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The Exhibition Structure and Its Impact Towards Visitors' Understanding at a Museum.

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ABSTRACT

The museum relationship with the public has evolved. Back then, the architecture grandeur of museums and its collections; existed in their own sphere; serving only as gatekeeper to history, heritage and culture. However, museum has travelled in term of development and services, from 'cabinets of curiosities' to an institution that communicates through their product which are meaningful, stimulating and, above all, relevant to today's visitors.

Today as public expectation of museums changes, museums now take additional roles in the community. While continuing to collect, catalogue, preserve and study its collection, museums have now become an influential institution in generating and transferring of knowledge. They must enrich community life by making their collections accessible, useful and provide a space for interaction and knowledge exchange.

In facing these positive developments and changes, there are bigger challenges that museums today have to face. One major challenge is their ability to attract, create curiosity and entertain visitors. There is an important need to initiate interesting exhibition and programs that are relevant, innovative and fun so that visitors' experience is enhanced. Complementary to this, elements such as exhibition structure which can help in facilitating the visitors understanding the message has yet to be proven. Therefore, the Shannon and Weaver model will be used to measure the effectiveness of exhibition structure towards visitors understanding and its impact towards the exhibition. Through quantitative method, survey questionnaire will be distributed to 364 random visitors in Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia. The five-point type scale adopted to measure the exhibition structure which can lead the museum to convey their intended messages successfully to the visitors.

Key Words: exhibition structure, impact, museum

1. INTRODUCTION

Museum according to Alexander (2008) is a building which houses collections of objects for inspection, study and enjoyment. It shows that museums are not only collecting artifacts for display for the visitors to see but from the museum, the visitors can gain knowledge and enjoyment. In Malaysia, there are more than 150 museums displaying artifacts and exhibits. However, people are not attracted to visit the museum (New Strait Times Press, 2012). This is due to the absence of interior design strategy (Elottol & Bahaudin, 2011) and the presentation of artefacts are still conventional and not attractive (Noor, 2012). Thus, the visitors found no interest in visiting museums (Mokthtar & Azilah, 2011).

As the museum relationship with the public has evolved, public expectation of museums changes. Museums now take additional roles in the community. Besides continuing to collect, catalogue, preserve and study its collection, museums should also become an influential institution in generating and transferring of knowledge. They must enrich community life by making their collections accessible, useful and provide a space for interaction and knowledge exchange.

Therefore, there are bigger challenges that museums today have to face. One major challenge is their ability to attract, create curiosity and entertain visitors. There is an important need to initiate interesting exhibition and programmes that are relevant, innovative and fun so that visitors' experience is enhanced (Belcher, 1992). Hence, Taha (2008) mentioned that museum nowadays play an important role in learning, showcasing the nation's culture and history to visitors (cited in Elottol & Bahaudin, 2011).

Museums in Malaysia started to recognize their role as part of the leisure industry and they changed in terms of their practices and policies in 1990 in order to be more audience oriented (Mokhtar & Kasim, 2011). In addition to this, Kim and Yeoh (2010) suggested that in order to satisfy visitors' experiences, museum should consider the physical environment and personal experiential from the objects display.

Despite this, there is still lack research aimed at specifically investigating exhibition structure for a better understanding at museum message. Hence, this research was carried out to fill the gap pertaining to the museums. With this aim, a questionnaire has been distributed to 364 random visitors to Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur. After the analysis, results are discussed at what the visitors' perceptions on exhibition structure are and how the exhibition structures relate with the impact of the exhibition. At the end of the paper, implications for researcher and managers are proposed.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Museum communication has been widely discussed by scholars (Hyowon Hyun, Jungkun Park, Tianbao Ren, Hyunjin Kim, 2018; Wang, Quo, 2018; Castellani & Rossato, 2014; Heilig, Feuerhahn & Sikkenga, 2014; Latham, 2012; Capriotti, 2010). Many studies suggested that, in order to make the exhibition as a communicative media, effective production structures can affect visitor experience of discovering meaning in the exhibition.

