



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERPRETIVE PANELS AT SARAWAK
CULTURAL VILLAGE, MALAYSIA***

JANE ANAK ABI

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**EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERPRETIVE PANELS AT SARAWAK CULTURAL
VILLAGE, MALAYSIA**

By

JANE ANAK ABI

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of
Science**

July 2018

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

ABSTRACT
EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERPRETIVE PANELS AT SARAWAK CULTURAL VILLAGE, MALAYSIA

By

JANE ANAK ABI

July 2018

Chairman: Associate Professor Manohar Mariapan, PhD
Faculty: Forestry

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of existing non-personal culture interpretation product of the 7 ethnic houses at Sarawak Cultural Village, Kuching. The results were obtained from a total of 700 respondents divided into control and treatment groups. The Tilden's Interpretation Principles, Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Triadic Model of Attitude were used to determine the effectiveness of existing messages and when subjected with interpretive intervention. A set of interpretive messages were designed using the Tilden's Interpretation Principles and were introduced to respondents in the treatment group. Meanwhile, the existing interpretation messages were included in the questionnaire distributed to the respondents in the control group. Based on the results, the control group respondents found themselves not attracted to read the existing messages. Most of the respondents commented they are more interested in illustrative messages. They claimed that the existing message was too long, and its content lacks segmentation/ paragraph. They are unable to recall the message after reading and will not read all of the messages at the ethnic houses. As a result, the respondents do not fully understand the culture, less aware and lose interest to participate in the cultural activity provided. Similarly, the respondents in the treatment group are more interested in illustrative messages. A higher percentage of the respondents were attracted to read the messages and they can recall the cultural information that they have read. They also have a higher appreciation of the ethnic's culture. This was evident in the findings where they have higher percentage of admiration and appreciation of the various ethnics' cultures. The respondents also showed a higher percentage in the willingness to disseminate the ethnic's culture, excited to participate in more cultural events and contribute to the conservation of culture preservation as a whole. The results of this study proved that messages with interpretive intervention are more effective in attracting visitors and influence them in accepting the knowledge while having emotional impacts to enhance the effectiveness of messages provided at cultural tourism sites. In terms of physical characteristics of the message panels, respondents also suggested several criteria that will make the displayed messages more appealing to the public. It

appeared that the message panels' position, height, material, typeface, font type and size, as well as graphic design contribute to the holding power and attract respondents to read the messages, affectively effected and willingness to participate in cultural heritage-based activities and programs. Therefore, it is recommended that the non-personal cultural interpretive panels undergo a facelift. More thoughtful and attractive interpretive message designs will also attract visitors to use the non-personal interpretation facility. It will consequently lead to an increase in awareness, appreciation, participation and sustainability of cultural heritage tourism, especially at Sarawak Cultural Village.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Sarjana Sains

