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"Warning in Spaces: Blending Heritage, Nature and Design"

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Faculty of Built Environment, UiTM Perak Branch, Seri Iskandar Campus



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"Harmony in Spaces : Blending Heritage, Nature and Design"

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Walking with Monsopiad: Applying Cullen's Serial Vision to Spatial Storytelling at Monsopiad Cultural Village, Penampang Sabah

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The Monsopiad Cultural Village in Penampang, Sabah, an iconic heritage site, conserves the history of Monsopiad a legendary Kadazan-Dusun warrior whose legend symbolizes the elements of cultural identity, cultural memory and values in the community. Despite the large amount of artifacts, ritual spaces and traditional architecture found in the village, the interpretation of heritage is dependent largely upon museum-like exhibitions, signage and guided commentary. Spatial sequencing as a narrative tool has not been fully leveraged, which means that visitors are not immersed in the location and the cultural story is still fragmented by the use of space sequences in Monsopiad Cultural Village. Hence, this study aims to interpret Monsopiad's legacy by examining how spatial sequences in the village create heritage narratives through Cullen's Serial Vision, with objectives to map the sequential experience, to evaluate visitor perception at key checkpoints, and interpret how spatial sequences contribute to heritage storytelling. The mixed-method approach will be employed, including qualitative observations of the site across ten thematic checkpoints, semi-structured interviews with the expert participants and the non-expert ones and a visitor perception survey, where 23 respondents will take part in during the month of November and December 2025. The results were conditioned by spatial qualities as proposed by Cullen principles of possession, looking, and linking and joining and visitor perceptions of clarity, emotional involvement and identification with the culture. The results suggest that confined and visually regulated spaces, especially, the Skull House are effective to express the intensity and importance of narratives and identification with culture. Open and transitional spaces, on the contrary, do not have the anticipation, visual layering, and spatial continuity, which lead to the impaired narrative flow. The survey findings reveal that sequential flow and visual legitimacy can play a crucial role in the comprehension of the story of Monsopiad by the visitors, and interviews present the argument that a carefully considered spatial transition, visual sequence, and immersive interpretation can be applied to contribute to the sustainable tourism of the related cultural site.

Keywords: Monsopiad Cultural Village ,Heritage Interpretation, Cullen's Serial Vision, Walking Experience, Storytelling.

INTRODUCTION

The Monsopiad Cultural Village located at Penampang, Sabah is regarded as one of the most important heritage sites that demonstrate cultural identity and oral languages, and historical narratives of Kadazan Dusun. The village exhibits celebrations of Monsopiad who is a heroic figure whose life story has given rise to the local memory and cultural pride. In spite of the diversity of the site and its important artifacts, ritual spaces, and architecture, the current interpretive style is vastly one-sided when focusing on museum exhibits, fixed displays, and narrative narration. (Li et al., 2024) Through this, the cultural landscape as an entity in itself, with its routes, transitions, openings, and spatial rhythm has not been played out as an element of the narrative experience. (Huang et al., 2025) This space restricts the potential of the village in providing a rich cultural experience that is based on contextual meaning.

Even though it has cultural relevance, the visitors tend to see Monsopiad Cultural Village as a set of detached sites, not as a narrative. The entrance, museum, Skull House, traditional houses and riverside areas are not tightly knit together in terms of narratives. Such disorganized spatial interpretation may undermine the emotional experience of the visitors since the development of space fails to bring them through the life of Monsopiad in a chronological or thematic order. The relatively unimaginative use of spatial sequence at Monsopiad Cultural Village is the place where heritage sites can achieve more of the cultural insight and immersion of visitors, as a greater number of them start to understand the importance of emotional resonance in telling their stories.

To address these gaps, this paper makes Cullen and his Serial Vision the subject of its analysis. The aim of the study is to explain the legacy of Monsopiad through the interpretation of the ways the spatial sequences of Monsopiad Cultural Village form meaningful heritage narratives. To accomplish this, the research presents three Objectives; (1) mapping the sequential experience of the village as proposed by Cullen in his Serial Vision, (2) assessing the perceptions of visitors in terms of narrative meaning at the major checkpoints in the spatial sequence, and objective (3) interpreting the role of these spatial transitions in the cultural narrative of Monsopiad. It is based on this framework that the research aims to show how the landscape, itself, may become a medium of narrative that adds cultural meaning to the visitor, as well as heritage interpretation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Landscape Narrative and Cullen's Serial Vision

Landscape can serve as the narrative medium by using visual images, spatial shifts, and the experience sequence. According to (Sowińska-Świerkosz, 2017) scenic value tests incorporate both objective visual components and emotional or spiritual subjective feelings. Such overlaying meanings depict the way that landscapes convey more than just the physical appearance. Equally important, (Saito et al., 2017) emphasize that the alteration in the urban greening has the effects on the experience of walking, the vitality of the community, and the identity of a heritage environment in general. According to their results, the spatial and environmental nature of heritage places has implications on usability as well as long-term cultural worth. The idea of Serial Vision introduced by Cullen (1961) also allows developing a set of principles upon which meaning is created by movement. Serial Vision explains the rhythm, contrast and emotional response of townscapes achieved through the enclosure, openness and visual revelations. With transit of spatial episode to another, a story is established by the unfolding visuals. The theory has a direct relationship with the purpose of the research to study the influence of spatial sequences in Monsopiad Cultural Village on heritage interpretation and emotional engagement.

