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**A SENSE OF PLACE MODEL TO ENHANCE GUIDED TOUR**  
**EXPERIENCE IN MELAKA.**

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***Abstract***

This research aims to enhance the tourist experience through a ‘sense of place’ guided tour model for the sustainability of heritage tourism in Melaka. The guided tour is a convenient and straightforward way to know a place. An enjoyable guided tour is vital for better management of a heritage city. However, the current guided tour may not be able to serve this purpose. Concerning the conceptions of sense of place, this study examines the elements that might contribute to the enhancement of tourism experience through a guided tour. This research conducted Interviews and participant observations in Melaka city in between April 2018 to April 2019. Ten documents were analysed in total, which included interview transcripts and observation records. By integrating the elements of sense of place in a guided tour, it is hoping that this model can provide better guidance for those who plan to conduct a guided tour in a heritage city. It can also serve as guidelines for cleaner and healthier management for the sustainability of a heritage city, in terms of tourists will know better about the place, attach to the place, and not just ‘touch and go,’ leaving only garbage to the place.

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## **1. Introduction**

Guided tour is a common method for tourists to know about a place. It is either organized by the government (tourism center), tourism business practitioners, non-government organizations, or even individuals. There are many places that have guided tours, especially in popular destinations such as Malacca city and George Town, UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) of Malaysia. Guided tour in a heritage city is important, as tourists are expecting to know about the history of the place by joining the guided tour. It is assumed that if tourists know more about a place, feeling positively towards a place, there will be higher possibilities for them to revisit the place or recommend it to friends. In other words, these are the tourists who have a higher “sense of place,” or feel “attached” to the place. However, the current practice of guided tours has been seen as choreographed and cursory (Edensor, 1998), and abound tourists select guided tours just because guided tours are low-cost and easy to stopover a place (Holloway, 1981). Nevertheless, it is clear-cut such tourism, especially cultural heritage tourism, a precise carcass of wisdom, and excessive models of tour guiding is needed, as the guided tour will affect the excellence of the tourist experience.

Although guided tour is important to enhance a tourist experience, how to do so remain questionable as many guided tours have been arranged in a package tour, and the time allocated to guided tour could be restricted and limited. Furthermore, for individual tourists, they might not be joining the guided tour as what they want could be just exploring the city by themselves or with local guidebook, or due to not able to find a local guide. Fortunately, getting more locals involve themselves in conducting guided tours, and getting more tourists participating in guided tour organized by the locals. It is expected that the guided tours provided by locals will provide more ‘insiders’ info’ as they are more acquainted with their place of origin. Nevertheless, what are the elements that should be integrated into a guided tour, and how these elements may assist in enhancing tourist experience remain understudied.

Studies about ‘sense of place’ may provide some cues to fill the gap. A sense of place as perception comprises the formation of place definition and the understanding that empowers nearness to a location (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). According to the research done by Jorgensen and Stedman (2006), the mental facets, or named as ‘sense of place,’ reiterates the affective, cognitive, and behavioural peripherals (Morgan, 2010; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). A sense of place contains a kind of sentimental contact in both positive and negative facets to a precise place. For instance, it contained an impression of well-being, impression of pride, longing or adoration of a place (Brown et al., 2003; Cuba & Hummon, 1993; Fullilove, 1996; Giuliani, 2003; Hidalgo, 2001; Hummon, 1992). Next, place attachment has been tenacious as cognition resides of the establishment of place interpretation, and the viewpoint that empowers intimacy to a place (Gifford et al., 2009). Sense of place also associated with ‘place identity’ occasionally, and it regulated the physical world socialization of self (Proshansky et al., 1983). According to Fredrickson and Anderson (1999), sense of place has been determined it happened regarding to one’s interactions with the specific of a place that shape the one’s identity and deepest-held worths. According to Manzo and Perkins (2006), people comprehended the nature of our bonds to a location when the people are from physical surroundings. By practicing the sense of place framework as our fundamental theory, this study intends to recognize how to integrate the sense of place elements into a guided tour of a heritage city.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Guided tour is a pivotal tool for tourists to know about a place. However, the current guided tour might not be able to achieve this goal due to many reasons, such as, time limitation and commercial-oriented. Locals who wish to introduce their place to tourists are believed to provide more insights to enhance tourist experience. However, there is no proper guidelines, especially for these amateur local guides, to conduct a more systematic guided tour to engage tourists to their place.

## **3. Research Questions**

- What are the elements that should be integrated into a local guided tour?
- How these elements may assist in enhancing tourist experience?

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

To provide guideline to guided tour practitioner, especially locals who wish to engage tourists to their place and enhance tourists' sense of place towards the place they have visited.

