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Opiniones y ensayos

The bridge between heritage conservation planning and management and the visitor to heritage place

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The heritage interpretation to visitors has been described as the bridge between heritage conservation planning and management and the visitor to heritage place. Why is it described as a “bridge”? And why is interpretation for visitors now considered so important in heritage planning and management?

If we talk about heritage, it is all the qualities, traditions, or features of life that have been continued over many years and passed on from one generation to another; especially ones that are of historical importance or that have had a strong influence on society (Sinclair et al. 1998, p. 790). And if we talk about interpretation, it is the process of stimulating and encouraging an appreciation of our natural and cultural heritage and of communicating nature conservation ideals and practices (Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service quoted by McArthur, in *Ecotourism*, vol 2, 1998). These words can be comprised as heritage interpretation and definition of it can be defined regarding to the definition of heritage of Sinclair (et al. 1998, p. 790) and the definition of interpretation that quoted by Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service (quoted by McArthur, in *Ecotourism*, vol 2, 1998) as the process of stimulat-

ing and encouraging an appreciation of all the qualities, traditions, or features of life that have been continued over many years and passed on from one generation to another and of communicating nature conservation ideals and practices. Why heritage interpretation to visitors has been described as the bridge between heritage conservation planning and management and the visitor to heritage place and why is interpretation for visitors now considered so important in heritage planning and management. The answers of these questions will be discussed as follows:

Firstly, heritage interpretation is a planned effort to create for visitor an understanding of the history and significance of events, people, and objects with which the site is associated (Alderson and Low 1985 as cited by Hall and McArthur 1998 p. 166). The heritage manager will use the interpretation to raise awareness and understanding of the values and uses of heritage (Hall and McArthur 1998, p. 168). For example, guides is an interpretation that are used at many heritage sites to give an on-the spot commentary outlining the main features of the site (Aplin 2002, p.43-4). In order to create the understanding of visitors to the heritage sites, Alderson and Low

(1985 as cited by Hall and McArthur 1998 p. 166) have explained that the interpretation is a program and activity. The program establishes a set of objectives for the things we want our visitors to understand. As the note in the handout of Staiff (2003, p.13), he has mentioned the fundamental aim of interpretation is to bridge the gap between form and content. The form is any material object or physical site and the content is any information that pertains to that material object or physical site that has been designed or shaped for a visitor viewing the object or visiting the site. Beside, the content is any information or memories or experiences the visitor has accumulated and uses to make sense of their viewing of an object or the experience of a heritage site. In order to design the interpretation to create the understanding of visitors, the heritage manager should set the objective to link the heritage objects or heritage sites and information that be used to explain those objects or sites. For example, the booklet of the Emerald Buddha Temple is used to explain and educate the visitors about the history, meaning, and architectural style of the heritages at the Emerald Buddha Temple by using the picture and information to explain. Beside a program, Alderson and Low (1985 as cited by Hall and McArthur 1998 p. 166) have defined an activity is another interpretation. They explained that the activity has to do with the skills and techniques by which the understanding is created. Aplin (2002, p.39) has mentioned that different audiences or market segments require different forms of interpretation. This statement has told us about different visitors might require different activities when they visit the heritage sites. For example, the social insects are good interpretive subjects. The visible beehive at Rock Nature Center, Washington, D.C., is attractive to young and old visitors (Tilden 1977, p. 6). In order to set the activity to motivate the understanding of the visitors, Hall and McArthur (1998, p.170) have explained about a target audience, as every visitor is different. Each has different values, interests and mental and physical characteristics. The identification of target audience can ensure that the interpretation is relevant to visitors' needs. It can be concluded that the interpretation

has been described as the bridge between heritage conservation planning and management and the visitor because the interpretation is a plan that the heritage manager use to create the understanding and appreciation of visitors to love and conserve the heritage sites. Moreover, the interpretation has been described as the bridge, why is interpretation for visitors now considered so important in heritage planning and management. The importance reason that can define the importance of interpretation to the heritage planning and management is the interpretation as the tool of planning and management of heritage manager to raise awareness and understanding of visitors to values and uses of heritage. The result of understanding and appreciation of value and significance of heritage will stimulate the visitors to conserve the heritage sites. As Moscardo (1996 p.377) has mentioned that successful interpretation is critical both for the effective management and conservation of built heritage sites and for sustainable tourism.

