AicE-Bs2014Berlin
(formerly AicE-Bs2014Magdeburg)
Asia Pacific International Conference on Environment-Behaviour Studies
Sirius Business Park Berlin-yard field, Berlin, 24-26 February 2014
"Public Participation: Shaping a sustainable future"

Adapting Museum Visitors as Participants Benefits their Learning Experience?

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Abstract

Public participation such as visitor satisfaction was directly related to experience of learning and discovery and involvement in motivating learning behaviour at the museum. This will enhancing museum in direction shaping a sustainable future as the museums as institutions for lifelong learning. How visitors learn in museums, will be given us a set of very practical strategies and tools for designing exhibits. This paper reports a current status of a study focusing on Research Framework (RF) towards an adult visitors' learning within informal education setting through museum exhibitions, which is a part of on-going doctoral research programme that correlated with the museum management in Malaysia.

Keywords: visitors'experience and learning; public participation; informal learning; lifelong learning.*

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1. Introduction

Museums are offer informal learning preferences to visitors with various learning experiences through visitors participation in engaging exhibits that facilitated visitor learning. Findings reveal that the participatory of visitor in engaging exhibits will make them purposefulness (they feel involved), next motivate meaningful results for visitors' 'learning outcomes'. This benefits museum management a set of very practical strategies and tools for designing exhibits for sustainable 'lifelong learning' in museums. In defining museum, Adler (2004) and Ahmad (2013), agreed with International Museum Association and many museum scholars and expertise had established with the decision of International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 1984 was elaborated that museums are a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society. The definition of a museum has evolved, in line with developments in society. ICOM updates this definition in accordance with the realities of the global museum community. In addition to that, with its development and once open to the public, ICOM elaborated the role of museum further as the institution that which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits for the purpose of study, educational and enjoyment, material and evidence of people and their environment at 21st General Conference in Vienna, Austria, in 2007. Today, a visitor may develop such traits as seeing, grasping, analyzing, questioning, extracting clues related to life from what they see (Unal, 2012).

In Malaysia, besides agreeing with International Museum Associations, a museum functions are not limited as to preserve and store artefacts of national treasures, but it is also a source of knowledge for a holistic view towards all way of life. Ismail (2011) be of opinion that it was seen vital to gather entire material heritage in the construction of cultural identity and the civilization of a country. Ahmad & Badarulzaman (2005) has stressed that cultural heritage attraction has become one of the niche products in Malaysia tourism industry and has also been identified as influencing factors in the tourism industry (Mey & Mohamed, 2010). Museum has also been identified in Malaysia as an institution to spread knowledge to the public on the history, culture and natural history (Tambi, 2011).

The research question investigated in this study was "Adapting museum visitors as participants benefits their learning experience?". A key focus of the study was on how adults visitors describe learning through adapting visitors' as participants in engaging exhibits and what benefits their learning experience. Other areas examined included the relationship between learning, education and entertainment, as well as the roles of visitors play, during a museum visit. This adaptation in this paper only highlights a preliminary synthesis of the sourcing narratively, identifying trend or gap with limited graphical displays towards museum learning on informal learning contexts focused on solitary adults' visitor in static exhibition approach versus interactive technology exhibition setting in Malaysia.

2. Market Research

Recently, museums have begun more conscious of the significance of understanding who is their visitors and why the people visits to the museums (Sellers, 2001, Black 2005). The analysis of visitors and potential visitors for museums is usually defined as 'market research' or 'visitor studies'. This providing quantitative report on prospective visitors are initially and mainly to scrutinize because they offer essential fundamental data on the nature of potential target visitors. This can permit museum both to prioritise interpretation towards the needs of defined visitors and at to evaluate their effectiveness in actually attracting the audiences they have set out to achieve eventually. The information resulted museum can better communicate with their current audience (Black, 2005).

Black (2012), also has views that museums should be to change the approach of museum visitors, adapting them from one-off visitors into regular users who perceive themselves as visitors to active participants in the work of museums. The process can transform them from visitors to the participants to ensure that their visit is enjoyable, providing opportunities for social interaction, soft supports, with no

involvement of pressure and reflection to encourage people to revisit the museum. As an educational environment, museums also promote the learning experience and can fulfil their duties fully when visitors are facilitated to have good experience.