2.1. Exhibition Structure

2.1.1 Display Case

According to Kim & Yeoh (2010), the main factors that can satisfy visitors' experiences are largely derived from the physical environment and personal experiential from the objects displayed at the museum. As an example, display cases. As suggested by Kaplan (2001), each case should be placed with attention to the shape, size and detail to increase its readability and labels stressed the function (Kaplan, 2001). Similar to this, Durbin (Durbin, 1996) did mention in his study that the display cases should be readable which are not higher than 0.9 meters to suit for short or seated people. In addition of that, all display cases must have enough space beside them in order for the visitors to move comfortably especially people who are using wheelchairs (Durbin, 1996). Display case can also be designed in order to attract the visitors. Belcher (1992) suggested that display case be design either open or closed concept. Open concept can allow all-round viewing of the objects whereas enclosed design is where it have backings and stand. Motifs enable to catch the eye of the visitor although they are several meters away.

2.1.2 Lighting

Another element that can help in facilitating better understanding on the museum message is lighting. Lighting can also provide an aesthetic experience which can affect the visitor in creating different moods and highlight objects and bring them out of dark, mysterious voids and enable the objects to glow and sparkle. Furthermore, lighting can provide such a bright and happy environment (Belcher, 1992). Maximea (cited in Lord & Lord, 2002) said that most museums uses low light levels due to the people that prefer warmth. On the other hand, lighting should be at moderate levels, spotting the cases and pieces in them so that the visitors can see clearly the objects and labels (Kaplan, 2001). Referring to the standards by Museum & Galleries Commission (1995) directional lighting can enhance the visitors' perception and help them in understanding the exhibition because lighting can emphasize form or surface texture of the objects. In addition of that, light which is an element of design can also contribute to the message where it can be used to set a mood or give drama to the exhibition. On the other hand, dramatic lighting with strong contrasts and areas of semi-darkness between exhibits can cause problems to people with visual impairments, therefore, brighter lighter and closer access from the current practice is required for them.

2.1.3 Colour

Besides display case and lighting, colours also play an important role in any exhibition design. Colours can help the exhibition room, objects or artifacts looks fascinating. In addition to this, colours enable to create an intimate and relaxing environment (Belcher, 1992). Temporary exhibitions require more basic colour or neutral colour because it can last through for the next exhibition. Thematic exhibition on the other hand, can be adopted in order to have the 'black box' affect which use black or another dark colour in matte tones. Those colours can be used on walls and ceilings to render the large portions of gallery background so that it can be invisible to eye and therefore encourage the visitors to give attention to the exhibit components or modules which have been highlighted with special lighting and colour (Maximea, 2002). For an instance, a gallery at the University Of British Columbia Museum Of Anthropology is one of the good examples in using a good combination colour for their exhibition. The gallery is coloured with calm and thought-enhancing pale grey-green which matched by blond wood fittings. Furthermore, the colour chosen works effectively which help the visitors engage to the exhibition and restful to the eye. A similar selection of colours within the gallery will encourage the visitors to contemplate and discover their thoughts. Choosing white for the ceiling will not only make the exhibition room looks brightly but it will reflect the colour of the displays in the room and make it outstanding. Tone colour is also important because it can help the lightness or darkness of any chosen colours. Tone can create the overall effect of the exhibition, create specific displays and the shape of the objects can be appreciated when it is seen against a background of a contrasting tone.

2.1.4 Graphics

To increase motivations among visitors, graphics need to be attractive and lively (Jones, 2001). These elements helped to focus the attention on the displays. The gallery design should be simple but impressive. In 1981, "Images of Power: Art of the Royal Court of Benin, Nigeria" exhibition in New York had addressed the inclusion of the audience. Sheldon Cotler, the graphic designer had successfully conveyed a feeling of the rainforest environment in the exhibition. The cases were wrapped with natural linen that gave texture and a neutral background to the rich darkling shades of bronze, brass, ivory, and wood and terracotta objects. The blown-up and mounted black and white photographs on the grey gallery walls to provide some depth and the grey carpeting completed the neutral shell (Jones, 2001).

2.1.5 Text or Scripts

Text or scripts is important as it will deliver the message. Lord & Lord (2002), found out that texts or scripts should be brief and simple in order to provide the information at multiple levels of complexity for visitors. As to make the message clearly legible, the exhibition designer should know which level of speech can be used and which specific jargon can be used to achieve high level of communication competencies (Krautler, 2001). Visitors like the short lines as they might go for further reading to complete their understanding and they do enjoy the informal and rhythmic quality of the text. Texts with simple wording might be appreciated by the visitors in order to read the information displayed (Gilmore & Sabine, 1999). In addition of that, a brief text should be relevant to the interest and motivations of visitors. Text placement also plays an important role in order to have a strong conceptual context. The text at the wall panels shall be in higher orders in the labelling hierarchy because those texts are concerned with ideas.

