

EXPLORING HOW WALKING TOUR INTERPRETATION INFLUENCES GENERATION Z'S ATTITUDES TOWARD HERITAGE CONSERVATION

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ABSTRACT

The preservation of cultural heritage plays a crucial role in passing on non-renewable resources to future generations, as well as maintaining national identity, social cohesion, and cultural values. In addition to protecting historical knowledge from the impacts of modernization and globalization, the conservation of cultural heritage also contributes to community development and the local economy. This research explores how heritage tourism interpretation affects Generation Z tourists' attitudes towards the preservation of cultural heritage sites. The study employs several key concepts in the literature review, including sustainable tourism, heritage tourism interpretation, and tourists' experiences and attitudes towards cultural heritage preservation. This research uses a qualitative approach to understand how heritage tourism interpretation influences Generation Z tourists' attitudes towards the preservation of cultural heritage sites. The methods used include: Research Sample – Generation Z tourists who have participated in heritage tourism interpretation were selected through purposive sampling (23 people). Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews (3 people) and open-ended questionnaires (20 people), allowing for the exploration of tourists' experiences and perceptions. Next, the data were analyzed using thematic text analysis. The research results show that, at the "Initial knowledge," many participants experienced significant changes in their appreciation of historical value after receiving interpretations from the tour guide. In the category of "Engagement and Emotional Attachment," participants in walking tours of historical sites varied significantly, ranging from deep attachment to more neutral interest. Meanwhile, in the category of "Influence of interpretation on attitudes," heritage tourism interpretation had diverse effects on the attitudes of tour participants. Some participants experienced significant attitude changes, including a desire to participate in preservation and develop a positive attitude towards conservation.

Keywords: Conservation of Cultural Reserve; Generation Z; Tourism Heritage; Tourism Interpretation; Sustainable Tourism;

INTRODUCTION

The preservation of cultural heritage is crucial for transferring invaluable, non-renewable resources to future generations. As noted by Holtorf (2020), cultural heritage is a dynamic process that shapes the future, with its preservation being essential for safeguarding priceless assets for those who come after us. This process is especially significant as it conveys knowledge that may be marginalized by modernization and globalization (Syah et al., 2017), highlighting the multifaceted value of cultural heritage.

Beyond the intrinsic value of preserving historical artifacts, cultural heritage conservation reinforces national identity, enhances social cohesion, creates employment opportunities, and upholds cultural and religious values (Chirikure, 2013). This broader impact highlights the need for a modern paradigm in heritage site management, one that emphasizes intangible elements and strikes a balance between conservation and development (Aaroz, 2011).

However, the successful preservation of cultural heritage cannot be achieved without active community involvement. Engaging the community in conservation efforts has proven to significantly contribute to community development and revitalization (Elsorady, 2012). This communal aspect is particularly evident in the tourism sector, where interpretive experiences can shape tourists' attitudes and behaviors towards environmental and cultural heritage preservation.

Research indicates that interpretive efforts in tourism can foster sustainable behaviors by increasing visitor knowledge and awareness, enhancing their experiences, and promoting environmentally friendly attitudes and actions (Tubb, 2003; Moscardo, 1996; Indrianty & Agoes, 2022). Nevertheless, the impact of these interpretations can be context-specific, and their universal efficacy has not been conclusively established (Kim et al., 2011). This variability highlights the importance of targeted studies to better understand these dynamics.

Among these target groups, one of the most important ones, on the demand side, includes Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012. This generation has become the largest globally, holding 32% of the world's population as of today (Popşa, 2024). Despite their tender age and meager incomes, Generation Z has now become a key interest of the tourism industry, expected to account for 40% of consumers by 2020 (Wein, 2019). Understanding the motivations and behaviors of Generation Z is crucial for shaping future engagement with cultural heritage (Agoes & Safari, 2024), particularly as their influence continues to grow. As the largest group of tourists today, Generation Z's attitudes and behaviors are especially relevant to the future of cultural heritage preservation.