Visitor Experience and Perception

The heritage environment visitor experience is developing towards a more emotional, immersive and narrative experience, rather than a consumption of visuals. (Li et al., 2024) state that values determined by experts are frequently less influential on heritage significance compared to visitor perception and emotional engagement. It is also reported that historic environments are increasingly dynamic and storytelling visitor experiences with beneficial memory and education. (Huang et al., 2025). Research conducted in landscape architecture demonstrates that the spatial organization affects the way people experience, act, and make meaning in the context of heritage space. (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021) affirm that the effects of spatial accessibility and visual sequence on emotions and cognitive perception are direct. These studies are consistent with the research problem at Monsopiad

Cultural Village where discontinuous spatial interpretation undermines the relationship of the visitor affect and narrative. They also support the purpose of the study to determine visitor perception at major spatial checkpoints.

Heritage Policy Context in Malaysia

The heritage conservation system in Malaysia is informed by the National heritage act 2005 (Act 645), which regulates the protection and management of cultural assets. Within the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture (MOTAC), the MyTQA program and the Cultural and Heritage Tourism Guidelines promote the preservation of heritage and stimulate the visitor experience as well as interpretive practice. The State Historic Enactment (2017) supports national policies in Sabah, especially in the conservation of indigenous settlements and cultural landscapes, and traditional communities. The Sabah Museum and Sabah Cultural Board are institutions, which have policies to record, preserve and share heritage objects and cultural practice with the population. The given background of policy underlines the topicality of the enhancement of interpretation strategies at the Monsopiad Cultural Village, where spatial narrating is not overly studied according to the available guidelines.

Warrior Figures in Cultural Heritage

Warrior images are also important in construction of cultural identity, resistance discourse and collective memory. Hang Tuah and Hang Jebat are some other characters, who are still used in the discussion of the contemporary Malaysians, as they help to realize how the tales of warriors are negotiated and adjusted to the current moral and cultural principles, (Bailey, 2024) The interlacing of memory, adat and identity can be seen in the legacy of Rentap, an Iban leader of resistance against Brooke rule in Sarawak (Norben Bin Ben, Courage, sacrifice and spiritual power are some of the themes that are emphasized in oral traditions as central to his story.

This literature favours the cultural background of Monsopiad; another warrior character, which is a core of Kadazan-Dusun identity. The interpretation of these figures can guide the reasoning of why the spatial narration of the Monsopiad Cultural Village is meaningful in the conservation of the culture and the continuity of the narrative.

Outdoor Museums as a Medium to Preserve Cultural Heritage

Outdoor museums are considered hybrid spaces where tangible artifacts and intangible practices are combined to form the immersive learning spaces. According to (Olinsson, 2023) open-air museums are strongly based upon rituals, narratives, and cultural showcasing and are regarded as the bridge between the past and the present. Such settings go beyond passive presentation to provide sensory experiences, social interaction and learning.

Studies on the subject in Malaysia, including the one carried out at Terengganu State Museum (Lokman Hakim & Zakaria, 2025, Md Ali & Zawawi), suggest that outdoor museums make it easier to understand through visual, tactile, and situational perception. This supports the notion that the heritage can be enhanced by moving through space, which is critical in the application of Serial Vision to Monsopiad Cultural Village.

Experiential Behaviour and Environment Preference

The Environmental Preference Theory is a theory of human experience of space that was developed Theory by Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) due to the influence of coherence, complexity, legibility, and mystery. Coherence and legibility assist in understanding and complexity and mystery stimulate further investigation and expectation. Such properties have a direct effect on visitor movement and emotional reaction, which is the foundation of sequential

visual experience.

SITE STUDY

The Monsopiad Cultural Village located in penampang, Sabah is a heritage site that represents the cultural identity, oral traditions and historical story of the Kadazan-Dusun community. The village boasts of Monsopiad who was a brave warrior whose legacy is still being deployed to shape the memory and cultural values of the people. Even though no notable artifacts are deprived in the site, the rituals spaces and traditional buildings, heritage interpretation in this regard is largely based on the museum display, fixed signs and lectures. Space landscape with the path tracks, exercise and movement patterns has hence not been utilized to its full capacity as a means of narration; hence, constraining immersion and place based cultural experiences (Smith, 2006).

This implies that the visitors are more likely to be reminded about the village as a collection of separate attractions and not an integrated heritage narrative. The primary spaces such as entrance, museum, Skull House, and river areas are free of each other, and the continuity of space is not high to ensure that the visitors pursue the story of Monsopiad in a logical manner. The recent study revealed that space composition and visual experience have enormous influence on emotional involvement and heritage cognition . The current research fills this research gap by adopting Cullen Serial Vision as its research instrument. The research goal will attempt to make sense of the legacy of Monsopiad by examining how spatial chains within the Monsopiad Cultural Village generate semantic heritage discourses. The objectives are to track the sequential visitor experience in terms of Cullen Serial Vision, gauge the impressions of the visitors of narrative meaning at critical spatial checkpoints, and shed light on the role played by spatial transitions that contribute to cultural narration of Monsopiad (Cullen, 1961).

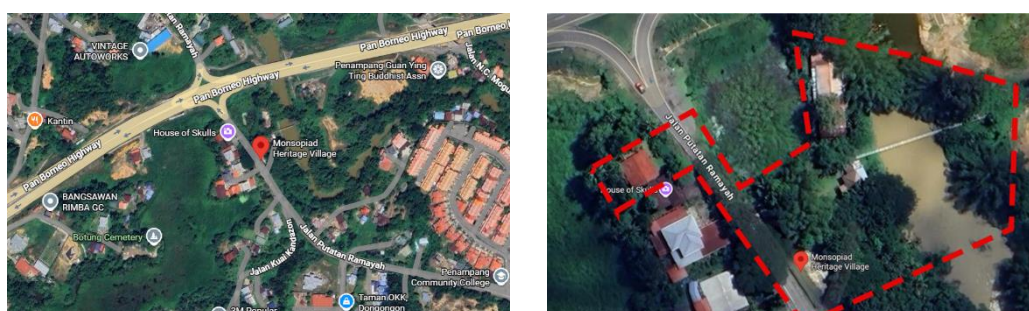


Figure 1.0 Key plan (left) and location plan (right) of Monsopiad Cultural Village, Penampang Sabah

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study is a mixed-method research that combines both qualitative and quantitative methods to consider the effects of spatial sequences on heritage interpretation at the Monsopiad Cultural Village. The mixture of observational evidence, the insights of the interview, and the answers of the visitors allows getting a full picture of how the movement, the visual flow, and spatial transitions lead to the narration of the legacy of Monsopiad.