2.1. Visitor/Participant Development

Visitor development is a vigorous process of improving services to existing visitors and reaching out to new participants. According to Anderson (2005), the development of visitor means "enrich the visitor experience by helping them to learn more and deeper for their enjoyment of what the museum has to offer. Thus, the core elements of audience development are "The actions we take to involve people, to understand their needs and interests, and to create an environment and experience that appeals to them" (Audience Development Plan, Heritage Lottery Fund, UK, p4). Visitors development is about breaking down barriers in all its shapes and forms as well as to visitors who participated in activities that they considered worthwhile. The basis of all audience development initiatives should be research - market research - knowing your audience is key to identify different needs but also to develop niche markets and convince more visitors to become regular museum goers.

Visitors as participants are clearly a goal for many museum education practitioners, and increasingly an outcome expected by museum administration that is to shape museum audiences that are motivated, interested, and actively participated with exhibition content, then practitioners and researchers must first define the ways to design and build those opportunities (Wood and Wolf, 2008). Kotler and Kotler (1998) argue that successful museums need to "provide multiple experiences: aesthetic and emotional delight, celebration and learning, recreation and sociability". In delivering multiple experiences that are satisfying and engaging museums will meet specific needs of different target groups and also help individual audiences in their self development process.
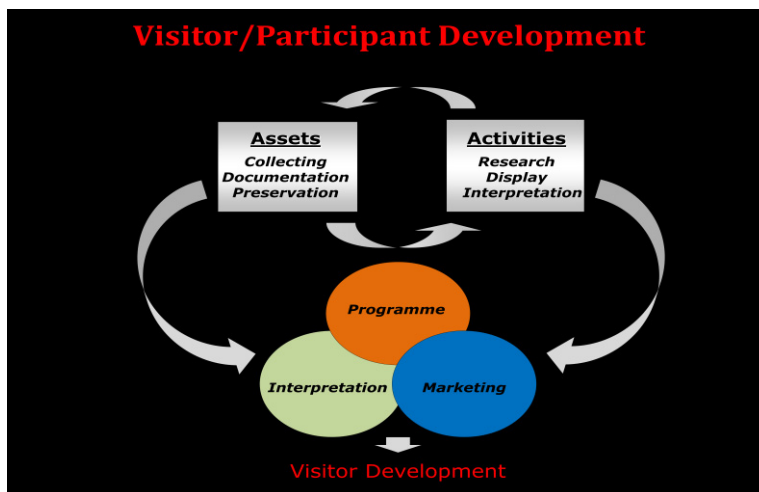

Fig.1. Illustration of the flow diagram screening on Visitor / Participant Development in Visitor Development Model perform a role of museum functions responsible in execute highly developed learning in the activities (sources adapted from Waltl (2006).

3. Research Methodology

The methodology of this research is based on a triangulation method that offers a amalgamation of qualitative and quantitative strategies provides multiple perspectives and the most in-depth understanding of the experience in an exhibition. Qualitative methods on their own are often deliberated anecdotal, and not credible, valid and reliable. Quantifiable information (about motivation for a visit, the effectiveness learning when engaging exhibition and satisfaction levels) can serves as a context for more descriptive and interpretive data. Evaluators working with more ethnographic, naturalistic approaches have considered triangulation technique as an important way to control bias an establish validity (Soren, 2001). This paper only uses qualitative methods, which refer the literature review in the purpose the identification of issues from the perspective views of museum scholars and experts towards creating direction in developing museum exhibitions in Malaysia for public learning. The study was on how adults visitors describe learning through adapting visitors' as participants in engaging exhibits and what benefits their learning experience and informal learning outcomes. Majority of literature review is based on western scholar in knowing the scenario of museum learning within adult visitors. It would be required to the further enhance the robustness of this research. This will be the foundation idea towards a study on solitary adult visitor studies in Malaysia because there is a limited study on museum learning through exhibition using static versus interactive technology in the local context.
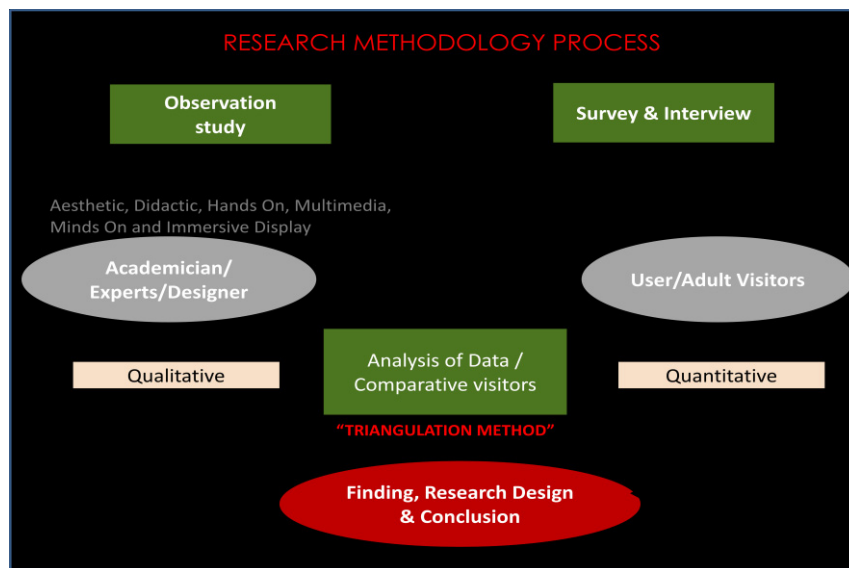