ABSTRAK
KEBERKESANAN PANEL INTERPRETIF DI KAMPUNG BUDAYA
SARAWAK, MALAYSIA

Oleh

JANE ANAK ABI

July 2018

Pengerusi: Professor Madya Manohar Mariapan, PhD
Fakulti: Perhutanan

Kajian ini adalah bertujuan untuk menilai keberkesanan produk interpretasi budaya bukan personal bagi 7 rumah etnik di Kampung Budaya Sarawak, Kuching. Keputusan kajian adalah berdasarkan kaji selidik seramai 700 responden daripada kumpulan kawalan dan kumpulan rawatan. Prinsip Interpretasi Teori Sebab Perlakuan dan Model Perlakuan *Triadic* telah diaplikasikan untuk menilai keberkesanan mesej sedia ada, dan yang telah diubahsuai secara interpretif. Satu set interpretif mesej telah dibina dengan menggunakan Prinsip Interpretasi *Tilden* telah diperkenalkan kepada kumpulan rawatan. Sementara soalan kaji selidik mesej sedia ada telah diberikan kepada kumpulan kawalan. Berdasarkan keputusan kajian, kumpulan kawalan mendapati diri mereka tidak tertarik untuk membaca mesej sedia ada. Kebanyakan responden memberi komen bahawa mereka lebih tertarik kepada mesej yang mengandungi ilustrasi. Mereka mendakwa yang mesej sedia ada adalah terlalu panjang, dan kandungan mesej tersebut tidak mempunyai pembahagian perenggan, tidak boleh mengingat mesej yang telah dibaca di rumah etnik. Ini memberikan keputusan responden kurang memahami budaya, kurang kesedaran and kurang berminat untuk menyertai aktiviti kebudayaan yang disediakan. Manakala bagi responden kumpulan rawatan pula, mereka turut lebih berminat dengan mesej yang mengandungi ilustrasi. Mereka mempunyai lebih peratusan tertarik untuk membaca mesej dan boleh mengingat kandungan mesej yang telah mereka baca. Responden ini juga mempunyai tahap penghargaan lebih tinggi terhadap kebudayaan etnik. Ini ditunjukkan daripada peratusan yang lebih tinggi meminati dan menghargai kebudayaan etnik. Responden juga mempunyai peratusan lebih tinggi sanggup untuk menyebarkan budaya etnik, lebih teruja untuk menyertai acara kebudayaan dan memberikan sumbangan terhadap pemeliharaan kebudayaan secara keseluruhan. Panel mesej interpretive bukan personal turut memerlukan naik taraf. Rekaan dan penempatan panel mesej interpretif tersebut haruslah lebih mesra pengguna dan menarik perhatian mereka. Keputusan kajian ini membuktikan bahawa mesej yang diubahsuai secara interpretif adalah lebih berkesan untuk menarik perhatian pengunjung bagi membaca dan

mempengaruhi mereka untuk menerima maklumat dan impak secara emosi untuk meningkatkan keberkesanan mesej yang disediakan di lokasi perlancongan budaya. Manakala bagi penilaian ciri-ciri fizikal bagi panel mesej, responden turut mencadangkan beberapa kriteria untuk membuat panel serta mesej yang disampaikan agar lebih menarik kepada umum. Kedudukan, ketinggian, bahan buatan, muka panel, jenis tulisan dan saiz, serta ilustrasi grafik adalah menyumbang kepada kekuatan menarik responden untuk membaca, terkesan secara emosi serta kesanggupan untuk menyertai aktiviti dan program berteraskan kebudayaan dan warisan. Oleh itu, adalah dicadangkan agar mesej dan panel interpretif diperbaharui. Rekaan mesej serta panel yang lebih bermakna dan mengambil kira keperluan pengunjung akan menarik mereka untuk menggunakan kemudahan interpretasi bukan personal. Ini akan secara tidak langsung meningkatkan kesedaran, penghargaan, penyertaan serta kemampuan perlancongan kebudayaan dan warisan, terutamanya di Kampung Budaya Sarawak.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on (24 January 2018) to conduct the final examination of (Jane anak Abi) on her thesis entitled "Effectiveness of Interpretive Panels at Sarawak Cultural Village, Malaysia" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the (Master of Science).

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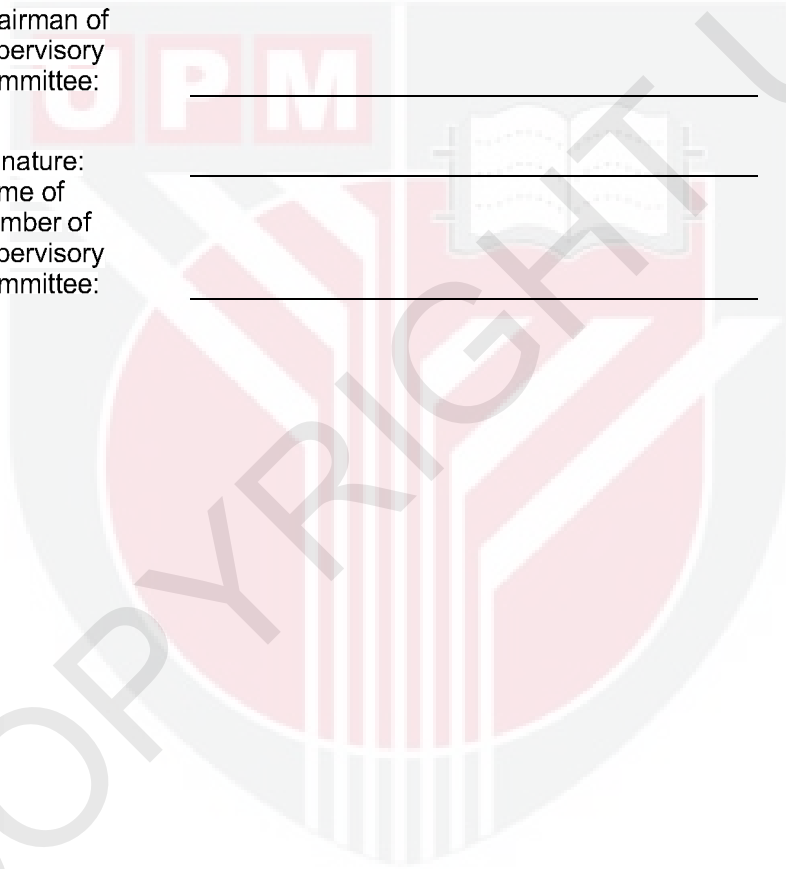
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CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Over the years, the term 'interpretation' has been characterized by several disciplines such as the environmental movement, the outdoor recreation movement, and most recently by the tourism industry (Beck and Cable, 2002; Knapp, 2007; Larsen, 2002; Merriman and Brochu, 2005; Randall and Rollins, 2009; Ward and Wilkinson, 2006). This evolution has prompted researchers and scholars to revise the meaning and description of the interpretation activity.