Instrument

Site Observation

The author conducted qualitative site visits between November and December 2025 and observed ten areas of

interest which comprised the checkpoints within the Monsopiad Cultural Village. These checkpoints were themed zones of the visitor walk, the entrance, museum, Skull House, open activity zones and riverfront were investigated with respect to the influence of the physical and spatial nature of the village on visitor experience and narrative interpretation. Three attributes were considered in particular:

- **Possession (Feeling of Space):** The enclosed or open spaces that produced the feeling of ownership, identity or territoriality and how this affected the emotional affiliation of the visitors to each space.
- **Looking (Visual Perception):** The structure of gaze, contextualization of landmarks, light-shadows, and points of revelation that informed the viewing interest and focus.
- **Linking & Joining (Movement and Connectivity):** Movement, spatial sequencing and transitions between regions were helped by pathways that facilitated comprehension, continuity and mobility in the story Monsopiad.

The following spatial qualities were explored at every checkpoint: space sequence, visual passages, levels of enclosure and openness, anticipation/revelation, and the connectivity in general. To record how these elements led to the emerging story, documentation of the drawings, photographs, and field notes were used to allow the village landscape to tell the story of cultural meaning, heritage identity, and the legacy of Monsopiad through the experience of space.

Semi-Structured Interview

This was conducted by semi structured interviews with both experts and non-experts to obtain qualitative data on spatial storytelling and cultural interpretation in Monsopiad Cultural Village. Purposive sampling was applied to select a total of seven respondents. The informants were experts such as the Head of the village, Adat Leader and the Monsopiad cultural village Manager along with two members of the Monsopiad family, who offered insights about the leadership, traditions, heritage interpretation, and the cultural authenticity. The non-expert respondents consisted of a visiting tourist, and a staff worker of the site, who was a representative of visitor perception and operational experience. The interviews aimed at examining how the users experience the narration of culture in the spatial movement, architecture and landscape. Spatial attributes sequence, visual clarity, confinement, anticipation, emotional response, and narrative connectedness were made to be used in form of questions to gain knowledge of how the participants perceive and experience the village. The major questions were on cultural messages that the visitor comprehended, narrative connectivity of various spaces, navigational clarity and the emotional visit experience, which ended with a question on how storytelling and spatial experience could be strategically refined to make visitors engage more.

Survey Questionnaire

The questionnaire was a series of Likert-scale (1-5) questions, which were developed according to the same spatial characteristics investigated in observations and semi-structured interviews to evaluate the perceptions of the visitors on the clarity of the narrative, its emotional appeal, its cultural value, and its ability to remain in their memory. The narrative clarity was used to gauge the clarity of the story of Monsopiad as it had been told, emotional resonance was used to gauge the extent to which the visitor felt emotionally involved, cultural value used to gauge the perceived significance and authenticity of the cultural heritage and memory recall used to gauge the memory of the experience. Each of the items was rated using a 5-point scale, 1 = Strongly Disagree / Very Low

Perception, 2 = Disagree / Low Perception, 3 = Neutral / Moderate Perception, 4 = Agree / High Perception, and 5 = Strongly Agree / Very High Perception, thus making it possible to analyze the different degrees of perception based on all the spatial and narrative attributes.