Generation Z exhibits unique interactions with heritage tourism interpretation. They are truly digital natives, famous for their unique consumption patterns, especially in terms of how they approach and interact with cultural

heritage destinations. They have a keen interest in immersive and learning journeys, clearly informed by their digital native status and engagement with social media platforms. Their motivations for visiting cultural heritage sites are diverse yet highly personalized, and their tourist behaviors are influenced by innovative experiences and cognitive perceptions of destinations (Liu et al., 2022).

Additionally, the overall tourism experiences of Generation Z are predetermined by global trends, characteristics of destinations, and individual factors altogether, which shape their mindsets concerning heritage tourism interpretation (Robinson & Schänzel, 2019). They are interested in learning, recreational, and emotive experiences related to their heritage and generally select their travel destinations based on the uniqueness of such experiences offered at those places (Poria et al., 2004). The generation also shows some demurring attitude toward sustainable tourism (Haddouche & Salomone, 2018).

These considerations will, therefore, provide research with a robust framework within which to investigate the relationship between heritage tourism interpretation and attitudes towards cultural heritage conservation. In such a tour, the interpretation would revolve around historical sites in Bandung rather than the common tourist attractions. The tour participants view the city as it is, interact with its buildings and streets, thereby having a better view of the heritage of Bandung. This approach would give much deeper insights into how the interpretation of heritage tourism is affecting Generation Z's attitudes toward preserving cultural heritage for future conservation purposes.

It is in this context that the present study attempts to investigate how heritage tourism interpretation influences the attitudes of Generation Z tourists toward the preservation of cultural heritage buildings. By focusing on this demographic, the study seeks to provide deeper insights into the role of interpretation in supporting future cultural heritage preservation efforts, thus bridging the gap between conservation practices and community engagement.

Identification of problems in this study includes:

1. Initial Knowledge:
How far is the level of knowledge of Generation Z tourists about cultural heritage conveyed through the interpretation of heritage tourism, and how does this affect their attitude towards conservation?
2. Engagement and Emotional Attachment:
To what extent can interpretation of heritage tourism evoke Generation Z tourists' emotional engagement and attachment to the cultural heritage buildings they visit, and how does it affect their attitudes towards conservation?
3. Influence of Interpretation on Attitudes:

How does the interpretation of heritage tourism affect the attitude of Generation Z tourists towards the preservation of cultural heritage buildings, either directly or indirectly?

4. Challenges in the Application of Interpretation:

What are the challenges faced in implementing effective interpretation of heritage tourism in improving the attitude of Generation Z tourists towards cultural heritage?

The research gap identified in the paper relates to a lack of understanding of how heritage tourism interpretation specifically influences the attitudes and behaviors of Generation Z tourists for the preservation of cultural heritage. While there is existing literature on heritage tourism and its impacts, limited studies have been conducted concerning specific interactions and responses within this new generational cohort, including digital native status and distinctive patterns of consumption. The authors have also pointed out certain requirements regarding the development of specific interpretative strategies that take account of visitors' different degrees of prior knowledge, not been as strongly considered in prior studies. This lacuna represents an opportunity to explore in more detail how effective interpretation might heal the gap between practice in the care of cultural heritage and the engagement of young people.

Therefore, the identification of these problems might assist in a better understanding of what determines Generation Z tourists' attitudes towards preserving cultural heritage buildings. Moreover, the results of this study can offer valuable insights for enhancing heritage tourism interpretation practices in the future.

METHODOLOGY

The objective of this research is to explore how walking tour interpretation influences Generation Z tourists' attitudes toward the preservation of cultural heritage buildings. Specifically, the research seeks to:

1. Assess participants' initial knowledge of heritage conveyed through interpretative experiences and its relation to conservation awareness.
2. Examine how interpretation evokes emotional attachment and engagement with heritage sites among Generation Z tourists.
3. Investigate the direct and indirect influence of interpretative elements on conservation-oriented attitudes and behaviors.
4. Identify practical challenges in implementing effective interpretation within heritage tourism settings.

This qualitative study focuses on the participants of walking tour groups in heritage areas. The walking tours are different in route but centered on historical sites in

Bandung. For example, in the Alun-alun Bandung (city square) area, tourists can visit significant places such as the Resident House, Dewi Sartika's school,

Kautamaan Istri, and Banceuy prison cell, where Soekarno was once held. Another route in the Kosambi area involves Cikudapateuh train station, Centeh Elementary School, the camp interniran complex, Resko school uniform seller, Cari Rasa bread maker, and Rumentang Siang heritage performance building. The research sample will involve Generation Z tourists. A sample of about 20 Generation Z tourists will be involved in this research by surveying them using a structured questionnaire with 20 open-ended questions.