Fig.2. Illustration of the flow diagram showing on a triangulation method that offers a amalgamation of qualitative and quantitative strategies provides multiple perspectives and the most in-depth understanding of the experience in an exhibition activities that developed learning. (source: Ahmad, 2013).
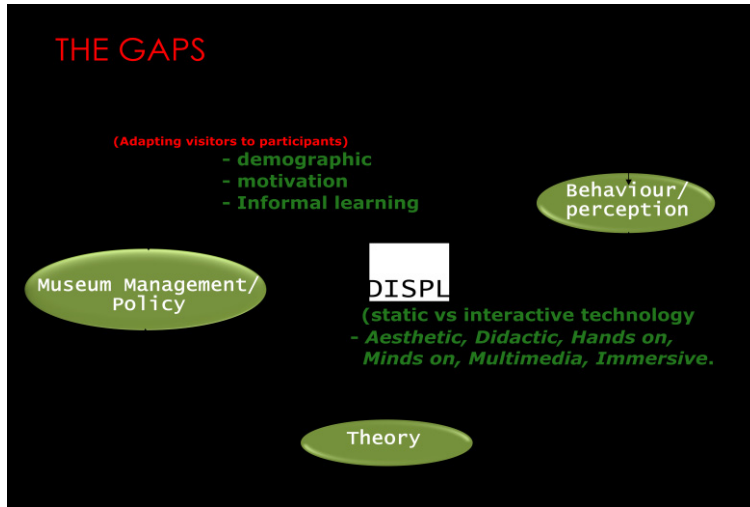
Fig.3. Illustration of the flow diagram showing on Adapting Visitor to Participants towards their participation in an exhibition activities that developed learning. (source: Ahmad, 2013).

3.1 Research Limitations

Owning to parameters set by a research grant, where funds are only for the site for local site activities (secondary data gatherings) within Malaysia. Therefore, all such information and data on other countries in the current paper relies heavily on secondary data. This study was only focus on how solitary adults visitors describe learning through adapting visitors' as participants in engaging exhibits and what benefits their learning experience and informal learning outcomes. Encouragement given by Griffin (2012), Kelly, Savage & Hatherly (2005) proved the necessity of research such as which this paper is based on, uncovering learning through gathering of information through informal setting exhibition techniques that will give an enormous impact to the quality of future exhibitions.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Defining Terms

4.1a Visitors

Serrel (2006) has expressed that 'visitors' mean culturally diverse people are spending leisure time, are curiosity-driven, have no specialized prior knowledge, are likely to have a social agenda, might be in an intergenerational group, who desire engaging experiences, need and appreciate orientation, might be first-timers to the museum, are time-limited, and are ready to learn if it can happen easily and quickly.

4.1b Visitors' Experience and Learning

Hooper-Greenhill & Moussouri (2002); Dawson (2006) perceives learning is a process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world around them. It may involve enhancing in skills, knowledge, understanding, values, feelings, attitudes and capacity to reflect. Effective learning leads to change, development and the desire to learn more.