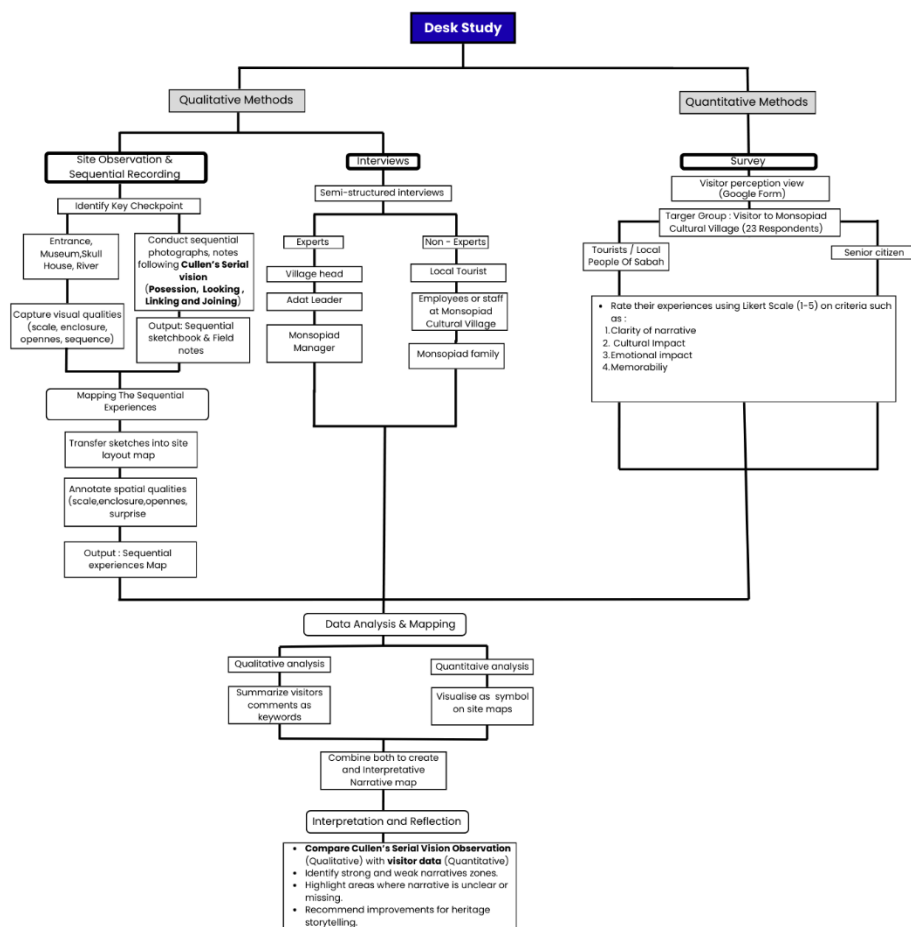


Figure 2.0 : Flowchart of Research Methodology

The flowchart indicates the research methodology of the research as a mixed method research that combines both qualitative and quantitative methodology of research to achieve research objectives. It identifies three main aspects on site observation, which are Cullen Serial Vision, semi-structured interviews, and visitor perception surveys. The two approaches are chosen carefully to collect free data on the spatial sequence, cultural interpretation and visitor experience in the Monsopiad Cultural Village. Such a combined strategy would ensure the comprehensive knowledge required to study the history of Monsopiad and find out the effects of the chronological layout of the landscape on the telling of the heritage points.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

Site Observation

The Monsopiad Cultural Village was visited by systematic walk-throughs on the primary visitor path. Using the theory of Serial Vision as developed by Gordon Cullen, one after another made drawings, photography, and

schematics at key points of entry, the museum, Skull House, and river area. The analysis was concerned with spatial sequence, visual passages, confinement, anticipation, and connectedness of movement to determine the influence of these spatial elements on the flow of cultural narratives. The availability of visitors and their behavioural reactions were also noted to be used in building the visitor perception survey. The findings indicate that the progressive lay out of spaces impacts knowledge and emotional attachment of the visitors to the cultural narrative of Monsopiad.

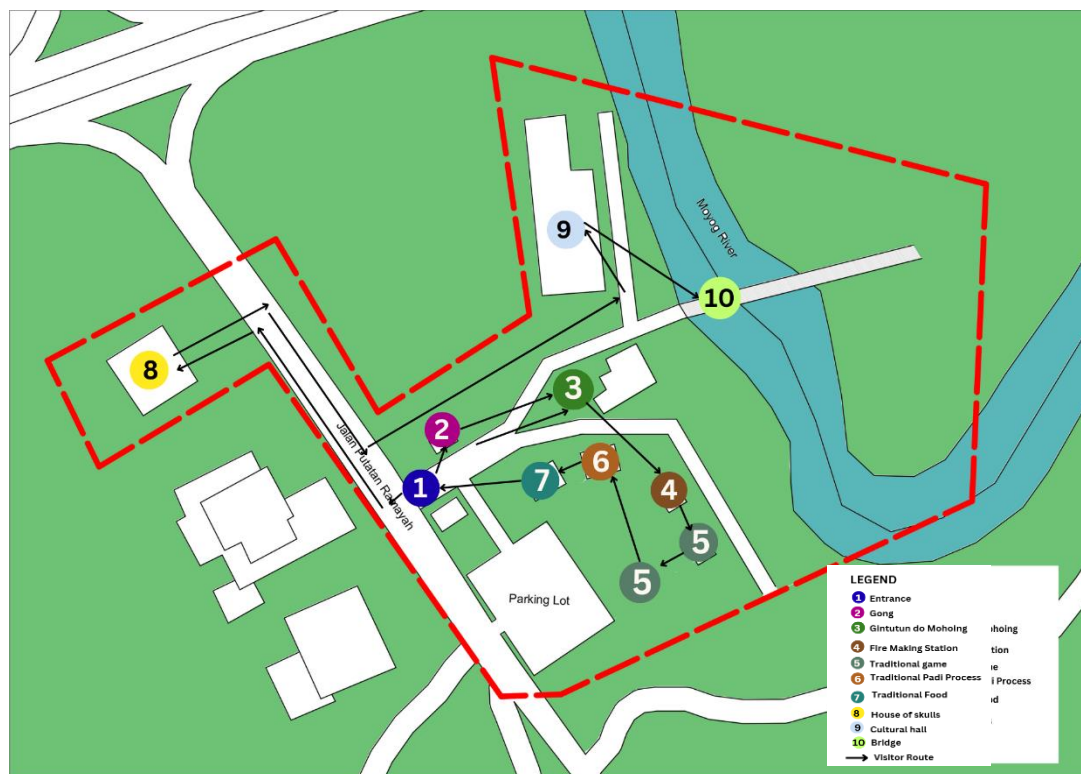


Figure 4.0 : Location map of Monsopiad Cultural Village illustrating the spatial layout and observation checkpoint along the visitor route

Spatial Distribution

The site observation map shows a linear path with 10 major turning points that are aimed to narrate the story of the warrior Monsopiad. Whereas the course of the carcass is uninterrupted, the spatial experience in both a permanent display and a narrative anchor is very different. It is a one-way, one-way loop, which begins at the Main Entrance (Checkpoint 1) and finishes at the Suspension Bridge (Checkpoint 10).