Moreover, 3 people will be interviewed in-depth. The purpose of this dual approach is to achieve a wide-ranging variation in experience and opinion related to the issue of cultural heritage preservation. Demographic variables, such as age, sex, and education, will be duly considered to ensure balanced representation both in interviews and in questionnaire responses.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Following the walking tour engagement, by direct participation and observation, along with an analysis of the questionnaire responses and interviews carried out with some of the participants, we can arrive at the following conclusions:

A. "Initial Knowledge":

Respondents of the open-end questions questionnaire can be categorized into several groups based on their level of knowledge before participating in the tour. Here are the identifiable groups:

The first group, characterized by a lack of knowledge or minimal knowledge, includes individuals such as Tita, aged 30, who admitted to a superficial awareness of historical structures, stating, "I didn't know what that building was, I just had a fleeting knowledge and didn't care about the relics." Similarly, Hauzan, 28, expressed ignorance of the historical value of sites like Borobudur, indicating a gap in understanding the significance of cultural sites.

The second group possesses a general but shallow knowledge. For instance, Muzhaffar Izzaturrahman, 16, revealed a disinterest stemming from infrequent visits to historical places: "I don't know or care because I rarely visit historical sites." Winne Putri Alena, also 16, acknowledged a lack of expertise in heritage site preservation before site visits, highlighting a common trend of limited pre-visit knowledge among youths.

The third group is aware but indifferent. Aurelia Hasna, 16, felt that the places visited did not have an intriguing history, while Kaella Silmi Azkya, also 16, showed apathy towards heritage sites before receiving interpretative explanations.

This detachment underscores the need for engaging educational approaches to foster a deeper appreciation for heritage among the younger generation.

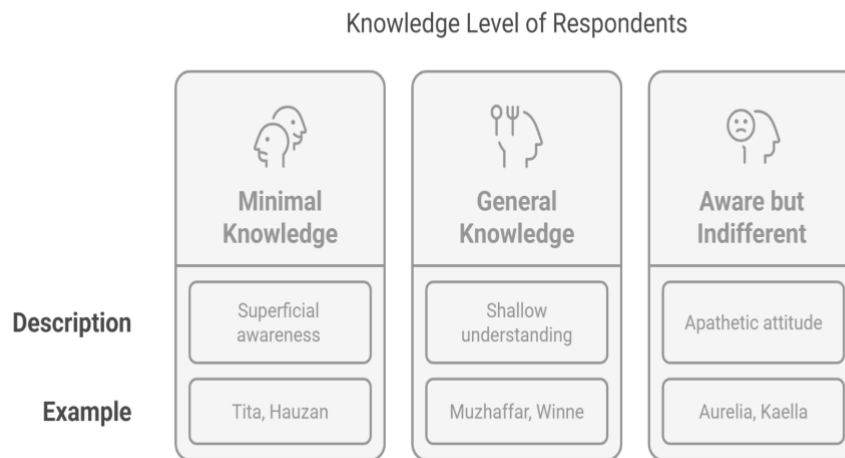


Figure 1. Knowledge Level of Respondents

Source: Researcher (2025)

These groups demonstrate the spectrum of respondent knowledge levels regarding cultural heritage and history before participating in preservation-related activities. The findings suggest a critical need for targeted educational interventions to enhance awareness and care for cultural legacies. It also highlights the diversity in respondents' knowledge levels before experiencing heritage tours. Understanding these differences can help tailor tour guide interpretations and educational efforts to better meet the varied informational needs and interests of visitors, thereby enhancing their overall experience and appreciation of cultural heritage sites. Through in-depth interviews with three young adults who participated in guided walking tours, we explored how prior awareness shapes perceptions and experiences of heritage sites.

