Using Photo Elicitation in Identifying Tourist Motivational Attributes for Visiting Taman Negara, Malaysia

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Abstract: This paper investigates motivational attributes of visiting Taman Negara in Malaysia using photo elicitation approach. Photo elicitation is based on the use of photography as a means with which to explore tourist's views and perspectives of the subject understudy. Understanding photos involves three sets of questions, focused at content (what), purpose of creation (who, when, how) and interpretation (why). The paper argues that photo elicitation approach could produce a different kind of information needed for understanding tourist behaviour or attitude for visiting Taman Negara. The photographs provide the stimulus and the motivation for the photographer (in this case respondents) to explain the outcome and identify what and why they took the photographs, a view which could be misinterpreted by analyzing the images alone. Photo-elicitation is suitable for overcomes many issues associated with traditional methods (such as questionnaires), thus able to generates a wealth of information. Overall the photo-elicitation exercise demonstrated that although there were five (5) separate groups of respondent's, the categories in the groups had very similar themes such as natural environment (such as forest, river, aboriginal people-the Batek Clan) as well as a place for preserving habitat of wild animals. The findings presents practical considerations and concludes that photo elicitation enlarges the possibilities of evokes information, feelings, and memories and consequently could be used to understand what really motivate tourists to come and visit at Taman Negara.
Key words: Photo Elicitation; Motivational Attributes; Tourist; Taman Negara Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Photo elicitation is established on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview. The difference between interviews using images and text, and interviews using words alone lies in the ways

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we respond to these two forms of symbolic representation. This has a physical basis; the parts of the brain that process visual information are evolutionarily older than the parts that process verbal information. Thus images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness that do words; exchanges based on words alone utilize less of the brain's capacity than do exchanges in which the brain is processing images as well as words. These may be some of the reasons the Photo elicitation interview seems like not simply an interview process that elicits more information, but rather one that evokes a different kind of information. Most elicitation studies use photographs, but there is no reason studies cannot be done with paintings, cartoons, public displays such as graffiti or advertising billboards or virtually any visual image. But at this point nearly all elicitation research has been based on photographs and that shall be the focus of the study.

Photo elicitation was first named in a paper published by the photographer and researcher John Collier (1957). Collier proposed photo interviewing as the solution to a practical problem; research teams were having difficulty agreeing on categories of the quality of housing in the research area. Collier's photographic survey made it possible for researchers to agree on their previously taken-for-granted categories. The technique was put to use in research when the Cornell team used Photo elicitation to examine how families adapted to residence among ethnically different people, and to new forms of work in urban factories. The overriding question was the environmental basis of psychological stress. The researchers had found these themes difficult to explore in surveys or in-depth interviews and decided to try a new interview technique using photographic images of old and new worlds inhabited by the subjects. What was particularly useful about this was that the researchers did Photo elicitation interviews as well as non-photographic interviews with the same families to see how each method worked. The researchers felt that the photos sharpened the informants' memory and reduced the areas of misunderstanding. Collier concluded; the characteristics of the two methods of interviewing can be simply stated. The material obtained with photographs was precise and at times even encyclopedic; the control interviews were less structured, rambling, and freer in association. Statements in the photo interviews were in direct response to the graphic probes and different in character as the content of the pictures differed, whereas the character of the control interviews seemed to be governed by the mood of the informants. Further, Collier noted "the pictures elicited longer and more comprehensive interviews but at the same time helped subjects overcome the fatigue and repetition of conventional interviews". Collier revealed that photo interviewing involved "…a more subtle function of graphic imagery. This was its compelling effect upon the informant, its ability to prod latent memory, to stimulate and release emotional statements about the informant's life…". The report of this experiment was published in 1957 in the *American Anthropologist*. Collier's text on visual anthropology, which described this and further experiments with photo interviewing, was published ten years later (Collier, 1967) and became the standard introduction to visual anthropology and sociology, published in expanded form two decades later (Collier and Collier, 1986). In later years Collier continued to make the case for photo elicitation, for example in his contribution to the inaugural issue of the journal *Visual Anthropology* (Collier, 1987). Accordingly, it was observed that over the last century, the use of photographs for social science purposes has evaporated. It has swung from being popular to being ignored but in the past decade, there has been a considerable renewal of interest (Hurworth and Sweeney 1995, Banks 1995, 2001, Emmison et al. 2001, Rose 2001). Even so, in comparison with other data collection methods, only a relatively small amount has been written concerning the use of the visual medium for research, and even less about how photographs can be integrated into the interviewing process. This study therefore, tries to explore and investigates motivational attributes of Taman Negara, Malaysia tourists using photo elicitation approach.

