. This study was to examine the factors that influence Melaka state towards a complete GCB and to investigate strategies of Melaka state towards a complete GCB.

2.0 RESEARCH METHODS

This study applied a qualitative approach where a case study has been conducted at the Melaka Green Technology Corporation (MGTC) in order to gain in-depth understanding regarding the implementation of GCB [7]. As it functions towards the development of the Green implementation in Melaka state, a semi-structured in-depth interview was carried out to obtain the primary data among fifteen executives of MGTC. This study utilized a non-probability sampling technique which has been used because it is based on the assumption that the sample will be chosen at random from a sampling frame [7]. Several interview questions were asked during an in-depth interview session.

- i. What are the factors that cause Melaka to implement a complete GCB?
- ii. How do the GCB factors contribute towards the state image enhancement?
- iii. What type of effective communication to be used to increase the awareness of GCB?
- iv. Who are the partners involved in a public-private partnership for GCB?

Besides, secondary sources such as books, journals and other publications were obtained as to provide additional knowledge, interpretations or conclusions [8]. Principally, the primary data were derived from words throughout the interview session, hence, explanation building strategy was utilized in order to analyse the primary data [9]. The explanation building is designed to test a theoretical proposition whereby the researcher uses an existing theory to formulate the research questions and the objectives [10]. The explanation building method is a deductive process for analysing qualitative data that involve the iterative examination of a number of strategically selected cases to test a theoretical proposition [7]. Hence, in this qualitative study, the theory on GCB was tested against the findings and then each of the findings was explained.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Factors that Influence Melaka State towards a Complete GCB

GCB has been influenced by the sustainable development of tourism in the state. Sustainable tourism develops when policies, practices and programs take into account not only the expectations of tourists regarding responsible natural-resource management (demand) but also the needs of communities that support or are affected by tourism projects and the environment (supply) [11]. Meanwhile, the development of ecotourism, when handled properly, can provide tangible opportunities to promote, and perhaps more importantly to protect the earth's natural and cultural heritage [12].

Figure 1 shows the launching ceremony of the Electric bus by the Chief Minister (CM) of Melaka in 2014 [13]. The provision of Electric buses in Melaka as the mainland public transportation has attracted tourists around the world to visit the state [13]. Tourists may ride the Electric bus to travel around Melaka city with a reasonable fare, hence, support the GC vision of the state. Furthermore, the electric buses do not emit any pollution directly into the air, as the vehicle uses an electric to move the bus instead of using petrol or diesel fuel. The aim of usage of the electric buses in public transportation is to deliver an environmentally friendly fleet that reduces carbon emissions, improves air quality and also lowers pollution level as it is powered by nine lithium iron phosphate batteries.



Figure 1: Launching ceremony of electric bus by CM of Melaka [13]

Assistant Engineer 1 asserted that tourists who visited Melaka tended to stay in green hotels. MGTC has also been given recognition through the awarding of certificates (Melaka Green Seal) to the buildings that fulfil green criteria. It is a recognition for hotel owners and guests who are showing their concern for the environment, and both are playing vital roles in making the hotel industry more sustainable. Figure 2 shows the Kings Green Hotel at Ayer Keroh, Melaka received the Melaka Green Seal in 2015 [14].

By adopting green electricity such as a Photovoltaic system (PVS) or solar electricity in the hotel building may help the hotel providers reduce their operating cost [15]. PVS will contribute to low environmental impact because it provides green, renewable power by exploiting solar energy by reducing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions into the atmosphere, thus encouraging climate mitigation. Therefore, Melaka will pave the way for the state to become a zero-emission city by promoting electric buses and green hotel concept.



Figure 2: Kings Green Hotel received Melaka Green Seal award [14]

Besides, the implementation of City Branding may attract talent to the cities by improving the quality of city branding development talents such as introducing the talent introducing system, talent training system and talent utilizing system [16]. Talents have become one of the most important growth factors for all regions and places [17]. In city branding, the function of talents is to convey a comprehensive image of the future city for work and residence in which later, the individual's decision can be affected in favour to transform a city's image towards GCB.