Our findings revealed a spectrum of initial knowledge among participants. Tegar, 21, exemplified a lack of specific prior knowledge: "I didn't know about these places before. Like Jaya Plaza, Centeh, Cikudapateuh... I struggled to remember their names at first." This contrasted with Putri, 24, who possessed some familiarity: "I knew about Borobudur and Prambanan, but the places on the walking tour? I'd only seen brief mentions on social media."

The guided tours proved instrumental in addressing these knowledge gaps. Sofie, 24, described her experience: "Before, I just had this vague idea about Kosambi and Resko. But the tour guide's explanations opened my eyes to their historical value." This sentiment was echoed by Mohammad, who noted, "The storytelling made me understand why these places are important. It made me want to help preserve them."

The transformation from limited awareness to deeper appreciation was evident across all interviews. Putri reflected, "Getting these deeper insights into the history... it changed how I felt about these places. I felt more connected to them." This shift in perspective often led to increased interest in preservation efforts. As Sofie stated, "After learning so much, I realized these places are valuable. We need to protect them."

Our analysis suggests that the effectiveness of guided tours in enhancing engagement is closely tied to visitors' initial knowledge levels. For those with minimal prior awareness, the tours provided a foundation of understanding. For others with some familiarity, the experience deepened and contextualized their knowledge. Across the board, participants reported that the tours significantly enhanced their appreciation for local history and heritage preservation.

These findings highlight the crucial role of effective interpretation in heritage tourism. By tailoring their approach to visitors' varying levels of initial knowledge, tour guides can foster a more profound connection to historical sites. This, in turn, may promote a stronger commitment to heritage preservation among diverse audiences.

B. "Engagement and Emotional Attachment":

The analysis of participants' engagement and emotional attachment to historical sites revealed three distinct categories of responses. The first category, characterized by high interest and strong emotional involvement, was exemplified by participants who expressed profound appreciation and connection to the sites visited. For instance, Tita (30) exclaimed, "Amaze. Keren karena baru tau gedung itu ternyata dulu ya bioskop" [Amazing. Cool because I just learned that the building used to be a cinema], indicating a sense of wonder and newfound knowledge. Similarly, Nazwar (16) described their experience as "sangat terasa kembali ke jaman dahulu dan membuat saya terkesan dan lumayan menghilangkan penat yang ada" [it felt like going back to the old times and made me impressed, also somewhat relieving my fatigue], suggesting a deep emotional and sensory engagement with the historical atmosphere.



Figure 2. Engagement and Emotional Attachment to Historical Sites
Source: Researcher (2025)

The second category comprised participants who showed interest in the information provided but demonstrated less emotional involvement. This was evident in responses such as that of Muhammad Ramadeo (16), who simply stated, "Kami mengunjungi semua wisata yang menarik" [We visited all the interesting tourist spots], indicating a general interest without specific emotional attachment. The third category included participants who exhibited neutral or minimal interest, as exemplified by Ganendra Kenan Azka Lesmana (16), who remarked, "*(Interpretasi) sangat baik sehingga dapat dimengerti. Tidak ada (yang mengesankan)*" [(The interpretation) was very good so it could be understood. There was nothing (impressive)], suggesting comprehension without significant emotional engagement.

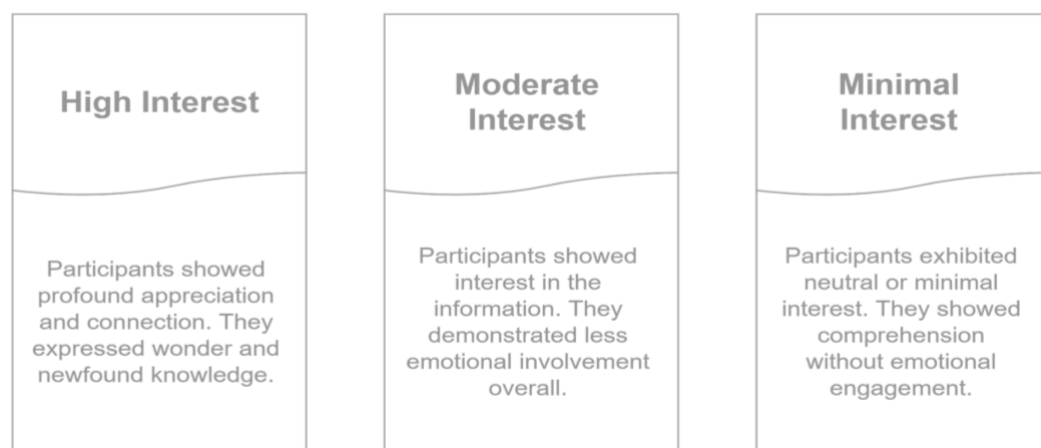


Figure 3. Respondents' Interpretation
Source: Researcher (2025)

