

A Study of Community Participation Through the Adaptive Reuse Approach: A Case Study of Historical Building at Kuala Lumpur

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Abstract: *Adaptive reuse means giving old or unused buildings a new purpose while keeping their important design, history, and cultural value. It is seen as a smart and eco-friendly way to develop cities, helping with problems like limited land, the need to protect heritage, and the demand for useful spaces. In Kuala Lumpur, where the city is growing and changing fast, many empty buildings could be reused in this way. This study investigates how community involvement influences the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings in Kuala Lumpur. Focusing on three case studies which is Rumah Tangsi, Telekom Museum, and Light Capture Café the research explores how user experiences, perceptions, and engagement shape the functionality, cultural value, and sustainability of repurposed spaces. Using qualitative methods such as site observations, questionnaires, and comparative analysis, the study uncovers the emotional, social, and practical relationships between communities and these adaptive reuse sites. These old buildings are part of the city's story and identity, and they offer a chance to protect our heritage while meeting modern city needs. But we still don't know much about how local communities feel about these places or what they hope to see done with them. Listening to their views is important to make sure that reuse projects truly benefit the people who live around and use these spaces every day. This study explores the meaningful community participation enhance the relevance and longevity of adaptive reuse project by embedding local identity and collective memory into the built environment. The study also includes the strategic recommendations for integrating public input into future design and planning processes and promoting not only the preservation of heritage.*

Keywords: Adaptive Reuse, Historical, Abandoned Building, Communities

1. Introduction

Kuala Lumpur (KL), Malaysia's capital and one of its three Federal Territories, stands as the nation's largest and most dynamic urban center. Covering 243 square kilometers with a population of approximately 2.1 million (2024), and over 8.8 million in the Greater Kuala Lumpur region, or Klang Valley, the city is a major engine of economic and cultural

transformation. As one of Southeast Asia's fastest-growing metropolitan regions, Kuala Lumpur plays a pivotal role in shaping Malaysia's identity, prosperity, and global relevance.

Established in 1857 as a tin mining settlement, Kuala Lumpur's growth was shaped by historical figures such as Yap Ah Loy and Frank Swettenham, who laid the foundation for its urban identity. Over time, it evolved into the capital of the Federation of Malaya and subsequently Malaysia. Despite the relocation of federal administrative functions to Putrajaya in 1999, Kuala Lumpur continues to hold significant political weight as the seat of Malaysia's Parliament and the official residence of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Today, Kuala Lumpur represents a city of striking contrasts, where heritage architecture coexists uneasily with rapid urbanization. The city's physical landscape is undergoing constant transformation, creating tension between development and the preservation of cultural and historical assets. Many older buildings remain abandoned or underutilized—despite their deep-rooted cultural significance and potential for contemporary use. This situation presents a critical opportunity to explore adaptive reuse as a strategic solution.

Adaptive reuse refers to the repurposing of existing buildings for new uses while conserving their architectural, cultural, and historical character. Scholars have increasingly identified this practice as a key response to urban sustainability challenges. As Rashid et al. (2022) argue, adaptive reuse offers a resource-efficient alternative to demolition, significantly reducing construction waste and environmental impact while maintaining the embodied energy of existing structures. In the context of Kuala Lumpur, adaptive reuse is not merely an architectural decision—it is a necessary and forward-looking approach to urban resilience, heritage preservation, and sustainable development.

However, the success of adaptive reuse initiatives relies not only on design and policy, but also on active community engagement. While architects and urban planners contribute technical expertise, it is local communities who experience the day-to-day realities of the built environment. According to Wan Mustafa & Abdullah (2021), overlooking community perspectives can result in developments that fail to reflect social needs or cultural values, undermining their long-term sustainability and relevance. Community insights can offer practical knowledge about the potential roles of abandoned buildings, informing reuse projects that are both meaningful and inclusive.

In Kuala Lumpur, where modernization often comes at the expense of heritage, the balance between growth and preservation is increasingly fragile. Residents maintain emotional, social, and practical ties to old buildings—ties that are often overlooked in development discourse. Understanding how communities perceive adaptive reuse, and what they expect from such initiatives, is therefore crucial for aligning architectural efforts with lived experiences.

This study investigates the perceptions and expectations of local communities in Kuala Lumpur regarding the adaptive reuse of abandoned buildings. It seeks to uncover how these structures are valued, what roles they could play in modern urban life, and what factors shape community support or resistance. By centering public input, this research aims to inform more responsive and sustainable urban strategies, ensuring that adaptive reuse not only conserves the past but actively contributes to the city's future.