The Manager of Project Unit stated that Melaka has limited natural resources unlike other states in Malaysia. However, to achieve the GC concept, the state government needed to utilize the human capital to involve in GC projects. In return, the state government would gain high profit.

Figure 3 shows one of the GC projects in Melaka is the Melaka River Rehabilitation and Beautification project, which provides about 3,000 jobs [18]. The job opportunities offered related to river cleaning and ecosystem preservation that are beneficial to help the government in enhancing its tourism image. The government can target, recruit and employ skilful individuals and gain perspectives from the public, private, and social sectors. Such diversity may help the government to plan and design the city towards sustainable development by considering all aspects of life.



Figure 3: The Melaka River Rehabilitation and Beautification project offer job opportunities [18]

The city branding organisation is one of the factors which influence the GCB [16]. It refers to various institutions which organize the multiple forces to participate in city branding management, hence, establishing the city branding policies and strategies in order to gain

city branding management. The Information Technology (IT) Assistant Officer commented that Melaka is the only state that has a special department namely MGTC that focuses on green development. MGTC has been established to oversee green development as the organization is responsible to promote, stimulate, facilitate and undertake green technology development, as well as enhance businesses and investment in green technology in Melaka state.

Furthermore, the manager of Administration & Finance Unit asserted that the organization needs to align with the vision of the state government vision towards 'Green City State' in 2020. In general, MGTC will help the state government to brand the state into GC State as the organization will provide more activities and attract more foreign investors to invest in green related projects such as green parks that can directly create a green environment in Melaka.

Next, the GCB is influenced by city branding system which involves the regulations and guidelines about the different tasks of city branding that are adhered by the city branding management institutions in the process of city branding [16]. The city branding system ensures the success of city branding because without the system, a lot of city branding practice cannot be carried out; or, the conflicts between departments and city branding communication activities appear in the practice cannot be solved in time. The Melaka state vision towards a GC was still in its transforming stage. Thus, the Melaka state has produced a blueprint as shown in Figure 4 entitled "Melaka Negeriku Sayang, Negeri Bandar Teknologi Hijau" which provides clear direction and guideline in developing a sustainable city [18].

The Manager of Project Unit outlined three main visions of Melaka state government which are to:

- i. Maintain the Developed State status;
- ii. Be a City State;
- iii. Sustain the green technology amid urbanization.

Thus, the city branding system is sharing its vision with the state government and people so that they will be a part of the shared vision.

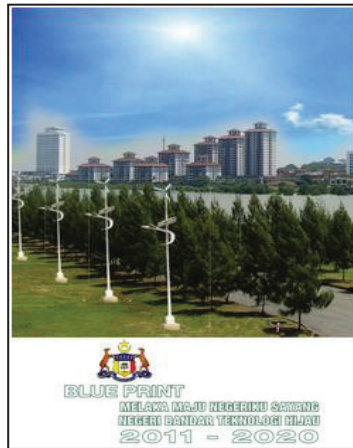


Figure 4: The blueprint of “Melaka Negeriku Sayang, Negeri Bandar Teknologi Hijau” [18]

The city branding culture is another factor to be considered to realize GCB in Melaka. It is stated as the behavioural concept, management style and working environment that is formed in the process of city branding organization functions [16]. In addition, the city’s attraction and competitive ability depend on its cultural resource [19]. In this case study, there is also a relationship between culture and city marketing stemming mainly, from the dependence of the city's image on the city's cultural past and present and from the reliance of the city's brand on the city's hidden and revealed identities.

For example, as commented by IT Assistant Officer, MGTC employees supported the green concept within the organization as to show their support and willingness by practicing green culture. The executive stated that the employees use Information Technology (IT) in daily works such as scanning and emailing documents through softcopy instead of hardcopy documents which tend to use excessive papers. The practice will not only save the cost on material, but will also develop a green culture which contributes to the GC community.

Furthermore, city branding of people also influences the success of green city branding in Melaka. This factor refers to the wisdom, ability and inner power of all kinds of talents which demand qualities in the city branding process [16]. Product brands need brand managers and other talents to run professional management, such as market analysis, brand orientation and campaign. Similarly, city

brand also needs a professional management team to realize the continuous grow of its brand value. In order to ensure the green city vision of Melaka is successful, the talent qualities are vital to ensure the growth of professionalism in city branding development.