Secondly, interpretation is the communication process which aims at helping people to discover the significance of things, places, people, events and help to change the way they perceived themselves and their world through a greater understanding of the world and themselves (Colonial Williamsburg USDA as cited by Hall and McArthur 1998 p. 166). The heritage manager will use the communication process in order to explain the value and significance of heritage objects and sites to the visitors. If we consider the applied diagram of communication model to Museum of Shannon and Weaver (Hooper-Greenhill 1994. p. 40-1) as Figure 1, it is possible to describe the exhibition team as the source, the exhibition as the transmitter, with objects, texts and events as the channel of communication, the visitors' heads as the receives, with the visit's understanding as the final destination (Hooper-Greenhill 1994. p. 40-1). It can be explained that the exhibition team of museum will use the exhibition as the interpretation to present the objects of the museum to the view and the experience of visitors to make them understand and appreciate the value and the importance of the objects in museum. If the visitors appreciate and understand the value and

significance of the objects in museum, they will help to preserve these objects. It can be summarized that the interpretation has been described as the bridge because it is a communication process, which is used to send the meaning and the importance of

heritage objects and heritage sites to the view of visitors. If the visitors can understand meaning and the value of the heritages, they will like to protect and conserve the heritage sites.

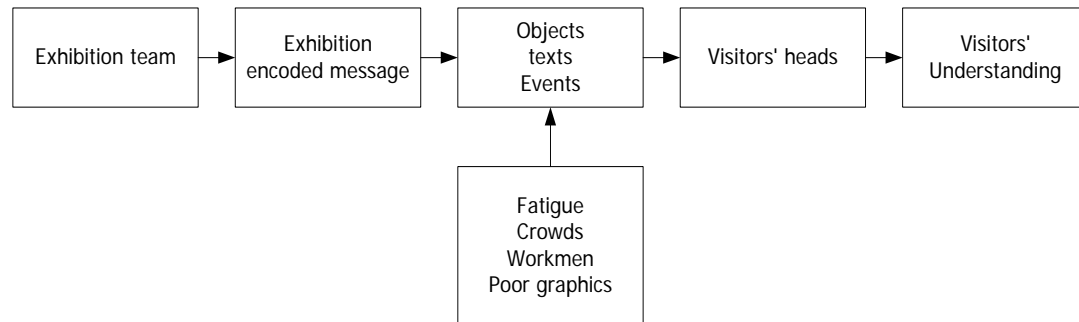


Figure 1: Shannon and Weaver Model of Communication Applied to Museum (Hooper-Greenhill 1994, p.40-1)

Furthermore, the interpretation has been described as the bridge, why is interpretation for visitors now considered so important in heritage planning and management. The reason that can explain the importance of interpretation to the heritage planning and management is the interpretation as the communication media of planning and management of heritage manager to use to access and attract the interesting of the visitor and help them easier understanding the heritage objects and sites. For example, Internet is the communication media that many people can surf for in-depth information about the heritage sites around the world. Internet can support the visitors know and understand the heritage sites before visiting the real sites.

Lastly, interpretation is a tool, which the heritage manager uses to motivate the understanding and the appreciation of visitors to the heritage sites or heritage objects. In order to motivate the understanding and the appreciation of visitors, there are many forms of interpretation that heritage managers can use as Aplin (2002, p. 42-7) has indicated such as brochures, websites, and media coverage. These can help increase public awareness of a particular heritage site or item, or as part of a broader exercise to raise general

awareness of heritage values and the need to protect them. Besides, they can increase pressure on the government to manage and protect the site adequately. It can be said that interpretation has been described as the bridge because it is a tool of heritage manager use to motivate the understanding and appreciate of visitors to the conservation of heritage sites. Besides, why is interpretation for visitors now considered so important in heritage planning and management. The reason that can indicate the importance of interpretation to the heritage planning and management is the interpretation can support the success of planning and management. Hall and McArthur (1998, p. 170) have indicated that without adequate planning, most interpretation programs eventually become ineffective and redundant. For example, touring programs that are not thematically linked will appear disjointed, while commentaries that are not targeted will fail to stimulate anyone in particular.

In conclusion, heritage interpretation to visitors has been described as the bridge between heritage conservation planning and management and the visitor to heritage place because of three reasons as follows. The interpretations are an effort plan, a communication process, and a tool

that the heritage managers use to create the understanding and appreciation of value and significance of heritage sites to the visitor. It can be said that interpretation has an importance to the heritage conservation planning and management because the visitor will gain an in-depth understanding and knowledge of the area, its landscapes and peoples. The tourist will become concerned and, therefore, protective of the host area (Lane 1991 as cited by Moscardo 1996. p. 377). The result of understanding and appreciation of value and significance of heritage will stimulate the visitors to conserve the heritage sites.

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