2. Problem Statement

The rapid growth of Kuala Lumpur has led to many historic buildings being abandoned, neglected, or even demolished. These buildings, which are part of the city's cultural and architectural identity, are often replaced by new developments that focus more on function than on heritage. While modern buildings meet urban needs, they also risk erasing the city's history and weakening the connection between the past and present. This raises concerns about the loss of heritage and the need to balance preservation with modern demands.

Adaptive reuse offers a solution by giving old buildings new life while keeping their historical value. But the success of these projects depends on how well they involve and reflect the local community. Through the study of Rumah Tangsi, Telekom Museum, and Light Capture Café, we see both the potential of these spaces and the challenges they face.

Rumah Tangsi stands out for its colonial architecture, but it lacks accessibility and strong public participation. The Telekom Museum uses interactive tools for learning but has limited engagement. Light Capture Café offers a cozy space but struggles with issues like parking and inconsistent events.

One of the main problems is that many of these reuse projects don't fully involve the community. Without community input, these places can feel empty or disconnected. Places like Rumah Tangsi and Light Capture Café show how important it is to include programs like workshops or cultural events to bring people in and make the spaces feel alive.

This research highlights how important it is to understand how people use and experience these spaces. By improving accessibility, creating flexible spaces, and involving locals in planning, designers can make places that are more inclusive and meaningful.

In the end, adaptive reuse isn't just about keeping buildings standing—it's about giving them new purpose, shaped by and for the community. When people are involved, these spaces can celebrate history, build social connections, and support sustainable city growth. This approach can help Kuala Lumpur protect its identity while still moving forward. Intellectual Property laws.

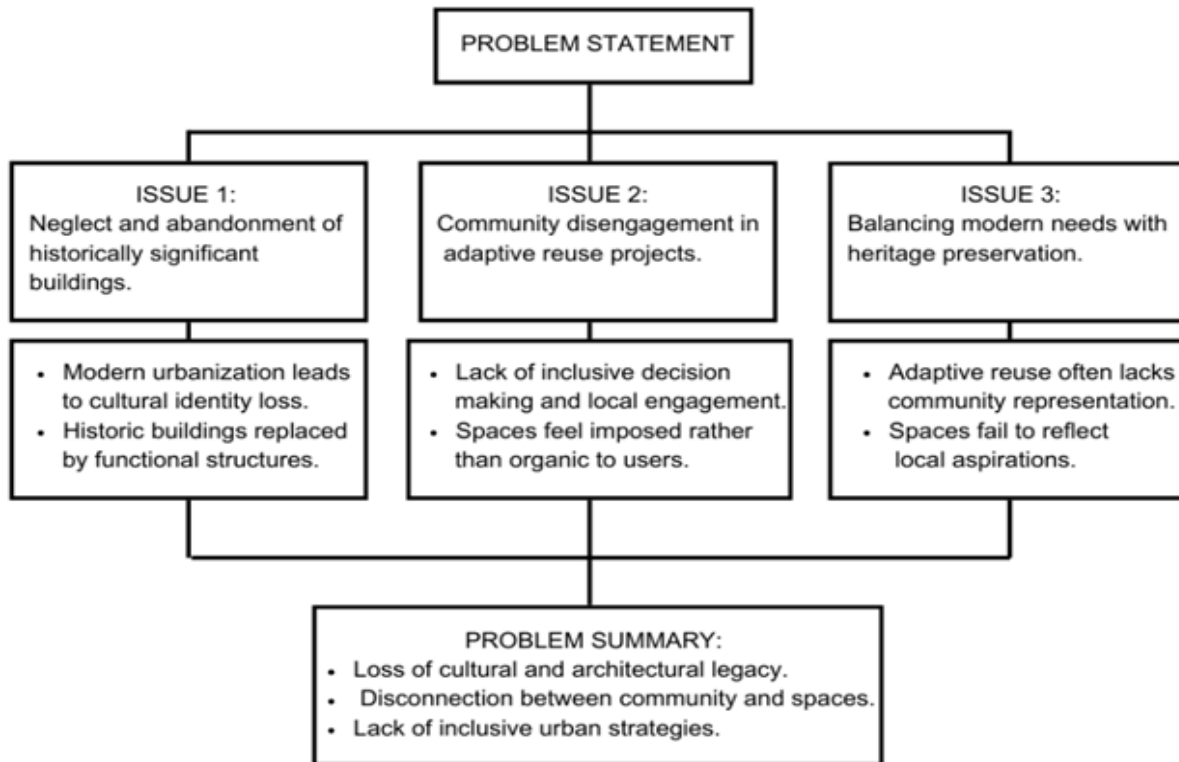


Figure 1: Key issues in adaptive reuse and community participation in Kuala Lumpur
 Sources: Sofea, 2025

2.1 Scope Study

This study focuses on the heart of Kuala Lumpur's urban transformation, listening to the stories of communities breathing new life into old buildings. It's not just about bricks and concrete, it's about how a repurposed shophouse becomes a beloved community hub, how a forgotten museum regains its soul, and how ordinary people shape these spaces through their memories, needs, and dreams. Through intimate conversations and on-the-ground observations at places like Rumah Janasi and the Telekom Museum, we discover how these adapted spaces stitch together Kuala Lumpur's past and present in ways that feel authentic to those who live with them every day.