Table 1.0 : Summary of Site Observation based on Gordon Cullen Theory

Checkpoint	Visual Evidance / Area	Analysis (Possesion, Looking, Linking and Joining)
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Checkpoint 1 : Main Entrance			Possession: weak emotional engagement, Lacks compression Looking: Low light contrast, no gradual reveal. Linking & Joining: Road too clear, no emerging narrative.
Checkpoint 2 : Gong			Possession: Lacks are weakly defined, lacks. Looking: There are limited visuals and plain sceneries. Linking & Joining: Lost to the neighboring story.
Checkpoint 3 : Gintutun Do Mohoing (sacred stone)			Possession: Prominent visual focus, stabilizes and grounds the landscape. Looking: Gathers the attention of the visitors without physical barriers. Linking & Joining : Leads the eye movement; brings open space to Monsopiad story. to the Monsopiad story.
Checkpoint 4 : Fire making station			Possession: Open exposure makes cultural identity open. Looking: No screening, distracted by commercial aspects. Linking & Joining: Discontinuous, feeble narrative.
Checkpoint 5 : Traditional game			Possession: excessive openness, inability to be spaceoriented. Looking: No framed views; weak narrative payoff. Linking & Joining: Movement is not anticipatory.
Checkpoint 6 : Tangkob/Traditional padi process			Possession: Great potential and not compressive. Looking: Early disclosure as a result of non-screening. Linking & Joining: Joining, no path, no links.

Checkpoint 7 : Traditional food		Possession: Commercial distance brings about dissociation. Looking: Not found out progressively, does not have framed views. Linking & Joining: Discontinuous sequence, poor connectivity.
Checkpoint 8 : House of skull		Possession: Well enclosed and cultural ownership. Looking: Dramatic contrast and controlled visibility. Linking & Joining: Narrative Climax, successful movement.
Checkpoint 9 : Cultural hall		Possession: Excessively open, lacks enclosure. Looking: No suspense, does not qualify as a narrative reward. Linking & Joining: Flow is not structural towards a solution.
Checkpoint 10 : Bridge		Possession: Natural setting but does not contain cultural cues. Looking: Intermediate level of use, no interpretation frames. Linking & Joining: There is no apparent resolution of the sequence.

Summary of Results (Checkpoints 1–10)

Overall, the early sequence from **Checkpoint 1 (Main Entrance)** to **Checkpoint 2 (Gong)** demonstrates weak spatial possession and limited visual engagement, failing to establish emotional compression, gradual reveal, or a coherent narrative threshold. These initial checkpoints lack spatial cues that encourage anticipation or symbolic ownership, resulting in a fragmented beginning. **Checkpoint 3 (Gintutun Do Mohoing)** marks a clear improvement, functioning as a visual and narrative anchor through strong focal presence, open yet controlled visibility, and effective eye movement that reconnects the visitor to the Monsopiad story. However, this momentum is not sustained. **Checkpoints 4 to 7** (Fire Making Station, Traditional Games, Padi Processing, Traditional Food) suffer from excessive openness, early disclosure, commercial intrusion, and weak spatial definition, leading to narrative dilution, poor linking, and a lack of progressive discovery.

Analytical Interpretation

The experiential sequence reaches its strongest articulation at **Checkpoint 8 (House of Skull)**, which successfully achieves enclosure, cultural possession, dramatic visual contrast, and narrative climax, demonstrating effective looking, linking, and joining. This checkpoint functions as the emotional and interpretive peak of the journey. However, the concluding spaces, **Checkpoint 9 (Cultural Hall)** and **Checkpoint 10 (Bridge)**, fail to resolve the sequence meaningfully. Their excessive openness, lack of suspense, and absence of interpretive or cultural cues weaken narrative closure and spatial resolution. Collectively, the findings indicate that while isolated checkpoints possess strong cultural and spatial potential, the overall sequence lacks continuity, compression, and structured progression, resulting in a fragmented visitor experience rather than a cohesive cultural narrative journey.

The Expert and Non Expert Interviews

This part contains qualitative information based on the interviews with the expert and non-expert stakeholders about the spatial narrative of Monsopiad Cultural Village. The aim was to consider the ways in which the layout of the village conveyed the Monsopiad legend to the audience, through a multiplicity of prisms the professional knowledge of tradition and the personal experience of the visitors. These discussions reveal the achievements of cultural storytelling as well as the current spatial issues, which influence visitor engagement.

Participants

The research involved a wide range of stakeholders and they were divided into the following categories:

- Expert Group:
 1. Village Head: Village and cultural management.
 2. Adat Specialist: It is concerned with the protection of customs and traditions.
 3. Manager of the Monsopiad: Preoccupied with the realities of heritage tourism.
- Non-Expert Group:
 1. Local Visitor (Sabah): This involves a feedback on the real experience of the visitor.
 2. Village Employees: Providing an internal overview on the operations of the site.
 3. Two members of Monsopiad Family: Authentication of historical truth and family heritage.

The research was able to synthesize the heritage knowledge, operational logic, and personal perception with the help of these various perspectives. This multi-layered treatment helped to triangulate the data to assess the usefulness of the site layout in telling the legend.

Narratives of Importance and Security

The most acknowledged central narrative of Monsopiad Cultural Village was the legacy of Monsopiad as the defender of the Kuai Kadazan people by the participants together. The story has historical validity as the Village Head and the Adat Leader identified the 42 original skulls in the Skull House (Rumah Tengkorak) as a convenient reminder of his efforts to defend the village.. This view was enhanced by the descendants of Monsopiad and the locals, who identified with religious places such as Gintutun Do Mohoing (Sacred Stone) to show how the

Bobohizan (shamans) were connected to that of Monsopiad. In turn, the non-expert participants considered these physical and spiritual signs to be the necessary elements of understanding the holistic historical and cultural meaning of the warrior.