Learning is a dynamic process in which the learner uses sensory input and constructs meaning out of it. People be trained to learn as they learn to see as learning consists both of constructing meaning and constructing systems of meaning. The crucial action of constructing meaning is mental where it happens in the mind. It is gradual and takes time to learn which means that learning is not instantaneous. Motivation is a key component in learning (Hein 1991:90-91).

Etienne Wenger (1998: 226-228) perceives learning as a process of engaging in social practice, and that can be applied in all kind of settings.

4.1c Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning testimony was occurring in the 1960. The ideas and practice of lifelong learning in a twenty-first century have new nationwide trends. In addition to create equal opportunities in education and generalize learning participations, it also stresses on promote all people to engage in lifelong learning on a continuing basis, and foster autonomous learners who own the ideas, cognition and skills of self-directed learning (Wu, 2001).

5. Findings

5.1 Type Museum Learning and Learner (Visitor)

Evidently, learning that always happen in a museum and divided into three categories namely:

- *Formal Learning*: School type experience, teacher or staff led, might involve worksheets, often passive and may involve assessment.

- *Self-Directed Learning:* Led by the learner when they are interested in a subject or motivated by a specific needs (e.g. school project, vocational interest).

- *Informal Learning***:** Unplanned casual encounters that lead to new insights, ideas or conversation.

Howard Gardner developed a theory on the dissimilar ways that individuals learn and process information, which called the multiple intelligences theory. According to Gardner's theory, visitors might show well-built learning skills in any of seven different style categories that summarized in the following tables (Tables 3):

Table 1. Summaries Howard Gardner Theory of Learning that called 'Multiple Intelligence Theory' in the learning process to perceive information.

Howard Gardner Theory of Learning, 1983

Types of Learner	Behaviour of Learner	Participating with Display
1. Visual Learner/Spatial Learner Artists, photographers and architects often exhibit this learning style.	Enjoys by looking at pictures, watching movies, drawing, designing and creating three dimensional representations. Activities that appeal to the spatial learning style include sketching, graphing, creating charts and mapping out stories.	Learns best by visualizing, dreaming, working with colors and pictures.
2. The Linguistic Learning	Enjoys with reading, writing and telling stories, debating, reading aloud, drama and creative writing.	Learns best by saying, hearing and seeing words
3. The Logical/Mathematical Learner	Enjoys doing experiments, asking questions, exploring patters and relationships	Learns best by classifying, working with abstract patterns, categorizing.
4. The Musical Learner	Enjoys singing and humming, listening to music, playing instruments.	Learns best by rhythm, melody, music.
5. The Kinetic Learner	Enjoys moving around, touching and talking.	Learns best by touching and moving, processing knowledge through action.
6. The Social Learner	Enjoys being with friends, talking to people and being part of a group	Learns best by sharing, cooperating, interviewing and comparing.
7. The Solitary Learner/Introspective Learner	Enjoys working alone, pursuing their own interests	Learns best by self paced instruction, reflecting and individual projects.

Source: Dawson, M. (2006), Lord Academy, Museum Seminar, Malaysia National Museum, Kuala Lumpur; http://www.ehow.com/about_5367145_howard-gardner-learning-style.html#ixzz2icI21m6R

5.2 Exhibition Display Techniques

Brown (2001) has claimed that whether a museum is organizing its permanent collection displays, temporary exhibition or combination of both, the visitors experience of this exhibition will be enhanced if they are supported by a range of educational and other public programs or activities that reinforce communication of the exhibitions' core messages. If exhibitions are intended as communication devices, then the developments of such programs consistent with exhibition theme. The utilizing of alternative media and techniques leads to appeal on the way to a broader range of preferred learning styles, interest level and intellectual capacities.

This paper research has determined the participation of visitors in the ways providing choice of media and techniques leads to appeal on the way to a broader range of preferred learning styles, interest level and intellectual capacities to meet the museums agenda. The determination of participation level with

adapting visitors to participate in engaging type of exhibition technique benefits with summarize as follows:

Table 2. Summaries type of exhibition method is identified in museum learning could offering visitors participation.