At its core, this research recognizes that buildings only matter when they matter to people. As Kuala Lumpur races toward the future, these adaptive reuse projects become quiet acts of resistance to protecting the city's character while making room for modern life. The findings offer architects and planners a simple but powerful lesson. The most successful transformations happen when you design with people, not just for them. This isn't just urban development; it's about creating spaces where generations can see their stories reflected, and where the city's heartbeat can keep its unique rhythm amid the changes.

3. Literature Review

3.1 What is Adaptive Reuse

Adaptive reuse is a sustainable architectural strategy that repurposes existing buildings for new functions while preserving their historical, cultural, and architectural value. It reduces environmental impacts by minimizing demolition and new construction, embodying principles of the circular economy in the heritage sector (Rudan, 2021). This approach creatively addresses urban challenges by meeting spatial demands without expanding ecological

footprints and offers a balance between preservation and modernization (Doshi, 2020). Through integrating contemporary design into historic frameworks, adaptive reuse not only conserves physical structures but also protects intangible cultural narratives and community identity (Rudan, 2021). Transformations such as converting industrial warehouses into community hubs exemplify its social and economic benefits. Ultimately, adaptive reuse supports sustainable urban development by offering functional, environmentally conscious alternatives that reinforce cultural continuity and architectural relevance (Doshi, 2020).

3.2 Key Criteria for Effective of Adaptive Reuse

Adaptive reuse is a sustainable architectural strategy that repurposes existing buildings for modern functions while preserving their historical, cultural, and architectural value. It minimizes environmental impact by reducing demolition and new construction, aligning with circular economy principles in the heritage sector (Rudan, 2021). This approach offers practical solutions to urban challenges by meeting spatial needs without ecological expansion and balances historical preservation with contemporary design (Doshi, 2020). A cornerstone of any adaptive reuse project is the preservation of a building's heritage value, which involves safeguarding both tangible elements—such as architectural features and materials—and intangible aspects like historical narratives and cultural significance (Ragheb & Naguib, 2021). By prioritizing authenticity and identity, projects foster continuity between past and present. Effective adaptive reuse also relies on strategic criteria, including heritage value management, environmental adaptivity, public engagement, and financial feasibility, all of which form a comprehensive framework to ensure sustainable, functional, and culturally respectful transformations (Ragheb & Naguib, 2021; Rudan, 2021; Doshi, 2020).

3.2.1 Heritage Value Management

The preservation of a building's heritage value is fundamental to any adaptive reuse initiative. As highlighted by Ragheb and Naguib (2021), maintaining the cultural and historical significance of a structure is essential to ensuring its authenticity and identity are not compromised. This process involves a comprehensive evaluation of key historical features such as architectural design, original materials, and cultural relevance to ensure their thoughtful integration into the building's new function. Furthermore, heritage value management encompasses intangible elements, including the historical narratives and societal meaning attached to the site. By prioritizing both tangible and intangible heritage, adaptive reuse projects can successfully bridge the past and present, fostering a sense of cultural continuity and collective memory.

3.2.2 Environment Adaptivity

One of the central considerations in adaptive reuse is the building's capacity to support a new functional programme. According to Ragheb and Naguib (2021), environmental adaptivity entails evaluating the structural flexibility and spatial configuration of a building to determine its feasibility for repurposing. This approach advocates for minimal intervention, favouring the adaptation of existing architectural elements over extensive physical alterations. For instance, an industrial warehouse may be transformed into a residential development by maintaining its expansive open plan and integrating modular living units. Prioritising environmental adaptivity not only facilitates efficient functional transitions but also ensures the preservation of the building's structural integrity and historical character.

3.2.3 Environment Performance and Sustainability

Adaptive reuse plays a vital role in promoting environmental sustainability by reducing material consumption and construction waste. As Ragheb and Naguib (2021) assert, enhancing the energy performance of heritage buildings is a key component of successful reuse strategies. This can be achieved through retrofitting interventions, including the installation of energy-efficient glazing, improved insulation, and the integration of renewable energy technologies, thereby aligning older structures with contemporary environmental standards. Moreover, the reuse of existing materials and structural elements significantly lowers the carbon emissions typically associated with demolition and new construction. By embedding sustainability into the adaptive reuse process, such projects not only safeguard cultural heritage but also contribute to broader climate action goals and the advancement of sustainable urban development.