Discontinuous Spatial Sequences and Restraints on Storytelling

The results of the interviews with the experts and non-experts show that the spatial sequencing in the village is greatly interrupted and undermines the experience of telling the story. One of the main issues is the discontinuous flow of the narration, especially the one after the cultural hall, where the way to the suspension bridge does not have a definite structural logic. In addition, the open and exposed areas at different checkpoints help the premature exposure of the visuals which practically nullify the suspense and kills the narrative tension. According to the participants, this lack of gradual discovery does not allow gradual perception of chronological and thematic episodes of the journey of Monsopiad. The observations of the staff proved these insights by showing that such unstructured sequences are the direct impediment to visitor interaction with the cultural narrative of the site.

Future Improvement Recommendations

To address the existing spatial discontinuities, stakeholders presented a number of strategic interventions that would allow integrating the physical and historical components of the site:

1. **Chronological Spatial Restructuring:** The scholars argued that a Warrior Progression arrangement would be more appropriate, to change the layout into a chronological biography of Monsopiad. This helps make all the stations a definite narrative landmark and not a generalized cultural presentation.
2. **Thematic Climax at the River:** The riverfront must be redesignated as a main narrative anchor and it will be the historical frontier of defense and a dramatic denouement of the journey of the visitor.
3. **Multi-Sensory Engagement Modalities:** Staff and guest feedback indicated that the model of heritage experience required transitioning to an active, participatory experience through experiential storytelling in the form of live reenactment, sensory-based exhibit displays.

These initiatives are aimed at balancing the perception of the visitors with the historical mission of the village so that the spatial experience would be an efficient carrier of the story of the warrior.

Survey Questionnaire

A survey questionnaire was conducted in November 2025 to gather public perceptions on the Monsopiad Heritage Village. The survey comprised two sections designed to how visitors experience each checkpoint Monsopiad Cultural Village, and how the spatial sequence contributes to cultural meaning, memory, and narrative understanding related to the legacy of Monsopiad. Section 1 collected demographic information, including age, gender, gender, place origin, education level and occupation. Section 2 focused on respondent's perception of the site experience for each checkpoint Monsopiad Cultural Village, and the spatial sequence contributes to cultural meaning, memory, and narrative understanding related to the legacy of Monsopiad. A total of 23 respondents took part, offering valuable perspectives to support the study's aim to interpret Monsopiad's legacy by examining how spatial sequences in Monsopiad Cultural Village create heritage narratives through Cullen's Serial Vision. This study seeks to understand how the visitor journey from arrival to exit conveys cultural meaning, memory, and

identity.

5.3.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 2.0: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 23)

Participants	Visitors	
Distributions	(n)	%
Overall Participants	23	100
Gender		
Female	12	52.2
Male	11	47.8
Age Group		
18 – 25	11	47.8
26 – 30	7	30.4
31 – 45	3	13.0
45 and above	2	8.7
Place of Origin		
Sabah	9	39.1
Sarawak	3	13.0
Peninsular Malaysia	7	30.4
International	4	17.4
Education Level		
Diploma or equivalent	6	26.1
Degree	16	69.6
Master	1	4.3
Occupation		
Student	10	43.5
Government staff	3	13.0
Private sector	7	30.4
Self-employed	1	4.3
Retired	1	4.3
Not working	1	4.3

Sourc : Questionnaire Survey (2026)

Table 3.0 was conducted online through the application of Google Forms to be completed by visitors who encounter the heritage site environment. The respondent sample consists of 23 visitors to Monsopiad Heritage Village. As shown in Table 1, the demographic profile of the participants reveals that the sample is composed primarily of highly educated young adults aged 18–25 (47.8%, n=11) and 26–30 (30.4%, n=7) who are mostly students and private sector employees from Sabah and Peninsular Malaysia.

Evaluation of Visitor Experience and Cultural Interpretation

The results obtained through the use of the 5 point Likert scale were measured through the calculation of the weighted mean score of each checkpoint attribute. Given that the scale used is 1 to 5, each of the responses was multiplied by the corresponding scale value and the average of these values was then divided by the total number of sample n=23, to obtain a specific numerical average that can be used in the comparative analysis.

Table 3.0 : Visitor experience based on mean scores per checkpoint of interpretation (n= 23)

Checkpoint	Overall mean score	Performance Rating
Checkpoint 1 : Entrance	3.36	Moderate
Checkpoint 2 : Gong	3.10	Moderate
Checkpoint 3 : Sacred stone	3.72	High
Checkpoint 4 : Fire Making	3.39	Moderate

Station		
Checkpoint 5 : Traditional Game	3.41	High
Checkpoint 6 : Traditional Padi Process	3.33	Moderate
Checkpoint 7 : Traditional Food	3.45	High
Checkpoint 8 : House of Skull	4.52	Very High
Checkpoint 9 : Cultural Hall	3.28	Moderate
Checkpoint 10 : Bridge	3.10	Moderate



Figure 4.0 Line Chart Of Mean Scores of Visitor Experiences

Figure 4.0 shows a line chart of the journey of the visitor through ten checkpoints, where weighted mean scores (n=23) are used to reflect the variation in engagement. This information indicates that although the House of Skull (CP 8) is a strong communicator with a high score of 4.52, the Bridge (CP 10) and Gong (CP 2) have the least exposure with the lowest score of 3.10 and 3.13 respectively. This trend of decline, proves that, though the displays in the museum style in the Skull House are effective, the rest of the terrain and the spatial changes, namely the bridge, has not been effectively used as a means of telling the story, it does not continue the legacy of the warrior as people leave the village. As a result, the failure of such outdoor spaces to include a concept of a serial vision compromises the capacity of the site to convey cultural meaning and identity not only with regard to the core exhibits.