The Administrative Assistant 2 in Training and Awareness Unit believed that the Melaka Government has its own intention to implement green element in the state. The executive claimed that the Melaka Chief Minister (CM) announces three elements of Melaka state to achieve the vision of Melaka Developed Phase II; product, system, environment and people. Moreover, the executive also expressed that all personnel in Melaka state government might contribute to the GC development, using their own creativity and out of the box thinking as they need to provide solutions for the state government to enhance the state image.

Recently, climate change mitigations or adaptation activities are utilized as a basis for GCB [20]. This trend is visible with various eco-cities, where climate change related projects and plans have become increasingly important. Melaka has predicted the rise in annual surface temperature during the period of 1960 to 2020 is about +1.31°C [21]. This scenario shows that the state government must take action to combat climate change that may become a threat to the Melaka environment.

The Head of Carbon and Indicator Unit argued that, climate change is the main factor that influences the Melaka state government to implement GCB as to support the Prime Minister's (PM) pledge to reduce the intensity carbon to 40 %. In addition, as a 'Developed state', Melaka aspires to become the pioneer in reducing the country intensity carbon emission. The Assistant Engineer 1 in Project Unit also agreed that climate change becomes the agent that influences Melaka towards implementing GCB as it would reduce various types of pollutions such as air, water and others. The Finance Administrative Assistant 1 in MGTC also asserted the pollutions such as noise, smoke and dust contributed to health problems which forced residents to spend a lot of money for medical treatment. In general, when the state government is aware of the impact of climate change, it will move towards the idea of branding the state into a complete GCB to create an eco-friendly state, thus, enhancing its image.

3.2 Strategies of Melaka State towards a Complete GCB

City branding identification is one of the strategies of GCB. The Genetic Engineering offers a foundation and instruction for brand-building in all cities [16]. Therefore, a distinctive, credible, attractive and characteristic system of city brand identification is essential for city branding. For example, the Chief Minister (CM) of Melaka who is the city manager should promote GC development in the whole country and also in the community because the GC concept is still new in Malaysia. Thus, CEO Personal Assistant in MGTC commented that CM was very supportive and active in managing GCB as he represents Melaka in activities like business trips or seminars. Information about the green efforts can be disseminated in all activities that he or she participates.

Figure 5 shows the 'Green World Ambassador Award' received by the Chief Minister of Melaka, Y.A.B Datuk Seri Ir Haji Idris bin Haji Haron on 2013 at Westminster [25]. The award recognizes the commitment of the Melaka state government towards the Melaka River Beautification Project as it makes a famous tourist icon in the domestic and international level. In short, a good city brand manager must think about the sustainable development that is beneficial to the state growth as the manager needs to instill cooperation between municipalities and regional service providers. When a good cooperation exists, Melaka can move towards GC development without any challenges.



Figure 5: Green World Ambassador Award received by the CM of Melaka [25]

Another strategy in implementing GCB is city branding architecture that refers to the combination of different levels, including the prior brands and the inferior ones, and the relationship between various

types of city brands [16]. Nowadays, many places have adopted a conscious strategy of using signature buildings and architecture to advertise and re-brand their cities. These buildings have different functions but are often situated within areas like culture and sports, and fairly often the buildings are praised for their architecture. Other than that, architecture plays an important role in urban regeneration projects and place marketing and in this sense architecture becomes a form of advertising [22].

The Administrative Assistant 1 of Training and awareness unit argued that the Melaka state implements Melaka Green Seal as one of certification marks used in the construction fields. Melaka Green Seal is one of the initiatives to achieve its mission as the National Green Technology City State. For instance, the CEO Personal Assistant asserted that the Melaka World Solar Valley (MWSV) has been a pioneer in this project where the building style resembles the green concept and the eco-based products of construction materials. In addition, the Melaka Blueprint “Melaka Negeriku Sayang, Negeri Bandar Teknologi Hijau 2020” reflects the development of Hang Tuah Jaya Green City as the development of new areas for a GC pilot project in the Melaka state [18]. The area covers a total of 1000 acres which is located in Hang Tuah Jaya City Municipal Council (HTJMC).