Having said that, the state of Sarawak, famously known as Bumi Kenyalang (Land of the Hornbill), is one of the main tourist attraction in Malaysia. It is the largest state in the country, located on the North-West of Borneo Island. In fact, one of the most attractive features of Sarawak is its rich cultural diversity; with a population of 2.5 million, consisting of 27 different ethnic groups speaking at least 45 different dialects and languages (Ministry of Tourism Sarawak, 2010). It contributes to a variety of cultural festivals and practices that draws tourists to this state.

Every year, it was estimated that millions of tourists from all over the world visit national, regional, local parks, museums and cultural centers. More often than not, these tourists will carry out some research about the places that they intend to visit. This information is usually obtained on site either along the sidewalks, through a tour, museums and cultural centers or by participating in local events. The staff who works at these locations play an important role in providing tourists with high impact, short-term experiences. This process of "revealing" the natural, cultural and historical wonders is known as interpretation (Tilden, 1957).

The aim of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of cultural non-personal interpretation provided at the Sarawak Cultural Village (SCV). The focus of the research was the interpretive message contents, provided at SCV of its seven main ethnics in Sarawak. The quality of interpretation and signage in the facilities were evaluated by the visitors. As one of the most popular cultural tourism attractions in Sarawak, the unique award-winning living museum displays the culture and lifestyle of the people of Sarawak (Ministry of Tourism Sarawak, 2010). Situated 35km from Kuching City, the village exhibits replicas of seven major ethnic houses, built around a man-made lake for the viewing pleasure of visitors. One of the highlights when visiting the SCV is the multi-ethnic cultural performances.

The evaluation of this research was based on the interpretation principals and grounded theory of behavior study. Interpretation is highly dependent on a two-way flow of information. The elements of interpretations and behavioral theories provided useful information for the research development of effective communication strategies (Manohar and Evelyn, 2015). An effective communication process requires interpreter to establish experiences, knowledge and interests of their visitors.

Interpretive signage is relatively less flexible compared to personal interpretation. It does not allow the audience to provide immediate feedbacks or ask questions, hence needs to be more accurate than other modes of interpretation (Doucette and Cole, 1993; Wearing and Neil, 1999). Therefore, effectiveness is defined as the ability of the program (content) or message and the interpreter (technique) to convey values emotionally and intellectually while influencing the behavior of visitors. Ward and Wilkerson (2006) stated that "all of the messages we provide are aimed at influencing visitors in some manners, whether that influence is aimed at what they know (cognitive), think (attitudes), feel (emotions), or do (behaviors)".

Thus, a study regarding the effectiveness of non-personal interpretation is essential as a management tool to communicate with the visitors in order to enhance their knowledge, attitude and behavior towards the multicultural heritage and history of Sarawak (Beaumont, 1999). Ward and Wilkinson (2006) also indicated that the best way to answer if a program was effective is by asking the audience.