2.1.6 Labels and Panel

Labels and panels should be placed with sightlines that most people can see it. Therefore, they can read the labels comfortably (Lord & Lord, 2002). Wall panels as stated by Kaplan (2001) said that panels which incorporate with other graphic elements such as photographs, maps, charts and drawings can enhance viewing and enclose exhibition space and grab the attention of the visitors. Ciolfi & Bannan in their study in 2002 found out that the information available to the visitors in the proximity of the displays should be minimal. Labels which are simple will allow for mediation of information. It is sufficient if the labels to indicate the nature, the provenance and the period and placed it near to the object or a group of objects. Kelly (2006) suggesting in her study few guidelines in writing panels and labels. Labels should be placed near to the objects they are describing in order for the visitors to not get confused. The design of the labels can be designed in question form so that it will encourage participation and to grab their attention.

2.1.7 Flow of the message

The organization of the message flow can help the visitors more understand on the subject matter. In order to have contextual or thematic exhibitions, the artefacts, specimens or other objects must be related to each other. It can be in room settings or dioramas or simply grouped in thematic within a display cases. Graphics may be multi layered and a combination of words and images can help visitor's comprehension and they can experience the transformative of the message (Bedno &Bedno, 1999). The flow of the message needs to be planned like a storyline. Story line means that we need to presents the key element which related to visitor experience and this will refine the subject of the exhibition and key topics can be identified (Carliner, 2001). Thus, it is important to have such a good flow of the messages, so that the visitors will engage to the exhibit and understand the intended message.

2.2 Impact of the exhibition

Visiting museum will provide such a numerous advantages to the visitors. Kelly (2006) stating that museum will provide a learning experiences which can influence a person's identity and their sense of self. Therefore, views of themselves, identity and meaning making will change. This experience would make the individual seeing things differently by expanding their knowledge, an expansion of what you already know and new things that add your body of knowledge.

According to Burton & Griffin (2006), museum can improve the cognition of visitors' mind and educational attainment which will lead to positive social behaviour. In addition, by visiting museum, it can also enhance the visitors' appreciation of museum (Frederick, 2007). Museums can be one medium in transferring knowledge. As mentioned by Falk and Dierking (2000), all social groups will utilize museum as vehicles for deciphering information in order to reinforce their shared beliefs and making meaning therefore, it will enhance or inhibit visitors learning experiences. In order to educate visitors, museum or exhibition should know the elements that can reach children, teenagers and adults.

According to Jensen (1999), providing rich encounters for diverse audiences from diverse collections is a challenge. School children are attracted to programmes combined education and entertainment while teenagers are concerned with asserting their own identities and independence where the aspect of activity further appealed to their senses of challenge. Adults' programmes are aimed to cut across divisions of social class, cultural interests and race. To satisfy visitors, combining traditional learning activity and social activity can be the factors. Programmes that incorporate with social interaction, active participation and comfort in area surroundings will make the visitors more incentive to come. Tour guiding is one way to educate visitors. As stating by Gunther (1999), the speaker should have some background or experience related to the subject.

Besides that, using new technologies can help the visitors to gain more understanding about the subject matters and technologies that can be used includes audio guide, video clip regarding the subject of the exhibition and others. To be an educator is a challenging, develop new skills and realize the visitors learning expectation can help the visitors to experience the excitement of the subject matter.



2.3 Shannon and Weaver Model

Figure 1: The Shannon and Weaver's model

According to the model above provided by The Shannon and Weaver (Figure 1) it shows that the exhibition team is the source, the exhibition is the transmitter, the channel is this communication process is objects, texts and events and it will get into visitors' head and understand the subject matter. In this communication process, noise might interferes with the message which might include anything from crowds to visitor fatigue or workmen in the gallery next door or internal noise such as confusing signals, poor graphics or inappropriate use of colour (Greenhill, 1994).