Moreover, the city branding communication is involved in GCB to promote the information related to GC as the city brand managers apply communicative methods to their target audiences [16]. It involves communication strategies such as advertising, public relations, direct marketing, sales promotion, personal selling and others. Cities have a wide choice of tools at their disposal to promote their brand using printed or electronic media [23].

According to IT Assistant Officer, MGTC owns an official Facebook page to interact with the public and every program is updated by the organization. In addition, a bulletin is also published for every 3 months, which contains information regarding green activities run by the Melaka state government. Administrative Assistant 1 of the Administration unit stated that MGTC has also collaborated with local authorities to design articles to be published in bulletins or other advertising materials such as newspapers and magazines. In general, communication with the community through any means or marketing

tools is vital in order to create awareness and increase the public's knowledge regarding GCB.

Next, city branding audit is also involved in GCB as a comprehensive, systematic, independent and regular verification of the branding environment [16]. The strategy helps the city organization to define the opportunities and difficulties in the process of city branding, proposed suggestions on action plan, and the effect of city branding improvement. In addition, this strategy is also recognized as a comprehensive examination of a brand involving activities to assess the health of a brand, uncover its sources of equity, and suggests ways to improve and leverage that equity [24].

The Assistant Engineer 2 expressed that energy building audit has been conducted in several Melaka government state buildings to ensure their compliance with the green concept criteria. There were nine buildings which undergo the Energy Audit Program under the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) Green Cities Initiatives Program. The energy audit was carried out by the Danish Energy Management (DEM) to do an energy audit of the nine buildings namely, Seri Negeri, Wisma Negeri, Putra Specialist Hospital, Central Melaka, Melaka International Trade Centre (MITC), Graha Maju, Graha Makmur, Wisma Air and Alor Gajah Municipal Council (MPAG). The objective of the audit was to identify the power usage and suggest the implementation of energy efficiency.

In addition, the officer in MGTC stated that although the Melaka State Government strives to implement GCB, the government must preserve the old buildings for their heritage values. Figure 6 shows the Graha Maju building that has been audited by DEM and achieved 20 % energy savings in Melaka state owned buildings [26]. A basic assessment of the building was inspected in detail through this energy audit that shows the great potential of energy-saving and thus has been proven through the 'Actual Retrofitting'.



Figure 6: Graha Maju building achieved 20% energy savings [26]

The final strategy for GCB is public-private partnership (PPP). In order for city branding to be successful, it is necessary for its key stakeholder to take part in a partnership [24]. The partnership should be one of equals between those stakeholders that can realize the brand of the city through their actions, investments, decisions and communications.

For instance, the Assistant Engineer 1 of the project unit stated that the Melaka state was chosen to represent Malaysia for the Green Cities program in Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) during the 9th Forum at Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan.

According to Administrative Assistant 2 of administration unit, IMT-GT involve three countries that aim to stimulate economic development in these countries that is supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The PPP program is a sub-regional cooperation initiative that is a catalyst for Melaka's vision to become a fully green city state by 2020. ADB plays a major role in assisting the state to create its very own action plan to achieve the 'green vision' namely Melaka Green City Action Plan (GCAP). GCAP has mapped the path that Melaka should take to become a complete green city.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the urge to transform the Melaka state into a complete Green City is now recognized involving a long-term commitment and strategies from all agencies and communities. The study has been highlighted that the climate change is the main factor that influences

the Melaka state government to implement GCB in line with the state's aspiration of 'Developed state' to become a pioneer in reducing the country's intensity carbon.

Besides, a sufficient fund should also be allocated to all city councils in the Melaka state to ensure they provide a sufficient green city infrastructures and community programs which can enhance a complete GCB for state image enhancement. The benefits of embarking on a complete GCB may be beneficial to the social and economic well-being for the sake of current and future generations. The future study should be focusing on the hurdles faced by the Melaka state government in implementing a complete GCB because the state government is seriously aiming for Green City State status.

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