3.2.4 Public Intervention

Community engagement represents a critical dimension of adaptive reuse, as the success and long-term sustainability of such projects are often contingent upon public support. As highlighted by Ragheb and Naguib (2021), the active involvement of local communities during both the planning and implementation phases enhances public awareness and fosters a deeper appreciation for heritage preservation. Engagement strategies may include community consultations, design workshops, and participatory planning sessions, enabling stakeholders to contribute meaningfully to project outcomes. This inclusive process ensures that the adaptive reuse intervention reflects the needs, values, and aspirations of the surrounding community, ultimately cultivating a collective sense of ownership and pride. By embedding public participation within the development process, adaptive reuse initiatives not only reinforce social cohesion but also amplify their cultural relevance and impact.,

3.3 Theoretical Development and Evolution of Adaptive Reuse

Adaptive reuse, the practice of repurposing buildings for new functions, has developed from a pragmatic response to changing societal needs into a sophisticated and theoretically grounded architectural approach. Historically, buildings were adapted primarily for functional or economic reasons, such as the repurposing of classical monuments during the Renaissance or religious structures during the French Revolution. These early efforts lacked a conservation ethic, prioritizing practicality over heritage. The theoretical framework began to take shape in the 19th century with thinkers like Viollet-le-Duc, who emphasized the need to assign sustainable, contemporary functions to old buildings to preserve them. His views were countered by Ruskin and Morris, who argued that restoration compromised a structure's authenticity, advocating for ongoing care instead. This philosophical debate was expanded by Riegl, who introduced the concept of "monument values," bridging past and present by recognizing both commemorative (historical, age) and present-day (utility, artistic) values in heritage conservation.

In the 20th century, adaptive reuse gained architectural and scholarly prominence, particularly after World War I, when growing demolition of historic buildings prompted a conservationist response. Architects like Carlo Scarpa and Herzog & de Meuron creatively integrated historic elements into new designs, signalling a renewed appreciation for the architectural past. Publications such as *New Uses for Old Buildings* and journals like *The Architectural Review* helped formalize typological studies, organizing adaptive reuse cases by building type and new function. Scholars like Highfield and Douglas highlighted the technical challenges involved—fire resistance, thermal performance, and structural integrity—advocating for interdisciplinary collaboration. Conceptual strategies also emerged, with metaphors like "architecture as

palimpsest" (Machado & Robert) and methodologies like intervention and insertion (Brooker & Stone) emphasizing a balance between historical respect and modern innovation. Today, adaptive reuse is recognized as a holistic practice integrating typological, technical, and strategic approaches, reflecting its central role in sustainable development and heritage conservation.

3.4 Community Participation in Adaptive Reuse

Community participation is pivotal to the success of adaptive reuse projects, as it ensures the alignment of historical preservation with contemporary community needs and values. Involving local stakeholders throughout the process not only enhances public acceptance and fosters a sense of ownership but also facilitates a deeper understanding of a building's historical and social context, leading to more inclusive and meaningful outcomes. Research highlights that engaging communities through workshops, surveys, and consultations helps uncover intangible cultural values such as memories, traditions, and emotional ties that are essential for preserving the authenticity of heritage buildings. These insights often guide the transformation of underused spaces into vibrant public hubs like libraries or cultural centres, reflecting local aspirations. Moreover, active community involvement encourages long-term project sustainability by instilling responsibility and encouraging creative contributions, such as the integration of local art and traditions. Ultimately, this collaborative approach enhances the social relevance and environmental value of adaptive reuse, demonstrating how shared efforts can regenerate spaces in a culturally resonant and sustainable way.

3.4.1 Impact of Adaptive Reuse

Adaptive reuse has emerged as a transformative strategy for reinvigorating historic structures, offering a wide range of benefits that extend beyond the conservation of architectural heritage. By repurposing existing buildings for contemporary functions, adaptive reuse contributes to environmental sustainability, economic revitalization, and social enrichment. These multidimensional impacts highlight the comprehensive value of adaptive reuse in promoting sustainable development while responding to the evolving needs of local communities. According to Samy Wage Mahmoud (2022), the environmental, economic, and social dimensions serve as key indicators of this approach's effectiveness in enhancing community well-being. As such, adaptive reuse functions as a critical link between heritage preservation and future-oriented development, generating both tangible outcomes and intangible cultural value that reach beyond the built environment.