APPROACHES TO PHOTO ELICITATION

Understanding photos concerns three sets of questions which are; focused at content (what), purpose of creation (who, when, how) and interpretation (why). The photographs provide the stimulus and the

motivation for the photographer to explain the photographs and identify what and why they took the photographs, a view which could be misinterpreted by analysing the images alone. Photo elicitation is suitable for both respondents and adults, overcomes many issues associated with traditional methods (such as questionnaires), and generates a wealth of information. Visual research methods have theoretically played a minor role in social research, because sociological research has been a "word-based" discipline, and the capacity of images to reveal "the truth" has been questioned (Harper, 2002). Recently, however, visual research has become a common technique because of its user-friendly and relatively inexpensive technology (e.g., disposable camera). In addition, by using photographs and playing with content (what is in the photo) and process (how photos were presented), researchers can probe participants to discuss social relationships.

The "photographs can be communication bridges between strangers that can become pathways into unfamiliar, unforeseen environments and subjects" (Collier and Collier, 1986). Although photographs may elicit a narrative directly related to the images, they can be such a powerful stimulus for reflection that they will result in the description of experiences which are not directly related to that photograph (Kaplan and Lewis, 2005). In addition, photo-elicitation can also motivate participants to provide an entire perspective of action, explaining and creating 'back-story' based on their views and experiences as stimulated by the photograph (Heisley and Levy, 1991). Photo elicitation has three main approaches; there are ***auto driving, reflexive photography and photo voice***. The three variations are all similar in their technique with photos used as stimulus to gather a deep understanding of the interviewee. *Autodriving* involves the use of photos taken by the interviewees themselves, with the interviewee then 'driving' the interview discussing the photos they have taken and/or are viewing. Similar to autodriving, *reflexive photography* (Parker, 2005) involves photographs taken by interviewees who then submit themselves to a reflexive interview in which they react to and reflect upon the deeper meanings of their own created photographs. *Photo Voice* or *Photo Novella* (Frohmann, 2005), involves interviewees creating 'picture stories' taking photographs that portray everyday existence and then discussing their significance and meaning with an interviewer. So far, the use of photo-elicitation techniques has overall provided a positive appearance as a highly effective, useful and reliable method for use in research. This is confirmed by (Heisley and Levy, 1991) as "*autodriving* provides a type of member check to increase the credibility of the researcher's interpretation" and "makes it possible for people to communicate about themselves more fully and more subtly and, perhaps, to represent themselves more fairly". Zambon (2005) adds that "it (photo elicitation) removes the problem of researcher bias, as it is the participants who take the images used in the interviews". Photo elicitation contributes to gathering richer data about similar topics and offers a closer look at what and whom participants consider important (Harper, 2002). It was noted that this approach has also been used across other disciplines and topic areas in order to:

- understand behaviours (Entin, 1979; Wessels, 1985)

- enhance memory retrieval (Aschermann et al., 1998)

- work with young children or school students (Diamond, 1996; Weiniger, 1998; Foster et al., 1999; Salmon 2001)

- undertake programme evaluations (Brown et al., 1980; Tucker and Dempsey, 1991; Buchanan, 1998)

- provide a tool for nursing, medical and gerontological research (Hagedorn, 1996; Higgins and Highley, 1986; Magilvy et al., 1992)

- teach tertiary students (Killion, 2001; Smith and Woodward, 1999)

- talk about more difficult, abstract concepts (Curry and Strauss, 1994; Bender et al., 2001)

- determine ethnic identification (Gold, 1986)