In order to have effectiveness of the exhibition message transmission, the source (exhibition team) should know what kind of information that they need to include in order to educate the visitors and which objects, texts and events that can attract the visitors and gained a lot of information about the subject matter. The message from the exhibition and impact of visiting museums can be obtained from this study and this will help the source to evaluate the success and effectiveness of the exhibition in the museum. During the transmission of the message, there might be noise interrupt the process and this will lead the visitors feel uncomfortable and will disrupt the message that the source wish to convey. Therefore the main objective of this paper is to determine the relationship of exhibition structure and its impact at museum. The research questions are as

follows:

To identify visitors' perception on the exhibition structure that facilitates better understanding on the exhibition message.

To identify the exhibition impact towards visitors.

To identify the relationship between exhibition structures and the impact of the exhibition.

3. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive and inferential statistics has been used in this study to determine the perceptions of exhibition structure and also the relationship between exhibition structure and its impact towards the exhibition. A set of questionnaire has been distributed to the museum visitors of Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia. All the data and information obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science). The survey was divided into three parts which is Part A (demographic profiles), Part B (related to exhibition structure) and lastly Part C (impact towards visitors). The first part, questionnaire was in multiple questions while in second and third part, the answer based on 5points of Likert scale from 1= strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree. A total of 364 respondents involved in this study.

4. FINDING AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Most of visitors in the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia are Malaysian which represents 54.1% while the balance of 45.9% is non Malaysian (Table 1). As shown in Table 1, most of the visitors that visited Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia aged 43 years old and above which holds 23.4% of total respondents while there are only 34 visitors aged 13-18 years old out of the total respondents. Mokhtar & Kasim (2011) found in their study that youth audience aged between 13-24 have poor perceptions towards museum as they feel museums is a boring, didactic, unapproachable and preoccupied with the past. There are 58 respondents aged 19-24 and 57 respondents aged 25-30 years old. Respondents aged 31-36 years old represents 15.7% and 16.2% of the total respondents. Table 1 shows that most of the respondents visit the museum for the first time and it represents 60.7% (221 respondents) and only 3% of them have visited the museum within 6 months.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents' demographic at Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia

Number of respondents (%)						
Citizenship	Malaysia	Non-				
-	-	Malaysian				
	54.1	45.9				
Age	13-18	19-24	25-30	31-36	37-42	43 and above

	9.3	15.9	15.7	16.2	19.5	23.4
Last time	Within	Within	1-3	More	Never	
visited	last 6	last year	years	than 3	(this is	
museum	months			years	my first	
				ago	time)	
	3	6.9	10.7	18.7	60.7	

4.2 **Overall Perception on the Exhibition Structures**

Exhibition structure does play a role in facilitating better understanding on the exhibition message. The structure includes display case, lighting, color, graphics, texts, labels & panels and message flow. Means score for this structure is quite similar as you can see from Table 2. Display case (3.46), lighting (3.47), color (3.39), graphics (3.37), texts (3.52), labels (3.38) and message flow (3.56). Therefore, from this finding it shows that the structure in Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia does contribute to the visitors in understanding the exhibition message. From the finding, it can be seen that message flow is the highest score which means that it really facilitate the visitors in understanding the exhibition message. Message flow can help the visitors in understanding the subject matter and very important as it will make the visitors engage to the exhibit, Kratz (2011) found out that by presenting the message through referential content, present and explain concepts, categories, themes or other information which can define and interpretive framework will help in creating the value of rhetoric which then facilitates the visitors in understanding the exhibition message.

Text is the second highest with a score of 3.52 and it shows that text also help them in understanding the exhibition message. Text important not only to make the visitor understand about the message; text can also attract and hold the attention. Sandifer (2003) in his studies found that if the text is readable which is arranged in easily understood segments and relevant by proving cognitive links to visitors' existing knowledge and experience, visitors will be attracted with the message.

Graphics with score of 3.37 shows that this particular structure is actually do contribute in facilitating better understanding of the exhibition message. Bedno & Bedno in their study in 1999 found out that a combination of words and images can help visitor's comprehension and they can experience the transformative of the message. This finding shows that Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia did planned very well and willing to spend a lot of money in order to conveyed their intended message successfully to the visitors. Vendors of every structure in the exhibition will be determined based on their high quality product or services so that the exhibition not only attract the visitors but also conveyed their intended message successfully.