## **5. Research Methods**

This research was conducted at the UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) of Malaysia in Melaka. Melaka is located next to the Straits of Malacca, the Southern region of the Peninsula Malaysia, Melaka City is 148m southeast of Malaysia's capital Kuala Lumpur. Together with George Town. Melaka City was declared UNESCO WHS on 7 July 2008. This study was conducted qualitatively and exploratory in order to gain insights on locals' and tourists' prospects and experiences in references to this case. Exploratory research is fitting for reveal remarkable definitions that participants have in their memories (Babbie, 1998), and is especially useful for reviewing new sectors where little is recognized being phenomenon under study (Sekaran, 2003).

The in-depth interviews and participant observations have run in Melaka City between April 2018 and April 2019. Theoretical sampling was engaged in this research. Theoretical sampling is a purposive sampling practice that authorizes the option of information-rich and vital sources that provide updated empirical components (Patton, 2002). A total of 10 tourists and local guides have interviewed, and seven guided tours have participated for observation.

Questions were asked in a manner to encourage respondents to describe their experiences during other guided tours from different locations. Also, additional questions regarding 'affective components' such as, "What do you feel/think when you know/see this happen?"; and 'behavioural components' such as, "What is your response?", "What have you done to change this?". Then, they had been encouraged to share their experience on how to engage participants from different demographic backgrounds.

The interview questions to tourist included the 'cognitive components' such as, "What have you learned from the guided tour?", "Do you think this guided tour is informative? If yes, please elaborate on it. Or, if no, can you please give us an example that you think is informative?". This is to encourage the interviewees to compare their current experience with the previous experience that they encountered in

some other places. The interviewees also have been asked, “Do you think this information is important? Why is it or why it is not (important)?” this is to invite them to illustrate the reason they think the information is vital for their experience. Later, they were asked about their feelings, the ‘affective components’ about the place, “What do you feel before you join the tour?” and, “What do you feel after the guided tour?” The respondents were invited to explain the different modes of their feelings. If there are differences, the respondents were asked to elaborate on the differences. If there is no difference, the respondents were asked to give reason, perhaps their experience in other places. Regarding the ‘behavioural components’, this parts were based on the observations during the visits, such as their actions and reactions throughout the journey.

Ten documents, which include three interview transcripts, and seven guided tour observations, had been used for content analysis. The documents were read and re-read to get a clearer idea about the overall picture of the current practice of guided tours and for an in-depth understanding of the sense of place related themes.

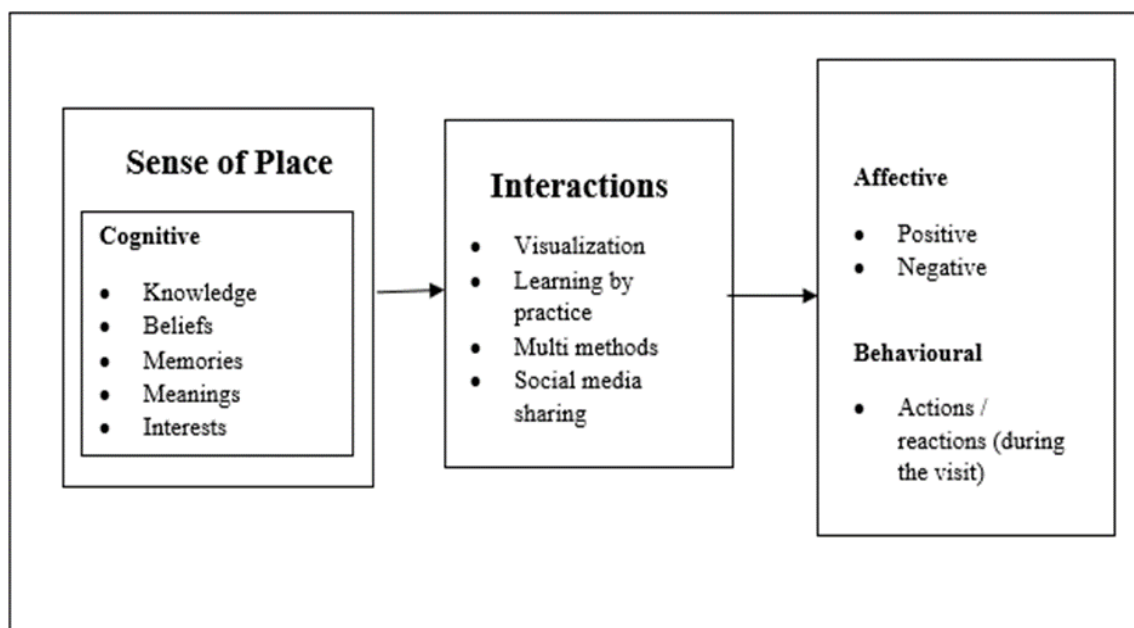
## 6. Findings

Firstly, the sense of place related concepts was taken from the documents using open coding. A total of 40 concepts have emerged from open coding. Later, these 40 concepts were being categorized under twelve subthemes using axial coding, and lastly, these twelve subthemes were categorized under four main themes using selective coding, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 01.** A sense of place model to enhance guided tour experience in Melaka