THE METHOD

Personalized auto driving photo elicitation method with a group of adult was chosen for the study. The aim of this activity was to gain an insight into the things that selected respondents like and are attracted to, particularly factors that actually motivate tourists to visit Taman Negara, Malaysia. This information could be transferred into the possibly interaction design application to make it better suited, usable and appealing for the tourists. The respondents of the study comprised of 40 adult (twenty male and another twenty were female) aged between 25 to 45 years old. The respondents were recruited on a voluntary basis after an explanation of the research study. They were told that they would each be provided with a disposable camera and that they would be required to take five (5) photographs of a specific attributes of Taman Negara, Malaysia that motivate them to visit over the period of a week.

Taman Negara was chosen for this study due to the fact that they are the most popular rain forest in Malaysia thus the possibility to recognize by the respondents is considered high. All 40 respondents completed the task and returned the cameras on time. Nevertheless, it was noted that five (5) of them decided not to continue with the task. After the photographs had been developed, the respondents were split into seven (7) groups and received their photographs back. The respondents then worked in these groups to sort the photographs into categories of their choosing and to discuss their approach and the photographs that were taken. Care was taken to make sure that the categorization was that of the respondent's and not influenced by the researcher. The group activity used the photographs that the respondents had taken independently, to collaboratively work together to analyze, arrange, and sort the images into categories of their choosing. The respondents felt surprisingly willing to discuss the photographs while the researcher noted their comments. The respondents seemed to view the categorization as the "activity" and felt no pressure to provide background information about the images. The respondents were told to look at all the photographs within their group, and arrange them into categories on large sheets of paper and were asked to name these categories together. They were also told that they could disregard any photographs that they did not want to categories either because they regretted taking them or could not tell what the photograph was about. They were then asked to pick as a group their favourite images from each category and give reasons for the choices they made. Each of the groups worked with a researcher, who made notes and guided when necessary. The respondents started by looking through their own photographs. They were then given large sheets of paper, glue and pens to arrange and organise the photographs onto the sheets. After completing this activity they were then asked to make a second review of the categorised photographs to ensure that their categories adequately reflected group member wishes and to modify their categorizations if necessary.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The initial review of the photographs identified that some of the respondents had obviously had technical difficulties with the use of disposable cameras. Some packs contained few images as the photographs could not be processed and some photographs were dark and unclear as the flash had not been used indoors. However many photographs were still usable and those packs with little photographs balanced out with those which were full. The group categorization activity worked well, with all respondents engaging with the process and readily discussing what their own photographs represented and what they thought that the photographs of others represented. Considerable care was taken not to lead the respondent's activities or discussion at this stage. The respondents readily thought up their own categories with considerable creativity and imagination.

The second review allowed the respondents to check that they all agreed with the categories, and resulted in some photographs being reassigned and some not included. Time constraints meant that the activity was very focused, with the researchers spurring the respondents on and keeping the exercise on track. An hour was insufficient for this exercise, with the final activity of respondents marking their

favourite images rushed and not completed fully. The observations of the respondents categorizing the images identified that they worked well together. There was appropriate turn taking in dialogue and sharing in the practical activity. The respondents worked well together and all engaged in the activities and discussion. Both groups seemed to naturally decide the categories together and compiled the photographs efficiently. Each individual provided arguments and reasoning when adding a photograph to the category, and respondent's individual categorizations were largely accepted by the other members of the group. The respondents continued to have fun throughout the activity, writing funny comments and laughing at certain photographs, demonstrating their enjoyment in the activity. They also provided emotional and personal information about what the photographs meant to them, with both groups annotating the images without being prompted to do so. The categories created by the groups are as follows:

- Group 1 (mixed): forest, river, aboriginal people, wild animals, signage;

- Group 2 (all male): forest, river, aboriginal people, wild birds, long boat;

- Group 3 (all female): aboriginal people, parking facilities, wild animals, river, long boat;

- Group 4 (mixed); jetty, eating place, Taman Negara entrance, forest, river;

- Group 5 (mixed); parking facilities, wild animals, river, forest, aboriginal people.