1.2 Problem Statements

Cultural tourism refers to forms of tourism that include cultural, heritage or artistic aspects of a destination or experiences and activities for tourists (Hou, Lin and Duarte, 2005). SCV introduces the unique and fascinating designs of the homes of various Sarawak ethnic groups, cultural performances and experiences to visitors. Therefore, SCV provides cultural personal and non-personal interpretation products which function as an important communication tool to deliver cultural heritage information and experience to visitors.

Dubbed as a 'living museum', SCV is responsible in providing personal interpretation to deliver their cultural heritage products. Unfortunately, almost all of the exhibits are not labeled. Indoor staffs were placed in each house to entertain visitors as interpreters. However, sometimes there are no indoor staffs at houses during recess and cultural performance sessions. This is because staff might be on break time or performing cultural dance shows at the theatre. The houses are left empty without any interpreter to entertain visitors. Without trained interpreters, visitors are not able to perceive information well fully understand Sarawak's multicultural aspects. During an informal interview which was conducted on May 2009, the visitors were concluded to be "dissatisfied" with the interpretation provided by SCV. Outdated interpretation (design and content), and

the small number of interpretive staff contributed to ineffective interpretation products and services (Jane, 2009). According to Morgan (2009), many interpretive programs is key in solving management problems. If the provided interpretive messages were not able to serve its purpose for visitors, they will be a waste of investment for the management.

Evaluations of message effectiveness either personal or non-personal have been done to investigate whether or not the messages are functional. Two measurements were normally used: visitors' perceived learning and actual learning. Visitors' perceived learning generally involves asking visitors what they 'think' they have learned as from their experience on site. Meanwhile, actual learning includes obtaining pre and post-trip measures of knowledge, beliefs and attitudes. If there were significant increases in visitor's knowledge, awareness and changes in attitude; the program is considered successful or effective (Moscardo, 1998; Beaumont, 2001).

Since SCV has been well-developed, the visitors' participation in certain activities and tourism has increased. Nonetheless, no studies have been carried out to evaluate existing cultural interpretation signage. Therefore, this study aims to determine:

- 1) What are the value of the effectiveness of existing interpretive panel's message, provided in enhancing visitor's knowledge, affective and behavior towards cultural heritage?
- 2) What are the visitors' interests and values in determining interpretive panel's messages design criterions that influence visitor's attention?
- 3) Is there any suggestion on the effectiveness of interpretive panel which beneficial to the management and visitors?

However, there is a lack in researches that focus on factors that influence the effectiveness of programs such as non-personal interpretive communication. In this study, steps have been taken to identify those factors before performing the evaluation. It involved developing the guidelines for non-personal interpretive communication based on literature review, evaluating the implemented guidelines which utilizes interpretive messages, refinement or improvement, re-testing and produce a set of guidelines to develop an effective non-personal interpretive communication that will increase awareness to participate and conserve the cultural heritage.

Meanwhile, some previous studies have showed that non personal communications were equally or more effective than personal communication (Roggenbuck and Berrier, 1982; Johnson and Swearington, 1992; Martin, 1992; Thorn, 1995, Widner and Roggenbuck, 1999; Duncan and Martin, 2002; Jacobi, 2003). However, Armstrong and Weiler (2002) reported that there are limited published studies on the effectiveness of non-personal interpretive media (Knudson et al., 1996; Machlis, 1986; Ryan and Dewar, 1995). The gaps in this

area has prompted the current research in discovering the effectiveness of non-personal interpretive communication.

In conclusion, this research evaluated the effectiveness of interpretation messages in enhancing visitor's knowledge, attitude and behavior towards Sarawak's cultural heritage. In addition, this research also suggested criteria that influenced the effectiveness of interpretive message and design which is beneficial to the management in delivering maximum level of satisfaction among visitors.

1.3 Research Objectives

The overall objective of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of interpretive message in enhancing the awareness and participation in cultural heritage-based activities and programs.

The specific objectives of the research were:

1. to determine the effectiveness of existing interpretive messages, provided in enhancing visitor's knowledge, affective and behavior towards cultural program,
2. to identify visitors' interests and values in determining interpretive panel's messages design criterions that influence visitor's attention, and
3. to suggest effective interpretive message which beneficial to the management and visitors.