These findings indicate a spectrum of engagement levels among participants, ranging from deeply emotional and transformative experiences to more passive

reception of information. The variations in responses highlight the complex nature of visitor engagement with historical sites and underscore the importance of tailored interpretation strategies to enhance visitor experiences across different engagement levels.

Our interview revealed nuanced responses to the historical site tours. These interviews with three young adults aged 21-24 uncovered a spectrum of emotional and cognitive engagement levels influenced by the tour's storytelling approach.

Mohammad Tegar (21) exemplified high engagement and emotional attachment, stating, "I liked the way history was presented through stories while visiting the sites." His experience led to a deeper personal connection, as evidenced by his reflection on the historical value: "These places had been fought for and inherited through generations." This response indicates a transformative experience, where the tour not only provided information but also fostered a sense of heritage and preservation.

Similarly, Putri (24) demonstrated strong engagement, initially attracted by the tour's "seru" (exciting) nature. Her emotional attachment deepened through the tour, as she explained, "Learning about the historical evolution of Kosambi and Resko added sentimental value to these sites for me, making me feel that they were worth preserving and protecting." This statement underscores the tour's effectiveness in creating meaningful connections between participants and historical sites.

Sofie (24) also showed significant engagement, driven by curiosity about the presentation of historical sites. Her emotional attachment was evident in her concern for preservation, expressing that it would be "sayang sekali" (a real pity) if the sites were modernized or lost. This sentiment reflects a newly formed emotional investment in the historical character of the sites.

These findings suggest that the walking tour format, with its emphasis on storytelling and interactive experiences, effectively enhanced both engagement and emotional attachment among participants. The transformation of unfamiliar or superficially known sites into meaningful places underscores the potential of such tours to foster a sense of responsibility and commitment to heritage preservation among young adults.

C. "Influence of Interpretation on Attitudes":

The analysis of the influence of interpretation on attitudes among participants revealed a spectrum of responses, categorized into three distinct groups based on the degree of attitudinal change. This qualitative study, drawing from interviews with individuals aged 16 to 30, provides insights into the effectiveness of interpretative strategies in heritage tourism.

The first category, characterized by significant positive influence, demonstrated substantial attitudinal shifts following interpretation. For instance, Tita (30) expressed a newfound desire for active participation, stating, "Jadi ingin ikut serta melestarikan dan juga ngasih tau ke orang-orang awam seperti saya kalau itu tuh dulu bangunan bersejarah" [Now I want to participate in preservation and also inform laypeople like myself that these are historical buildings]. Similarly, Winne Putri Alena (16) reflected a profound change in perspective: "ya, saya percaya sekarang bahwa sekecil apapun sejarahnya, sejarah itu tetap sejarah dan sejarah itu penting" [Yes, I now believe that no matter how small the history, it's still history and it's important].

The second category exhibited a moderate positive influence, with participants showing positive attitudinal changes, albeit less intensely than the first group. Fikri Zaidan (23) exemplified this, noting, "Tentunya lebih berwawasan yah karena yang tadinya kita tau itu cuma situs yang dilestarikan dan tertulis saja, namun ternyata bernilai sentimental" [Certainly more knowledgeable because what we initially knew as just preserved and documented sites turned out to have sentimental value].

The third category comprised participants who reported little to no influence from the interpretation. Ryu Nabil Ruzain (16) stated, "Tidak ada perubahan dalam pandangan Anda terhadap pentingnya melestarikan situs heritage" [There's no change in your view on the importance of preserving heritage sites], indicating minimal impact of the interpretative experience on their attitudes.