Type of Exhibition Method			
Type of Exhibition Technique	**Mode of Visitor Apprehension**	**Type of Learner**	**Participation Level**
1. Aesthetic	Contemplative and reflective	Appeals to visual and solitary learners	Passive
2. Didactic	Text based, cases, murals	Appeals to solitary and linguistic learners	Passive
3. Hands - On	Low technologies interactive activities	Appeals to mathematical / logical learners, kinetic learners, musical learners, social learners	Active
4. Multimedia	Videos, computer based, audio and projection	Appeals to visual and kinetic learners	Active
5. Minds - On	Encourages problem solving and discussion plus exhibits that ask question	Appeals to social learners, mathematical/logical learners	Active
6. Immersive Environments	Reconstructions that allow visitors to become part of the exhibition plus give context to content and artifacts	Appeals to all learners, especially those who are kinetic and social learners	Active

Source:Dawson, M. (2006), Lord Academy, Museum Seminar, Malaysia National Museum, Kuala Lumpur.

Dawson (2006) has emphasized that within the museum environment, the learner needs to be an active participant in the process and not a passive recipient. Learners construct their own understanding of the world by reflecting on their experiences and interpreting what they see, hear and feel to the objects in what exhibition displays are offered.

6. Discussion

Adapting Museum Visitors as Participants Benefits their Learning Experience? The growing demands of visitors who have been performed as participants by those who have earlier felt is excluded from what museums and heritage site (museum collection) have to recommend. The high quality requirements demands by visitors. The revisited visitors are increasingly experienced and educated. Visitor is no longer to be passive recipients and change to active participants that want to be involved, to questions, to take parts as equals, and to received as high standard of service as would be offered at any type of leisure site.

6.1 Participation Benefits to Visitor Needs

According to Waltl (2006) research found that Morris, Hargreaves and McIntyre (2001), a company in Manchester, specialising in visitor research and arts marketing with their comprehensive study, they developed a chart based on a hierarchy of visitor participation or engagement which reflects Maslow's

pyramid (1970) of visitor needs. Their model is a useful way of segmenting visitors by their main motivations classification. The categorization has been grouped into four key drivers:

● socially-motivated visitor
● intellectually-motivated visitor
● emotionally-motivated visitor
● spiritually-motivated visitor.

Each of them are hierarchical, starting with the socially motivated visitor who generates about 48% of visits to museums, the intellectually-motivated visitor approximately 39%, the emotionally-motivated visitor make about 11% and the spiritually-motivated visitor concerning 3%. For galleries, the numbers are quite different with 18% of the spiritually motivated visitors. The higher visitors move up the hierarchy the more fulfilling and rewarding the museums visit was. Thus, the aim of good programming with promoting mediation devices (audio guides, interactive terminals, smart phone, augmented reality, etc.) and promote visitor engagement with adapting them from visitors as participants seems to be a trend to museum environment (Refer Fig.2).
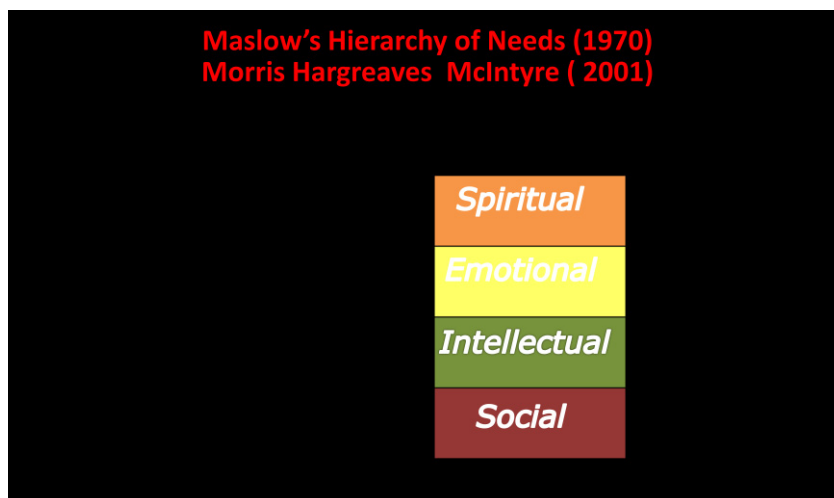

Fig.4. Illustration of Needs Hierarchy after Maslow (1970) and Morris, Hargreaves, McIntyre (2001), (sources adapted from Waltl (2006).

Table 3. Summaries type of Participation Benefits to Visitor Needs is identified in exhibition engagement could offering visitors effective learning with multiple experiences and evolved valuable of learning outcome.