Malaysia			
Exhibition Structure	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	
Display case	3.46	0.54	
Lighting	3.47	0.56	
Colour	3.39	0.54	
Graphics	3.37	0.56	

Table 2: Overall score of exhibition structure in exhibition as Islamic Arts Museum

Texts	3.52	0.54
Labels & Panels	3.38	0.56
Message Flow	3.56	0.53

4.3 The impact of the exhibition

Exhibition message if it is transmitted successfully to the visitors it will give a positive impact to themselves. As shown in Table 3, the respondents have positive agreement that they perceived impact from the exhibition. The visitors did learned new information (3.54), feel very strongly about the subject matter (3.35), developed and increased interest in that particular topic (3.46), gained knowledge (3.44), better understanding of other people's ideas and opinions (3.47), better understanding on the community (3.42), discovered interesting facts (3.45) and it changed their mind about the subject matter (3.47). Burton & Griffin (2006) in their study found out that, museum can improve the cognition of visitors' mind and educational attainment which will lead to positive social behavior. In addition, by visiting museum, it can also enhance the visitors' appreciation of museum (Frederick, 2007).

Table 3: The distribution of the exhibition impact towards the visitors' at Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia

Exhibition Structure	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation
I learned new information after viewing the exhibition	3.54	0.55
I feel very strongly about the subject matter of the exhibition	3.35	0.56
I have developed and increased interest in the topic I knew little about before coming here	3.46	0.56
I have gained knowledge that I can use in future	3.44	0.55
I have better understanding of other people's ideas and opinions	3.47	0.53
I understand better the community that I live in	3.42	0.53
I discovered some interesting facts from the visit today	3.45	0.55
I learned things that made me change my mind about the subject matter of the exhibition	3.47	0.57

4.4 The relationship between exhibition messages and exhibition structure towards the impact of the exhibition message

Table 4 shows the relationship between exhibition structure and impact towards the exhibition at Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia. Exhibition structure positively significance and moderate correlation to the impact of the exhibition. Exhibition structure with r value 0.673 shows that the higher visitors perceived the exhibition structure can facilitate better understanding on the exhibition message; the higher impact will have to the visitors. This is supported by R. Ajmat,J. Sandoval, F. Arana Sema, B. O'Donell, S. Gor & H. Alonso (2011). Their study mentioned that appropriate exhibition structure would offer visitors the ambience and museum experiences that the visitors need. Thus, it is advisable that museum has to plan and organizes the exhibition message and structure in order for the visitors to get the positive impact from the exhibition.

Exhibition Structure	Correlation (r)		
Exhibition Structure	0.673		
Display Case	0.506		
Lighting	0.488		
Colour	0.497		
Graphics	0.494		
Texts	0.555		
Labels & Panels	0.523		
Message Flow	0.554		

Table 4: The relationship between exhibition message and exhibition structure towards the impact of the exhibition at Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia

5. CONCLUSION

In a nut shell, results from the survey showed that the respondents agree that exhibition structure had impact on them after visiting the exhibition. In addition, reviewing the literature also revealed that if the exhibition structure was in accordance, there will a positive impact towards the visitors and it is actually help the visitors in understanding the exhibition message. This paper has aimed to contribute to literature relating on how the museum should planned their exhibition accordingly in order to communicate the message effectively. It is evident from this study that Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia has strategized their exhibition message and structure. However, improvement from time to time needs to be implemented in order for the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia achieve to the international standard.

Therefore, in order to achieve the museum objectives and to be such an impressive museum, Islamic Arts Museum should continuously strategized the message and structure so that the message and can be transmitted successfully and give positive impact to the visitors. Thus, this study would help any other museums, policy maker, exhibition organizer, government, or any other parties that related to exhibition on the exhibition element which can help them to convey their intended message to the visitors successfully. In addition, *Kementerian Penerangan, Komunikasi dan Kebudayaan Malaysia* and *Jabatan Muzium Malaysia* would

include this research to their policy and provide training on message delivery and structure to facilitate better understanding and have positive impact to the visitors. Furthermore, this study can help the museums to come up with attractive presentations of artefacts or historical exhibits to draw more visitors in order to convince the visitors to appreciate what they should appreciate.

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