The final review of the photographs identified a dominance of the following images:
- river (5) and long boat (2);
- forest (4);
- aboriginal people (4);
- wild animals (4) and wild birds (1);

Overall the photo-elicitation exercise demonstrated that although there were five separate groups of respondents's, the categories in all groups had very similar themes such as river (which include long boat), forest, aboriginal people as well as wild animals which also include wild birds.

DISCUSSION

Photo elicitation typically involves interviews where participants talk about the photographs being shown and share their 'stories' potentially providing more information than that of a normal question and answer interview. Here, an alternative approach was taken, where the analysis of the photographs did not rely on a one to one interview method to elicit information but instead used a practical, group exercise to categories the photographs and provide discussion on their contents. This method was particular well suited to working with respondents and provided an engaging, fun, non-intrusive activity. Personalized auto driving Photo elicitation allowed the respondents to take photographs in a care free, spontaneous way. It supports the aim of capturing images of anything that participants find interesting or that catches their attention and is an ideal input to Photo elicitation as it permits and indeed requires un-posed, unarranged and unplanned photographs to be truly effective. Personalized auto driving Photo elicitation fitted in well with respondent's usage of cameras as fun spontaneous toy items and allowed a care free, no rules approach to be applied to the photography exercise, thus supporting individual, fun activity. This approach and the time frame seem particularly apt for respondents, keeping the activity fun and engaging as well as quick and non-disruptive. The group approach taken was found to be highly effective and shows the benefits of groupings based on friendship for this type of practical and social activity. The group method kept the research fun and participatory, it reduced the level of anxiety of the respondents, allowing them to work within familiar groups so that they felt comfortable, worked efficiently, and had

fun whilst producing insight into their lives. Through allowing the five groups to sort their photographs into their own categories this allowed common themes between the five separate group's categories to be found, achieving a deeper understanding of the target audience. The categories did show similarities and through this method those themes were able to be translated into design requirements targeted as the things which 25-45 year olds are drawn too. Within the group activity there were some unexpected insights into the personal emotions of the respondents as they, without direction, annotated their photographs, providing more information on their interests. This adapted methodology was particularly successful with the respondents as they found the photography exercises enjoyable, took the research seriously throughout and many useful photographs and categories resulted. This participatory method overcomes some of the challenges associated with gaining respondents' views and perspectives. It ensures that the respondent's feels empowered and that they are leading the activity, thus reducing the power imbalance and focusing the attention onto the photographs rather than the respondent themselves. The photographs help stimulate and focus discussion, with the hands on activities promoting participation.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATION

Photo elicitation offers Taman Negara Management an important insight into the everyday existence of tourists. Concentrating in river maintenance (which include the operating and administration of long boat), forest, aboriginal people as well as wild animals which also include wild birds may increase tourist traffic to the Taman Negara, Malaysia. Unlike many research methods, Photo elicitation works for rather mysterious reasons. We consider Photo elicitation useful in studies that are empirical and rather conventional. Photo elicitation may add validity and reliability to a word-based survey. But at the other extreme we believe Photo elicitation mines deeper shafts into a different part of human consciousness than do words-alone interviews. It is partly due to how remembering is enlarged by photographs and partly due to the particular quality of the photograph itself. Photographs appear to capture the impossible: a person gone; an event past. That extraordinary sense of seeming to retrieve something that has disappeared belongs alone to the photograph, and it leads to deep and interesting talk. Throughout this paper we have maintained an impartial stance. The truth is that in Photo elicitation we have found a method in which we have taken a deep pleasure. We think this is partly due to our interest in photographs. We want to enter the time machine promised by the image, knowing, of course, that we cannot. Because we feel this way about photographs, it is natural that we want to share them with others. Our enthusiasm for Photo elicitation also comes from the collaboration it inspires. When two or more people discuss the meaning of photographs they try to figure out something together. This is, we believe, an ideal model for research. Nevertheless, photo elicitation does not always adequately represent an object in its natural context. For instance, in this study, photo elicitation may have to be imperfect to the atmosphere such as sound and services. More research needs to be carrying out specifically those concentrate at reflexive photography and photo voice.

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