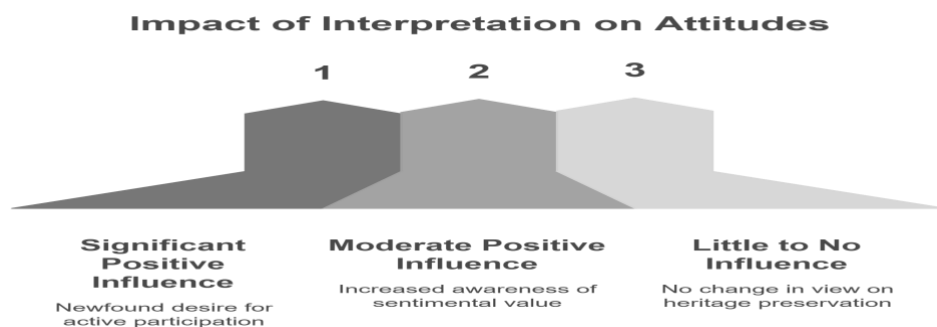


Figure 4. The Impact of Interpretation on Attitude

Source: Researcher (2025)

Notably, some participants expressed willingness to engage in preservation activities as a result of the interpretation. Hasfi Mutiara Insani (23) remarked, "Saya pikir besar kemungkinan saya ikut sertakan diri (dalam kegiatan pelestarian), karena kecintaan saya terhadap keberagaman serta sejarah dan budaya yang

heterogen mendorong saya" [I think there's a high possibility I'll participate (in preservation activities) because my love for diversity and heterogeneous history and culture motivates me].

These findings underscore the varying impacts of interpretative strategies on visitor attitudes towards heritage sites, suggesting the need for tailored approaches to enhance engagement and foster positive attitudes towards cultural preservation.

Interpretation's impact on visitor perception and preservation attitude.

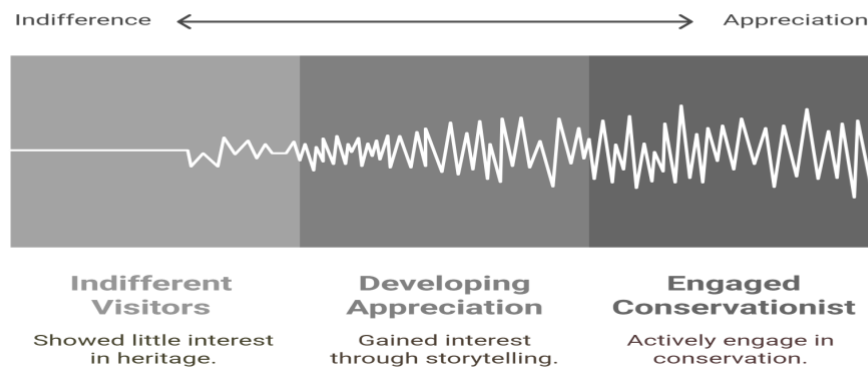


Figure 5. Interpretation's Impact on Visitor Perception and Preservation Attitude
Source: Researcher (2025)

Supported by the interviews, this research revealed that the impact of interpretation on attitudes towards historical sites is profound, as evidenced by the experiences of several respondents. This analysis explores how effective storytelling and detailed explanations during heritage tours can transform attitudes towards history and preservation.

Mohammad Tegar (21 years old) initially expressed a lack of interest in history, describing it as "boring" and uninspiring, a sentiment influenced by traditional, unengaging methods of presentation in educational settings. He noted, "History was dull and monotonous to me before; I didn't find it compelling." However, his perspective shifted dramatically following a walking tour that employed dynamic and engaging storytelling. Mohammad remarked, "The tour guide made history come alive with vivid stories, which made it exciting and relevant." This transformation in his view significantly increased his commitment to preserving historical sites, as he now perceived them as valuable and worthy of protection. He observed, "Understanding the stories behind the sites made me feel responsible for their preservation."

Putri (24 years old) experienced a similarly positive shift due to the depth and clarity of the tour guide's explanations. She stated, "The detailed historical context provided during the tour made me see the sites as more significant." The

tour helped her appreciate the historical value of sites such as Kosambi and Resko, beyond their superficial appearance. Putri's enhanced understanding led to a more favorable attitude towards preservation, as she expressed, "The narratives made me realize how important it is to preserve these sites, and I am now more concerned about their future."