SIGNIFICANT FINDING

Significant Finding From Site Observation

Weak Anticipation and Flattened Narrative

There are numerous checkpoints, such as the Entrance Precinct, Gong Area, and Approach to Skull House, which do not have transitional features, screening, or layering. This lowers Possession because visitors do not feel much ownership or identity to the space. This undermines the look since the entire scenes are shown simultaneously and

makes it less suspenseful and aesthetically appealing. The aspect of Linking and Joining is not strong because spatial sequence fails to provide direction in movement or create a feeling of narrative development and makes the visitor journey flat and slows the interaction with the story of Monsopiad.

Discontinuous Spatial Movement and Coherence.

The weak Possession is observed in the open and undefined spaces, which include the Open Activity Ground, Stone Marker Field, and Community Hall, that is, there is not much sense of being enclosed or having a sense of place. The lack of framed vistas and compositional emphasis impacts the Looking whereas the such lacks the movement as movement is disorganized and unstructured. Such interruptions destroy the spatial story, interrupting the continuity of important cultural and historical features.

Premature Exposure of Key Landmarks

The main features such as the Skull house and the Commercial Transition Zone are disclosed in an untidy manner without a buildup and screening. Possession is minimized since these landmarks are lonely as opposed to being a part of the series. The effect is increased on Looking because there is no longer visual surprise, revelation, and the effect on the Joining & Joining is weak because pathways do not gradually introduce the visitor to the story. This decreases the effect of the narrative and the feeling of discovery.

Significant Finding from Interview

The Protector Legacy of Monsopiad.

The role of Monsopiad as a community protector was the theme of the village brought out by all the participants. The physical aspects were emphasized by the expertise stakeholders like the Skull House (Rumah Tengkorak) and sacred places including the Gintutun Do Mohoing and strengthened by the local visitors and family members to their cultural and spiritual importance. This proves the fact that heritage interpretation is greatly dependent on the main tangible and intangible symbols that are used to share the legacy of the warrior.

Interruption of Spatial Movement and Narrative Sequencing.

Both the experts and non-experts observed that the present spatial layout distracts the story telling. Open and exposed spaces, undefined demarcation, and premature display of landmarks diminish the anticipation and suspense of the viewer journey, which appears to be in pieces. The absence of a chronological order of events undermines the interest and the comprehension of the chronological and thematic features of the story of Monsopiad.

Require Intelligible Narrative Development.

The stakeholders stressed the redesigning of the spatial sequence in accordance with the consecutive line of the warriors. The checkpoints are expected to be their respective phases of the journey of Monsopiad, physical space is connected to storytelling milestones. This would improve the understanding of the cultural heritage by the visitors and their emotional attachment and identification with it.

Improving Immersive Storytelling.

According to the interviewees, to go beyond passive observation, interactive or sensory-based approaches, including dramatizations, visual cues and dynamic displays, have to be incorporated. This would enable the visitors to get a more visual and memorable impression of the story of Monsopiad and this would be a way of closing the gap between the historical aim and the perception of the visitor.

Significant Finding from Survey

Intensive Interaction with Major Indoor Exhibits.

The House of Skull (CP 8) scored the meanest score (4.52 - Very High) which means that the viewer is highly attached to the dominated, closed and dramatically visual interior set-up. This indicates that clearly framed narrative spaces, spaces of enclosure and contrast in their visual presentation are good at conveying the legacies of Monsopiad and this supports the validity of the design of interpretive displays in its ability to narrate stories.

Reduced Occupancy of Open/Transitional Spaces.

The Gong (CP 2, 3.10) and Bridge (CP 10, 3.10) checkpoints were the lowest-rated, which means that the involvement in visiting was low. Open, unstructured, or transitional spaces do not offer some foresight, visual emphasis, or physical rhythm, which is in line with the principles of the Serial Vision by Cullen. These spaces are inaccessible to the visitors because they do not have a guided narrative or visual staging, which causes poor storytelling outside the main exhibits.

Outdoors Spaces offer Mixed Experiences.

There were other outdoor checkpoints, such as Sacred Stone (CP 3, 3.72), Traditional Game (CP 5, 3.41), and Traditional Food (CP 7, 3.45) that scored between moderate and high. These spaces demonstrate that the areas with the right focal points or features of the culture matter in capturing the attention of the visitors but unless they are guided sequentially or framed, the narrative effect is unfocused. The findings show that outdoor spaces are possibilities that need better assessment of space sequencing to optimize narrative.

Space Sequence Requirement of Continuity and Serial Vision.

The survey shows a downward trend in the involvement of visitors throughout the route especially in areas leading to the exit. It is an indication of spatial and narrative discontinuity, where the series of checkpoints does not support attention and affirm the legacy of the warrior. The concepts of possession, looking and linking and joining proposed by Cullen could help to improve anticipation, connectivity and general interpretive coherence across the whole village experience.

DISCUSSION

Application of The Method of Gordon Cullen

The conclusion of the site observation and visitor comments proves the applicability of Cullen Serial Vision to the evaluation of the spatial narration of the Monsopiad Cultural Village. Among the significant problems, which include poor anticipation, disrupted flow of space, and early exposure to landmarks, are the points of view on the visual series, contrasts of enclosure and aperture and progressive revelation, as highlighted by Cullen to lead the movement and narrative understanding (Cullen, 1961). The house of skull (CP 8) is an excellent example of the successful application of the enclosure, verticality, and point of sight, it produces the climax in the plot and supports visitor interest. Contrary to that, open or transitional spaces such as the Gong (CP 2) and Riverside Path (CP 10) demonstrate the effects of not focusing on the visual progression, leading to less suspense and loss of the visitor experience. These results support the importance of spatial sequence and design intervention to help heritage landscapes to be read as narratives and have a resonant emotional experience (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Sowińska-Świerkosz, 2017).