4. Methodologies

This study employed a qualitative research approach to examine community participation in adaptive reuse projects in Kuala Lumpur, focusing on three case studies: Rumah Tangsi, Telekom Museum, and Light Capture Cafe. Data collection involved both primary and secondary sources to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject. Primary data was gathered through structured questionnaires directed at visitors and employees associated with the selected sites, aiming to capture their experiences and perceptions regarding adaptive reuse and its impact on community engagement. Secondary data, obtained from scholarly journals, books, policy documents, and historical records, provided essential context on heritage conservation and participatory frameworks. By integrating empirical observations from surveys and site visits with theoretical insights from literature, the study adopted a mixed-methods approach that allowed for an in-depth exploration of the architectural, social, and cultural dimensions of adaptive reuse. This methodology enriched the analysis of how adaptive

reuse initiatives can foster community involvement and contribute to the revitalization of heritage spaces in Kuala Lumpur.

4.1 Case Studies

4.1.1 Rumah Tangsi

Originally built in 1905 as a private mansion for prominent mining entrepreneur Loke Chow Kit, Rumah Tangsi is notable for being the only locally owned building in Kuala Lumpur's European Quarter during the British colonial era. Initially serving as a luxurious residence, the building later evolved through various architectural transformations, reflecting its changing functions and significance. In 1909, it was taken over by the Empire Hotel Company Ltd and converted into the Empire Hotel, a favoured destination for affluent European travellers due to its prime location near the Kuala Lumpur Railway Station and Selangor Club. It was subsequently renovated and renamed the Peninsular Hotel in 1919, operating under that name until its closure in 1973. Today, Rumah Tangsi stands as a key heritage site in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, embodying a layered history of colonial influence, local identity, and adaptive reuse.

In 1973, the Malaysian Institute of Architects (PAM) leased the historic Loke Hall and renamed it the PAM Centre. When the building faced potential demolition in 1981 for redevelopment, public concern led PAM to campaign for its preservation. With support from Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL), the building was saved and restored, becoming a model of conservation and adaptive reuse. PAM continued to occupy the site until 2012, when DBKL reclaimed it for renovation. That same year, the building was gazetted as a National Heritage Building under the name Rumah Agam Loke Chow Kit. After five years of conservation efforts, it was officially renamed Rumah Tangsi in 2017, marking its restoration to former grandeur while safeguarding its cultural and historical significance.



Figure 2: Rumah Tangsi

4.1.2 Telekom Museum

Built in 1928, the Telekom Museum originally functioned as a central battery manual telephone exchange, playing a vital role in transmitting communications across Kuala Lumpur during a period of rapid urban development. The building, characterized by its elegant Greek-inspired

neo-classical architecture, now houses the National Telecommunication Museum. It features two main galleries: a historical section showcasing relics and immersive soundscapes, and a modern gallery that highlights contemporary telecommunications advancements and future innovations. The building was once slated for demolition, but this was halted in April 1985 when then-Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad intervened and had it gazetted for conservation. Restoration efforts preserved original elements like the wrought iron gates while integrating modern features such as a spiral staircase connecting the two gallery levels. The museum today stands as a testament to Malaysia's telecommunication heritage and successful adaptive reuse.

Located prominently at the intersection of Jalan Gereja and Jalan Raja Chulan in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, the Telekom Museum formerly known as "Bangunan Wilayah Selangor" was constructed in 1928, featuring a design heavily influenced by Greek architecture with its classical columns. Initially serving as a central battery manual telephone exchange, the building played a crucial role in connecting telephone subscriber lines and establishing communications across the city. Malaysia's colonial-era architecture, including the Telekom Museum, reflects a blend of Western Classical, Gothic, and Moghul influences, as pre-independence Malaya lacked a distinct architectural identity. Over time, however, local communities developed a vernacular style utilizing native materials such as timber, which became evident in traditional Malay structures. The influx of immigrants further diversified Malaysia's architectural landscape, giving rise to the Straits Eclectic style a uniquely Malaysian hybrid that adapts foreign influences on local climate and cultural needs. Despite the eclectic nature of this evolution, Neoclassicism emerged as the most dominant architectural expression, clearly reflected in buildings like the Telekom Museum.



Figure 3: Telekom Museum

4.1.3 Light Capture Café

Light Capture Café is housed in a historic pre-war shop lot in the bustling heart of Kuala Lumpur. Originally, the building served as a trading post during the early 20th century, reflecting the commercial vibrancy of the time. However, as years passed, the shop lot was left vacant, gradually falling into disrepair. The decision to adapt the space into a café was part of an effort to breathe new life into heritage buildings and preserve the city's historical character.

Today, Light Capture Café stands as a perfect example of how traditional architecture can be given a contemporary purpose, seamlessly blending the past with the present.