Sofie (24 years old) also reported a significant impact of the tour's interpretation on her attitude. She found the detailed explanations particularly influential in reshaping her perception of historical sites. Sofie noted, "The tour clarified the historical evolution of places like Kosambi and Resko, making me appreciate their importance." This newfound appreciation fostered a stronger commitment to preservation, as Sofie conveyed, "I am now more worried about the potential loss of these sites' historical value and support preservation efforts more actively."

The experiences of Mohammad, Putri, and Sofie illustrate the substantial influence of interpretive methods on attitudes toward historical sites and preservation. Effective storytelling and detailed explanations provided during the tours played a crucial role in transforming their understanding and appreciation of these sites.

- **Impact of Interpretation:** All three respondents answered that their attitudes have changed due to the interesting and informative interpretation of historical sites. For Mohammad, this change from indifference to participation shows how effective dynamic storytelling can be in making history more accessible and relevant. Similarly, the experiences of Putri and Sofie show that detailed explanations contribute a lot to understanding and fostering appreciation. This is in agreement with the study by Costa and Carneiro (2020) that notes interpretation contributes greatly to a greater perception and appreciation of the cultural value of architectural heritage, hence leading to higher aesthetic value and better understanding of the building. In addition, this view is supported by Light (1995), who remarks, "tourists are more receptive to audio media at heritage destinations."
- **Attitudes Toward Preservation:** Each respondent developed a much more positive attitude toward the preservation of historical sites as a direct result of the interpretive methods used during the tours. Their increased understanding of the historical value of the sites brought with it a greater sense of responsibility and more active dedication to preservation. Another study has also claimed that heritage interpretation can contribute to sustainable development in terms of opportunities, threats, effectiveness, tourism planning, guide-interpreter roles, creativity, and visitor traffic management strategies (Nowacki, 2021). Moreover, effective interpretation methods that involve educational and engaging content can positively

influence visitors' satisfaction and attitudes toward the conservation of cultural heritage (Kim, Lee & Ann, 2011).

As we can see on these results, it becomes evident that interpretation plays a central role in shaping visitor perception and engagement. By integrating narrative techniques with emotional resonance, tour experiences become more impactful and offer interpretive depth that encourages reflection, connection, and sustained interest for the participants, beyond passive observation.

Thus, tourism management practices can greatly benefit from the strategic use of tour interpretation. This approach not only enhances visitor engagement through contextual storytelling but also serves as a functional tool to execute broader tourism strategies, particularly in the context of heritage tourism management. In that matter, interpretation becomes a sustaining mechanism for cultivating continued interest in cultural and architectural attractions, which in turn reinforces preservation efforts. By embedding interpretation into site-level tourism planning, managers can align operational goals with conservation priorities, leveraging narratives as both educational and advocacy instruments to safeguard heritage assets.

CONCLUSIONS

This thus emphasizes the role of heritage tour interpretive methodologies that played a vital part in shaping participants' attitudes to the enrichment of their knowledge and appreciation of historical places. This transition from apathy to active involvement illustrates the efficacy of interpretation in cultivating a more profound relationship with and commitment to cultural heritage. This research emphasizes the importance of tailor-made interpretative approaches to creating engagement and breeding positive attitudes toward cultural heritage conservation among Generation Z travelers. Moreover, the interpretation of cultural heritage plays a crucial role in motivating Generation Z tourists to become actively involved in the preservation of cultural heritage.

The findings have shown that many respondents attested to a positive shift in attitudes towards conservation from the engagement and informative interpretive experiences. For instance, a number of respondents expressed a newfound desire to participate in conservation activities, based on their realization of the historical value of the sites they had visited. This would suggest that effective interpretation not only enhances understanding but also engenders a feeling of responsibility and commitment to the preservation of cultural heritage within Generation Z tourists.

These not only underscore the significance of interpretation in enriching visitor experiences but also point to its strategic potential within heritage tourism management. As a practical tool, interpretation supports long-term efforts to sustain

attraction interest and preserve cultural assets within the broader tourism management objectives

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