<b>Open coding: Concepts from interview transcripts and participant observations (guided tour)</b>	<b>Axial coding: Subthemes</b>	<b>Selective coding: Themes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- History: Cheng Ho</li> <li>- Stories/legend: Hang Li-Po, Hang Tuah, Hang Jebat, etc.</li> <li>- Sultanate Period, Portuguese period, Dutch, British.</li> <li>✓ The differences between these periods.</li> </ul>	Knowledge	Cognitive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A harmonious place</li> <li>- Regretful towards a place</li> </ul>	Beliefs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nostalgia – ambient (for example, what they did during their childhood time, although in different space and time)</li> <li>- Food culture</li> <li>- Traditional/childhood games</li> </ul>	Memories	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meaningful lessons learnt</li> <li>- Meaningful time spent with family/friends</li> </ul>	Meanings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interest towards old buildings, ambiance, cultures.</li> <li>- Interest in history</li> </ul>	Interest	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interesting</li> <li>- Excited</li> <li>- Tired but happy</li> </ul>	Positive	

- Satisfied - Happy get to know new friends		
- Bored (especially for kids) - Tired (for senior citizens) - Not interested	Negative	
- Talk and share with friends/family - Ask questions (to guide) - Observe others - Show curiosity - Do nothing, just follow and walk	Actions / reactions (during the visit)	Behavioural
- Need a lot of imagination - Perhaps more pictures/ visual - Create a place which is imitate the previous time (such as Malacca Stories Hall) - VR virtual tour - Create the ambiance (five senses, including smell, sound/music)	Visualization	Interactions
- Involvement → involve to do handicraft, dancing, performance, games and others. - Involve them in these traditional games and food - Interactions Q & A	Learning by practicing	
- Conference - Music concert - In-door guided tour (such as, projector showing, smelling/temperature/audio) - QR Code	Multi methods	
- Create recall tool ✓ More interactive tools are needed (e.g. Facebook anniversary's function?) - Encourage/motivate them to share their experience	Social media sharing	



**Figure 01.** Sense of place model to enhance guided tour experience in Melaka

A sense of place, which consists of cognitive, affective, and behavioural components, might enhance tourists' experience through different types of 'interactions.' Cognitive components, which include 'knowledge, beliefs, memories, meanings, and interests,' are fundamental to a guided tour. And, most of the guided tours emphasize on these components. However, if only cognitive components has been focused on a guided tour, the visitors will not be enjoying the tour. The 'interactions,' which include 'visualization, learning by practice, multi methods, and social media sharing,' are pivotal throughout the process. A guided tour should use different 'strategies' to engage visitors. Through these different interactions, the visitors' 'affective components' will be affected, and the interactions will also lead to the 'behavioural components'. The affective components, which include 'positive and negative feelings,' and the behavioural components which consist of 'actions/reactions during the visit,' are something that can be observe, as shown in Figure 01. For those who had more interactions, they had more positive emotions towards the place and vice versa.

## 7. Conclusion

The cognitive components, which consist of 'knowledge, beliefs, memories, meanings, and interests'; the interactions, which include 'visualization, learning by practice, multi methods, and social media sharing'; the affective components, which composed by 'positive and negative'; and the behavioural components which consist of 'actions / reactions during the visit', are themes and subthemes that are vital and should be integrated into a local guided tour. The elements under these different themes and subthemes may be used to enhance the tourist experience towards a place.

From an academic prospect, this research enhances the sense of place model through identifying the elements and integrating the 'interactions' components into it. From a practical perspective, the concepts of these interactions able to be implemented practically. For example, the guides could have more pictures to show how the place looks like in previous times as some of the buildings have been destroyed or renovated. Also, the pictures can be presented on postcards, puzzles, and other items as souvenirs to create stronger impressions in tourists' minds. Moreover, the guides could prepare some pictures or videos to show in café or museums using projectors or TVs. Apart from that, a guided tour may have an audio presentation about the dialect people used to talk in previous times or play some local traditional music to create the ambiance of a previous time. It could enhance the imagination of tourists to feel like they are walking in the same street, living in the same moment.

For some facilities such as the Malacca Stories Hall, although the 'hardware' is there, the 'software' or 'interaction' parts are still missing. For example, sea breeze feelings and smell of ocean can be integrated around the scene of 'pier', when telling about the story of migrants from china. This could assist the tourist to imagine that they are at the pier, looking at the arrival of these immigrants; voice of people in market or even the voice of cutting hair could be played in the session of barber shop, to help the visitors to immerse themselves into the shop. Moreover, the stories hall could integrate some 3D virtualization, such as showing how blacksmiths, 'kuli' (labour) work; or showing the view of Jonker Street during certain periods (1950s, 1970s and more) in the stories hall.

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