Figure 4: Light Capture Cafe

This study chose Rumah Tangsi, Telekom Museum, and Light Capture Café as case studies because each one tells a different story about how old buildings in Kuala Lumpur are being brought back to life and how people connect with them. Rumah Tangsi, a beautifully restored colonial mansion, now serves as a cultural and creative space. It stands as a symbol of architectural pride. The struggles to fully connect with the public due to limited accessibility and engagement activities. On the other hand, Telekom Museum shows how heritage can meet education, offering interactive exhibits within a historic setting. But despite its potential, it lacks regular programmes that truly draw the community in. Light Capture Café, meanwhile, takes a more casual approach turning a former shop lot into a trendy, welcoming space where people come to relax, work, or meet friends. It creates a comfortable atmosphere. Everyday challenges like parking issues and inconsistent events. These three places were chosen because they each highlight different ways adaptive reuse is happening in the city and more importantly, how the presence of community involvement can shape whether these spaces feel alive and meaningful, or simply restored but underused

5. Data Collection

This survey adopts a qualitative approach by using open-ended questionnaires to gather participants' personal experiences and perceptions of adaptive reuse buildings namely Rumah Tangsi, Telekom Museum, and Light Capture Café. Through detailed user responses, the study aims to explore how each site's design, activities, and atmosphere influence both the community's connection to its history and its current sense of belonging. The data collected will help identify key strengths, challenges, and opportunities for enhancing community participation. By allowing participants to articulate their thoughts in their own words, the research captures emotional, cultural, and social dimensions often overlooked by quantitative methods. These insights are particularly valuable in revealing differences across demographics and user groups, providing a more inclusive understanding of how adaptive reuse projects are experienced. Ultimately, this qualitative analysis contributes to shaping future adaptive reuse efforts that not only conserve architectural heritage but also strengthen emotional and social bonds within the community.

5.1 Data Analysis

This study’s data analysis centres on assessing user experiences and community participation within adaptive reuse projects in Kuala Lumpur, with a focus on three key sites: Rumah Tangsi, Telekom Museum, and Light Capture Café. A mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collected through surveys, site observations, and open-ended responses to capture the distinct dynamics of each location. Quantitative data including user demographics, visit frequency, and satisfaction levels were examined to identify patterns and measurable impacts on community engagement. In parallel, qualitative responses provided nuanced insights into users’ personal experiences, perceptions, and emotional connections to the spaces. Through comparative analysis across the three sites, the study explores how architectural design, cultural programming, and heritage conservation influence levels of user participation and public perception. The findings reveal both the strengths and limitations of adaptive reuse initiatives, particularly in fostering a sense of belonging, preserving cultural identity, and accommodating contemporary uses. Ultimately, this analysis offers a comprehensive understanding of the critical role that community engagement plays in the success of adaptive reuse projects, while also informing future strategies for sustainable heritage revitalisation in Kuala Lumpur.