Experiential Behaviour of Visitors

The results of the survey indicate that visitor perception and emotional engagement during the interpretation of a heritage is of great significance. Although the session was controlled and enclosed as in the case of the Skull House, where the level of attention, emotional connection and understanding of cultural narratives were high (mean score 4.52), when the space was open or at a transitional point, the scores were low and the engagement and understanding of cultural narratives was lower. These results confirm other works that emphasize the importance of historic landscapes as not just aesthetic display but the engagement of a visitor due to the aspects of a narrative, motion, and sensory input on shaping the behavior of a visitor (Huang et al., 2025). Visitors react to the extent of enclosure, framing, and pacing around the passageway, which in turn has a direct impact on how visitors experience the legacy of Monsopiad, and thus there is a need to create experiences that incorporate anticipation, visual surprises, and progressive narration.

Landscape Narrative and Serial Vision.

Landscape as a narrative medium is a concept that is clear in the Monsopiad Cultural Village but has not been fully exploited. It has been observed that outdoor environments such as the Open Activity Ground (CP 5) and Sacred Stone (CP 3) can be used to convey a meaning but do not offer sequence, visual framing, or connectivity, which restricts the ability to comprehend the narrative. The possessions of principles (sense of space), looking (visual perception), and connecting and joining (movement) of Cullen introduce a means of changing the landscape into a performance medium that tells the story dynamically, with every checkpoint depicting certain cultural milestones (Cullen, 1961)(Saito et al., 2017). The combination of these principles can contribute to the village having continuity and rhythm, so that the outdoor landscapes cannot be passive spaces, but as an active mean of the storytelling of life of Monsopiad and Kadazan-Dusun heritage.

Cultural Village Concept

Monsopiad Cultural Village is a living heritage site, which is a combination of architecture, landscape and cultural

activities, which conveys identity and tradition. Nevertheless, the modern design focuses on exhibitions and shows instead of comprehensive spatial narration, which creates divided experiences in which visitors see unrelated scenes and not a consistent narrative (Lokman Hakim & Zakaria, 2025; Olinsson, 2023). The results highlight the necessity to treat the village as a cultural environment that can be explored as an immersive space, where the spatial organization, the chronological script, and participatory technology can increase the knowledge of visitors, their emotional involvement, and cultural belonging. Such an attitude corresponds with modern views on the cultural villages as dynamic educational and experience-based sceneries instead of immobile exhibition spaces (Li et al., 2024)

The cultural memory and interpretation

Cultural memory and cultural interpretation is the capacity to identify and explain the collective knowledge of a certain community. The space and experience gaps that are noted in the research reveal the difficulty in sustaining cultural memory in the heritage landscapes. The Skull House and Sacred Stone are some of the key elements conveying the historical and spiritual heritage of Monsopiad, and a lack of coherent spatial narration in the outdoor spaces makes visitor understanding and memory weak. Heritage interpretation should thus include both tangible objects, spatial relations, and methods used to interpret the memory in order to communicate it (Bailey, 2024; Norben Bin Ben, n.d.) The paper shows that implementing the principles of the Serial Vision and experience design by Cullen can reinforce the storytelling process, leaving the Monsopiad legacy inexplicable and memorable, as well as contributing to the emotional connection and cultural identity of the visitors.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This paper has shown that the success of heritage interpretation at Monsopiad Cultural Village is dependent on the quality of the spatial sequence and flow among visitors at the entrance to exit. Using the principles of the Serial Vision developed by Gordon Cullen, the study argues that enclosed and visually controlled spaces, like the Skull House, are effective in conveying narrative meaning, cultural identity and heritage meaning. On the contrary, the open or transitional spaces such as the Gong, Riverside Path, and open activity grounds do not have the adequate space layering, anticipation, and directional connectivity. This lack of a organized spatial narrative leads to disjointed narrative and less effective visitor experience, implying that unless done thoughtfully, deep historical objects could end up being understood as a museum display and not as a part of an active historical process. The impressions of the visitors indicated that the spatial layout, sight lines, and movement corridors play a major role in the deciphering of the legacy of Monsopiad, which is critical in terms of possession, gazing, and connecting and joining in the formation of the cultural meaning.

Nevertheless, the limitations of the research were quite important because of a number of limitations. The main limitation was the time of data collection as it was done in hot months of November and December 2025, this is also the low tourism season in Sabah. This had a negative impact on the overall number of visitors making the variety of the responses to a survey and observational data less varied. Moreover, the brief period of observation did not include the changes in visitor behavior throughout the high tourism seasons. Unforeseeable weather also made field recordings and physical mapping a challenge as regular precipitation could not allow the movement pattern to be observed naturally, since this could also interfere with the quality of visual records that would be necessary to analyze the point of view. Nevertheless, the study has offered some important information on the practical use of spatial storytelling and visitor experience to a specific cultural heritage background despite these

constraints.

As a result of these findings, a number of viable recommendations are provided to improve the interpretative quality of the site. It is recommended in the physical design that landscape along major walkways be adjusted to have transitional features like visual screening, thresholds, and layered views. Such interventions such as the use of local flora or ancient architecture might make the space mysterious and build spatial ownership. The open spaces need to be more intimately united by directed walks which lead through the most important cultural locations in accordance with the succession of the logics of a Warriors Progress. Also, involving the use of modern technology, e.g., Augmented Reality (AR) or interactive displays, as well as sensual-based storytelling, e.g., dramatizations and dynamic displays, can create a stronger emotional appeal to the heritage story. In the end, this research paper will make contributions to the areas of heritage interpretation and storytelling in the landscape, a strategic approach to sustainable cultural tourism in Sabah, and the preservation and promotion of Kadazan-Dusun community. Further research may be based on these findings through exploring seasonal trends in visitor behavior or by comparing the site to other heritage sites in the region to advance development of immersive storytelling practices further.

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