Participation Benefits to Visitor Needs Based-on Selinda Model

Category of Visitor Needs	Engagement	Behaviour of Participation	Type of Exhibition Technique
1. Socially-motivated visitor	Social engagement or social interaction	Touching, arguing, gesturing, debating, making eye contact, laughing, standing in close proximity to one another and mirroring posture.	Hands – On, Minds – On, Multimedia and Immersive Environments.
2. Intellectually-motivated visitor	Intellectual engagements	Observing, hypothesizing, comparing, analyzing, contemplating, recognizing, wondering and so forth.	Hands- On and Minds-On
3. Emotionally-motivated visitor	Emotion engagements	Sense of beauty, respect, wonder, peacefulness, special privileges, caring and attraction, amusement, love, sympathy, surprise, concern, fear, disgust, anger and embarrassment.	Communicated without any intellectual mediation and a visceral response to objects – example medieval history. Aesthetic and Didactic
4. Physical-motivated visitor	Physical engagements	Pushing Button, crawling through a simulated cave environment, kicking, pouring sand on floor and manipulating object include spending time with exhibits, reading a label, watching someone else engage, standing still and being contemplation.	Hands- On and Immersive Environments, Multimedia, Aesthetic and Didactic

Source:Perry D. (2012).

Otherwise, based on The Selinda Model of Visitor Learning, with a comprehensive case study of how visitors interact in participate with one of the classic science centre exhibits, Coloured Shadows (Refer Illus.1). This is a classification of six key motivations that exhibits must satisfy in order to make learning inherently fun. Perry (2012, p.27) positions these in the context of 'Interpretive Activism', which defines as the process of advocating for and incorporating research-based, visitor-centered exhibit design principles and strategies that facilitate active visitor participation in the interpretive process. A key element of interpretive activism is to conceive of exhibits as 'catalysts' (for visitors own conversations and active learning) rather than simply 'conduits' (for information). Museums gave visitors the tools they need to engage in meaningful conversations with their companions.
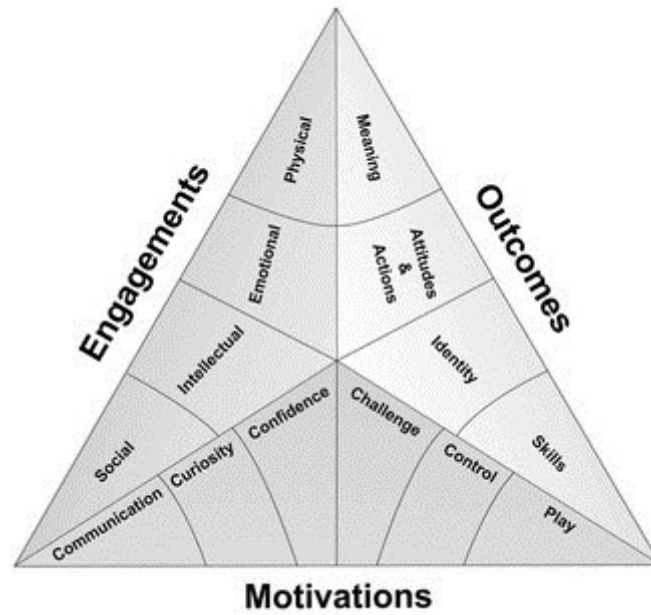
Fig.5. Illustration of The Selinda Model of Visitor Learning. Source:Perry, D. (2012).

Illus.1. Coloured shadows is a hands-on exhibit that allows visitors to explore the additive properties of light mixing. (Image source: Exploratorium. (Forrest, 2013).
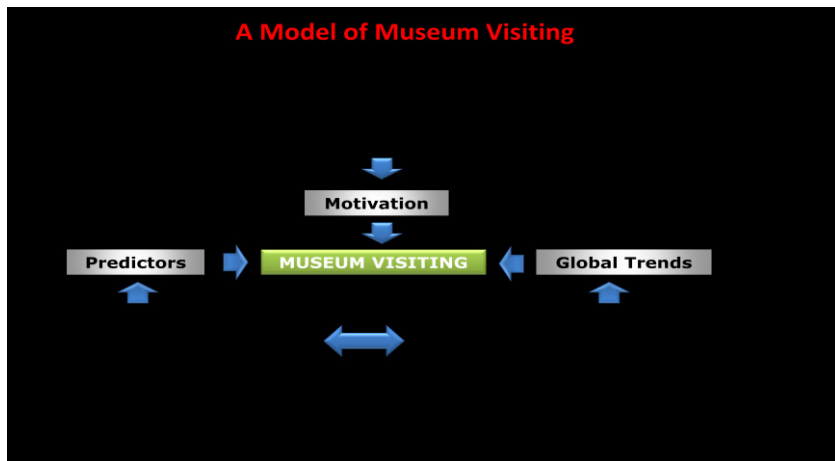
Fig.6. Illustration Model of Museum Visiting identified adapting visitors in participating actively promote motivation to the visitor visiting. (after Hood 1996;Kelly 2001). (Source: Waltl, 2006)