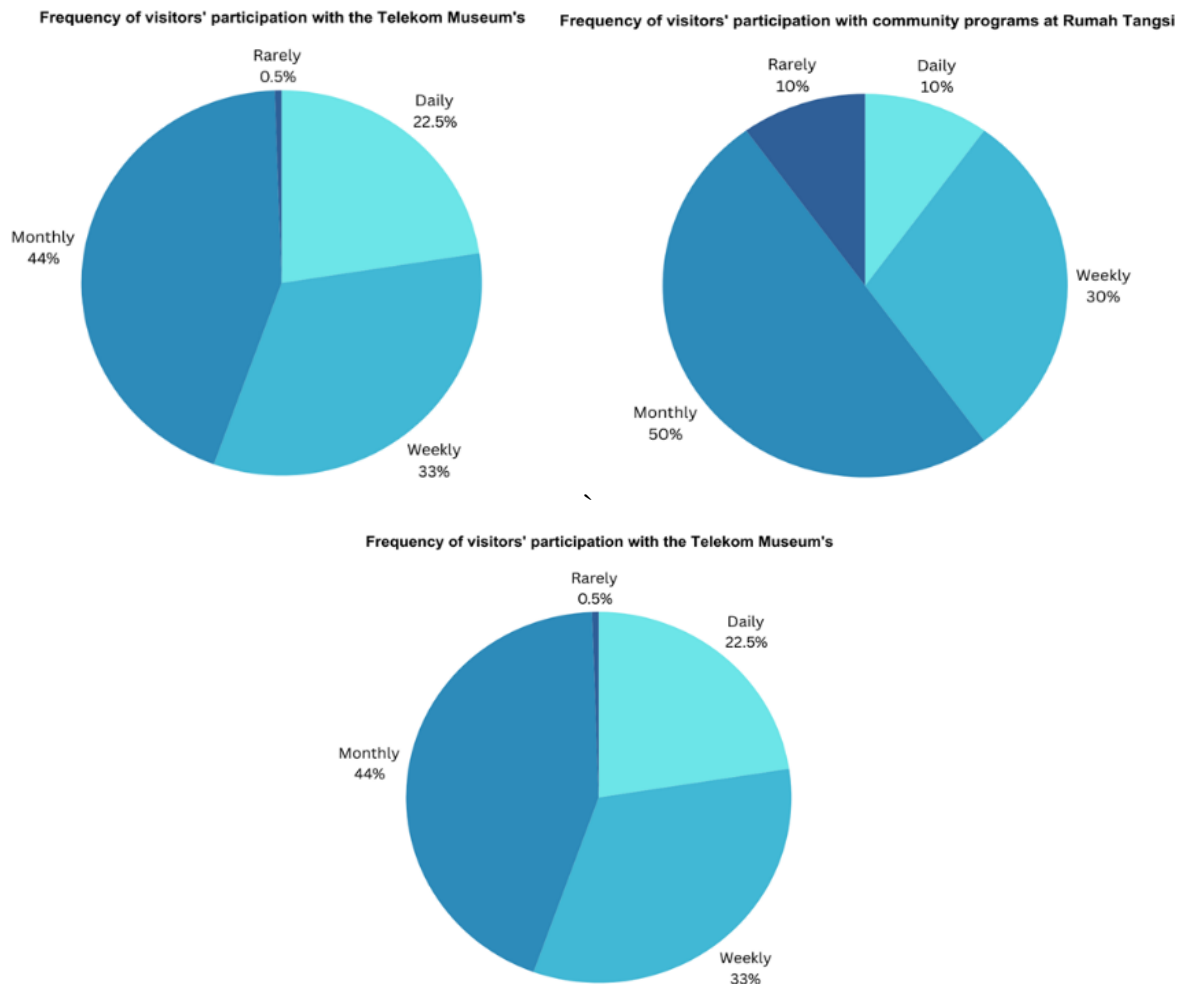


Chart 1: Chart Frequency of Visitor’s participation (Sources Sofea, 2025)

The pie charts reveal patterns in the frequency of community engagement and visits across three adaptive reuse sites: Rumah Tangsi, Telekom Museum, and Light Capture Café. At Rumah Tangsi, monthly participation is most prevalent (50%), followed by weekly (30%), with

both daily and rare participation at 10% each. Similarly, at the Telekom Museum, monthly participation leads at 44%, but there is a notable rise in weekly (33%) and daily participation (22.5%), while rare participation drops sharply to 0.5%. This indicates a more consistent and engaged visitor base at the museum. In contrast, Light Capture Café sees the highest weekly visitation rate (40%), followed by monthly visits (34.3%), daily visits (25%), and rare visits at just 0.7%. These trends suggest that while monthly engagement is common across all sites, the Telekom Museum and Light Capture Café attract more frequent visitors, highlighting their roles as more active hubs of community interaction compared to Rumah Tangsi.

5.2 Impact of Community Through Adaptive Reuse

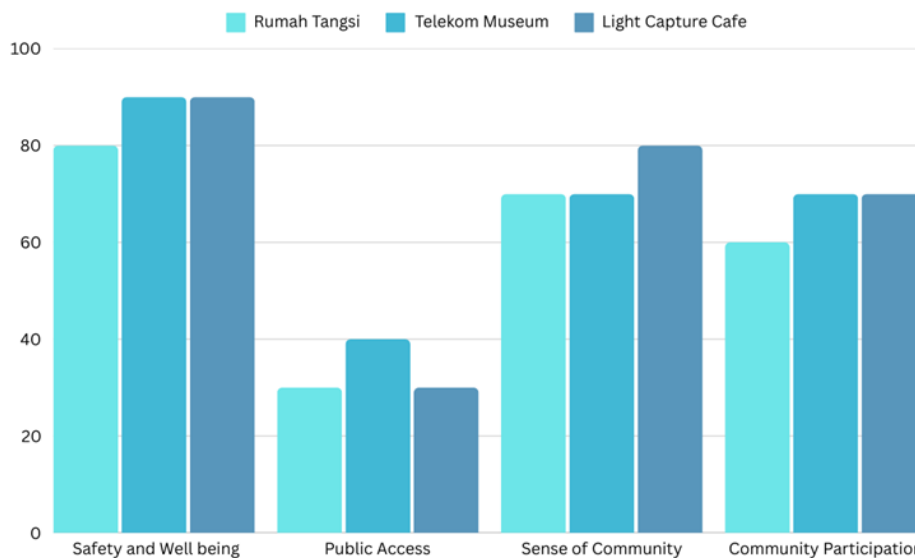


Chart 2: Chart Impact of Community Through Adaptive Reuse (Sources Sofea, 2025)

The bar chart presents the perceived impact of adaptive reuse at three sites Rumah Tangsi, Telekom Museum, and Light Capture Café measured across four key indicators: safety and well-being, public access, sense of community, and community participation. Rumah Tangsi registers the highest score in terms of safety and well-being, which may be attributed to its community-oriented initiatives and supportive spatial environment. Light Capture Café leads in public access, likely due to its strategic location and inclusive ambiance. The Telekom Museum demonstrates a strong sense of community, reinforced by its interactive exhibitions and educational programming. Although all three locations exhibit generally positive outcomes, the findings suggest opportunities for improvement particularly in enhancing public access at Rumah Tangsi and fostering greater community participation across all sites.

