

Chapter 10

Open Distance Learning in Heritage Recognition and Appreciation: Building Capacity and Strengthening Malaysian Livelihoods

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ABSTRACT

Heritage appreciation has been easily neglected and been taken advantage of over the years despite its invisible primary role in the tourism industry. The value of heritage is invaluable and its loss is an irreversible loss to the nation as a whole. Heritage appreciation could play an important role in rural development, with mostly positive impact to the local and economy as the whole. Tourism has many potential benefits for rural areas because it can secure more jobs for non-metro communities, especially for those that are economically underdeveloped. Mainly because jobs in the tourist industry often do not require advanced training, local residents with few skills can readily work as food servers, retail clerks and hospitality workers. Tourism also not only offers business opportunities to local residents, but it can serve as an opportunity for tourists to return later to retire or start a business locally. Tourism can also enhance local quality life where tourism can serve as an important source of tax revenues for governments.

LIVING/ CULTURAL HERITAGE

Heritage is an unappreciated resource by most people; policy makers, government, people of the country etc. Heritage has been taken advantage and been taken for granted for years. What is the actual meaning of “Heritage” or “Living/ Cultural Heritage”? The word “heritage” and “living heritage” can be used interchangeably because the word “cultural” or “living” attached to the heritage provides a narrower scope of heritage. Heritage or living heritage is known as something that is passed down from generation to generation and is constantly recreated by the communities. Living heritage covers the information of a

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practicing community about who they are and how their past that has formed them (UNESCO, 2007). It can be defined as a collection of practices, traditions, expressions, skills, and knowledge that are passed from one generation to the next. This understanding forms a complex system of knowledge that is unique to a particular population within a specific geographical area (UNESCO, 2007).

Nevertheless, heritage was often deemed neither useful nor important to a country's development. Heritage experts tend to regard economists as being insensitive and heavy-handed, focused too single-mindedly on financial measurement, and overlooked the true cultural significance of heritage assets in the past (Cannon-Brookes, 1996). Heritage can be considered as "public good" with non-rivalry and non-excludability characteristics. Non-rivalry refers to where the goods can be consumed by one without making it any lesser for the second people to use it, while non-excludability refers to not being able to exclude anyone from consuming the goods/ service. Public goods characteristics tend to cost the market to fail; hence the role of government is needed to stabilise the market for these goods. On the other hand, because of these characteristics, it makes heritage a viable instrument to promote tourism and sustain the livelihoods in the rural areas.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has been recognised for its heavy role in promoting cultural heritage. This organisation has highlighted and acknowledged the importance of rich cultural and natural heritage in the world. Other than that, UNESCO also safeguards and provides efforts in safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage, including its sustainable tourism programme. UNESCO also reiterates, to harness the true potential of culture and tourism for a more sustainable future. Due to the increasing recognition of heritage in the world, UNESCO has formed a committee which meets annually to evaluate nominations proposed by States Parties to the 2003 Convention and decide whether or not to inscribe those cultural practices and expressions of intangible heritage on the Convention's Lists.

UNESCO received a prestigious award for promoting Mediterranean cultural heritage in the world and for its efforts to promote the tangible and intangible cultural heritage as a distinguishing value in other countries on the occasion of the Mediterranean Week of Economic Leaders and in the framework of the XXIII General Assembly of the Association of the Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASCAME) held on 26 November 2014 (UNESCO News, 2014). Mr Kishore Rao, Director of the Division for Heritage and the World Heritage Centre highlighted his appreciation for the commitment of ASCAME to protect and promote the Mediterranean cultural heritage, which transcends national boundaries and reflects the life of the region's communities, their history and their identities. He highlighted the contribution of culture and heritage to development and peaceful co-existence.

The total economic value of the cultural asset is the sum of the use and non-use values associated with the cultural asset. Refer to Figure 1 for the illustration on the types of values that sum up the total economic value.

Cultural heritage gives rise to both direct and indirect use values. For example, in the fees tourists pay to visit heritage sites and indirect use values. These non-use values may relate to the asset's existence value, where people value the existence of the heritage item even though they may not consume its services directly themselves. According to Krutilla (1967), individuals might be willing to pay something just to know that the heritage continues to be there, whether or not he or she intends to visit it, now or in the future (existence value). Also, an individual might gain benefit from knowing that the cultural asset will be there should he or she want to visit it in the future (option value). Option value refers to people who wish to preserve the option that they or others might consume the asset's services at some future time. Perhaps, the cultural asset will benefit his or her descendants who will be able to experience it for

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