In the comprehensive study by Hood (1996) and Kelly (2001) is clear identified that the motivation for a museum visit must be seen in a wider social context (Refer Fig.4). Meanwhile, Perry explores the six motivations that adapted from The Selinda Model of Learning (Refer Fig. 3). They're described in terms that will make the most sense in the context of hands-on exhibits, although the fundamental principles can be applied more broadly as summarized as following:

Table 4. Summaries type of Participation Benefits to Visitor Needs is identified in exhibition engagement could offering visitors effective learning with multiple experiences and evolved valuable of learning outcome.

Motivations Based- on The Selinda Model of Learning

Types of Motivation	Engagement	Behaviour of Participant (Outcomes)
1. **Communication**	Cater a range of abilities	encouraging social interaction and collaboration between visitors within social groups .
2. **Curiosity**	Stimulate perceptual and intellectual curiosity	Pique interest by leaving some things unsaid – while too little information can be frustrating, if things are too obvious then curiosity can wane.
3. **Confidence**	motivated to learn in situations they feel "safe and smart".	Success breeds a feeling of success and a "series of "mini successes"
4. **Challenge**	confidence and competence	an appropriate level of uncertainty and challenge.
5. **Control**	have control over our environment is an important facet of the psychology of visitor experiences.	feel in control when they have appropriate choices and the power to influence what happens in the environment.
6. **Play**	ability to engage the imagination is an essential ingredient of free-choice learning.	most satisfying, and enjoyable experiences, playful with ideas, thoughts and all over

Source: Perry D., L (2012), Forrest. (2013).

7. Conclusion

Museums are centres of knowledge and the role to provide an educational experience is the key objective in serving their visitors. As museums have entered a time of transform, they are asked not only to justify their funding but also to redefine their duty in society. The impressive halls, real objects or comprehensive exhibitions do need visitor participatory in order to be rightfully called museums caring for their culture and for future generations (Waltl, 2006). Successful museums have to be proactive in planning their audience development strategies. Black (2005) and (Waltl, 2006), refers to audience development planning as a "long-term challenge" and argues that in setting out to develop revisited visitors and new participants, we are actually seeking to change human behaviour.

A well grounded strategic plan will help museums to move efficiently from where it is now to where it wants to be. Devising a forward a plan that reflects visitor needs means that organisations need a good understanding of the environment in which they work. The strategic plan such adapting visitors as participants as a framework help to devise reasonable goals, allocate resources to agreed priorities and at the same time reflect the overall mission and professional standards on the care of collections. As Waltl (2006) asserted that this emphasises the importance of collaborative work towards a shared vision and common goals, and shows that successful museums have to be aware of the interrelated issues of "*cohesive leadership and visitor focused public programming*" and make sure that visitors have easy access to all that museums do.

8. Recommendation

Currently with museums increasing their audiences and 'revisited visitors' also updating museum visitors to participants and trying to make collections more user-friendly to the public, more sophisticated - technically as well as methodically - interpretation devices become an important part in the process of participatory the visitor. Tools such as audio guides, computer interactive, multi-layered text labels, as well as specially trained mediators are helping to make the museums experience more worthwhile for visitors by linking the visitor experience with the collection displayed and initiating a communication between the visitor and the object. Adapting visitors as participants in an interactive experience is much more likely to result in a positive museums experience and enhance more visitors revisited and a visit to sustain life-long learning. In this model research and collections are core to be able to devise a programme that is communicated through interpretation and marketing. Together they bring a meaningful learning outcomes of participants and given museum management a collection of very viable strategies and tools for designing exhibits to the museum in Malaysia.

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