5.3 Comparison Analysis

A comparative analysis of adaptive reuse strategies across the three case study sites reveals varied yet effective approaches tailored to their unique contexts. While each project shares a common emphasis on preserving elements of the original structure and promoting community engagement, their methods of implementation differ significantly. Rumah Tangsi places strong emphasis on structural preservation and community-building through cultural programmes such as art exhibitions and creative workshops. In contrast, the Telekom Museum undertakes extensive interior transformations, integrating interactive digital exhibits and educational content that reflect its historical association with telecommunications. Light Capture Café adopts a more contemporary approach, blending modern technologies with a dynamic social

atmosphere that fosters collaboration and creative expression. Despite these differences, all three sites contribute positively to the local economy by supporting surrounding businesses and attracting visitors. These distinct strategies illustrate the flexibility of adaptive reuse as a tool for generating varied social, cultural, and economic benefits, each shaped by the character and vision of the individual site. To address this, Lima and Costa (2019) emphasize the need for training and knowledge-sharing initiatives to ensure consistent application of asset management practices across the organization. Similarly, Schuman and Brent (2005) underline that training is particularly essential for government officers, especially asset officers, to help them understand and effectively carry out their responsibilities. Since asset management is a multidisciplinary field requiring expertise in engineering, finance, and operations, comprehensive training programs are crucial.

6. Discussion

Community participation is vital for successful adaptive reuse, as shown in the cases of Rumah Tangsi, Telekom Museum, and Light Capture Café. Using frameworks like Arnstein's Ladder of Participation, findings suggest Rumah Tangsi currently operates at a "Consultation" level, where feedback is gathered but not fully acted upon. Visitors appreciate the site's heritage but express concerns about accessibility and limited engagement. To strengthen involvement, the project could move toward a "Partnership" model by involving local educators, workers, and residents in co-creating events and programs. This would foster a greater sense of ownership and improve community-driven use of the space

The Telekom Museum shows a relatively high level of community engagement through interactive exhibits and educational programs, aligning with Pretty's "Functional Participation," where users engage in structured activities. However, limited public access indicates remaining barriers to broader inclusion. Moving toward "Interactive Participation" could involve co-created exhibits and community-led storytelling or workshops. In contrast, Light Capture Café, despite high user satisfaction and a welcoming atmosphere, reflects "Passive Participation," as users enjoy the space without actively influencing it. To reach "Self-Mobilization," the café could empower patrons to organize events like art shows or open mics, enhancing its role as an inclusive, community-driven hub.

The findings of this study directly support the research aim of exploring how community participation and user experience influence adaptive reuse practices in Kuala Lumpur. By analysing the three case studies Rumah Tangsi, Telekom Museum, and Light Capture Café it became evident that spaces with stronger community engagement were more successful in maintaining cultural relevance and functionality. This addresses the first objective, as user experiences revealed the emotional and social connections people have with reused spaces, influencing how they interact with them. The second objective was fulfilled by showing that community perceptions greatly affect the success of adaptive reuse; positive perceptions led to more meaningful use and support. Lastly, the third objective was met by demonstrating that when communities are involved, the balance between preserving heritage and meeting practical needs is more easily achieved. Overall, the study confirms that adaptive reuse must be a people-centred process rooted not only in design and preservation, but also in the voices and experiences of the community itself

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Kuala Lumpur, where modern development moves quickly, adaptive reuse offers a chance to slow down and reconnect with our roots. This study shows that bringing old buildings back to life isn't just about fixing walls and restoring facades but it's about people. When communities feel included, heard, and connected to these spaces, something powerful happens: the buildings become more than just preserved structures, but they become places full of meaning, memory, and life. Through the stories of Rumah Tangsi, Telekom Museum, and Light Capture Café, we see how important it is for adaptive reuse projects to go beyond design and truly engage with the people who live around them.

To make these efforts more impactful, communities must be part of the conversation from the very beginning. It's not enough to restore a building beautifully but it also has to feel welcoming, accessible, and useful. Small things, like creating flexible spaces for gatherings or inviting local creatives to shape the space, can make a big difference. Support from policymakers and planners is also key to help these projects grow and last. In the end, adaptive reuse should not only protect our past but it should create places that people love, use, and feel proud of today and tomorrow.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research.

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