1.4 Research Significance

In terms of management benefits, this research provides recommendations for future improvement of SCV interpretive message development for their visitors. This is crucial since SCV introduces unique and fascinating designs of the homes of various Sarawak ethnic groups, cultural performances and experiences to visitors. Moreover, SCV plays a major role in the state cultural heritage tourism. A major challenge in cultural heritage tourism is to ensure that increasing number of tourists does not affect the very qualities that attract visitors in the first place. When a community's heritage is the basis of its main offering to visitors, it is essential to protect that heritage. This study explained the principal of using interpretation elements in delivering useful information that influence someone's attitude and behavior. Well-interpreted sites teach visitors their importance, and by extension, the importance of preserving similar sites elsewhere.

As Ham (2004) stated, "success, of course, depends on what interpretation is intended to achieve; provocation to thought, an enjoyable experience, acquisition of a belief or attitude, or perhaps a behavior like staying on a trail, buying a souvenir, or a repeat visit". More importantly, he also noted that "make no mistake about it, being able to explain success in interpretation requires research".

Ultimately, successful interpretation is closely associated with what it is attempting to achieve. However, the variance of desired outcomes is relative to an interpretive program precludes sweeping notions of successful interpretation. Success can only be measured by what is accomplished-actual or perceived-by the interpreter.

1.5 Research Key Terms

1.5.1 Interpretive Message

The commonly accepted definition of interpretation is developed by Tilden (1977). He stated that interpretation was “An educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.” Many scholars and related agencies established their own definitions of interpretation, sometimes utilising terms such as ‘information’, ‘education’ and ‘communication’ (Beckmann, 1992; Black and Mackay, 1995; Ham, 1997; Knapp, 1997; McArthur and Hall, 1996; and Cheatley, 1989).

Veverka (1994) stated that interpretation (the profession, the techniques and the approaches) is a brilliant combination from communication principles of various fields such as communication, marketing, psychology, non formal and adult education theory and presentation, business management, recreation and tourism planning/principles as well as media planning/design principles. An understanding of these theories and models could lead to designing effective printed interpretive communication materials.

Weiler and Davis (1993) defined interpretation as ‘an educational, illustrative and entertaining activity which aims at providing the visitor with an insight into the interrelationships of the various resources and systems comprising the natural environment by first-hand experiences’. National Australia Association (2003) said that interpretation is a communication process that forms emotional and intellectual relationship between public interests and fundamental values from the source.

1.5.2 Effective Interpretation

Ham (2013) strongly emphasized the need to verify that interpretive encounters and products to meet the four qualities of interpretation (thematic, organized, relevant, and enjoyable). The use of themes help to organize the interpretation, which makes it easier to understand the information, and provide the audience with an opportunity to create their own connections and meanings about heritage (Ham, 2003; Serrell, 2015). The success of an interpretation program is determined by how much interpreters utilize available resources that represent significant elements and variables. Some common instructions can be found in the book *Interpreting Our Heritage* by Tilden (2008). A set of general attributes described by Ham (1992) have influenced interpreters’ understanding of what

effective and successful interpretation requires. These four “qualities” are imperative for a successful personal interpretation program (Brochu and Merriman, 2002):

- Interpretation is enjoyable
- Interpretation is relevant
- Interpretation is organized
- Interpretation has a theme

Some studies have also supported these criteria currently focusing on presenting programs with distinct themes (Chadhokar and McLoughlin, 1999; Ham and Krumpe, 1996; Larsen, 2003). As Larsen (2003) noted, “perhaps the most powerful interpretive tool is the interpretive theme”.

1.5.3 Interpretive Panel

Interpretive panels tell the story of a resource, site or feature. Their primary purpose is to guide visitors to discover meanings. They may have multiple messages and are designed for learning at leisure.

1.5.4 Attitude

Attitudes are described as an individual’s evaluation of and dispositional response to a particular object or subject such as behavior. Poria, Reichel and Cohen (2013) stressed on the importance of visitor’s attitude in identifying the meanings they connect to a particular site was far more important than the objective characteristics of that site as their attitude towards a site, specify it as a world heritage.

1.6 Research Organization

Chapter 1 of this research focused on the introduction of the research subject, problem statement, justification, objectives, as well as the expected results of the research. Chapter 2 described the related definitions, literature reviews, and the importance of the effective of interpretive message. Chapter 3 showed the methodology utilized in conducting the research while the results obtained and discussions were included in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 summarized the findings of the research, followed by limitation and recommendation for future researches.

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