

Study of preferential display method of a cultural museum in Bandung - Indonesia

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article history:</i> Received October 08, 2022 Received in revised form Oct. 18, 2022 Accepted November 18, 2022 Available online December 31, 2022</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Display method Effective Museum Perception</p> <p>*Corresponding author: Krismanto Kusbiantoro Department of Architecture, Universitas Kristen Maranatha, Indonesia Email: krismanto.kusbiantoro@art.maranatha.edu ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6085-3131</p>	<p><i>Museums have an important role in preserving the journey of a nation. Museum records prove or evidence of the journey, like culture, language, politics amongst many other things. The success of museums to deliver information and communicate the content to museum visitors and other users rely on a strategic display method. There are many categories of museum objects, each has its story to tell. However, the method to display this fast information has limitations, usually regarding the availability of physical space. Hence, study is needed to help museum designers or administrators determine which method is an optimum solution to deliver the information to the visitor. Therefore, it is the intention of this research to conduct study through survey to museum visitors or users of their preferred basic approach of display methods which are aesthetic, intellectual or thematic. The method used for this research is visual research method. The visitor's perception about the preferential method of display is extracted using a visual questionnaire followed by a structured interview. The research found that the 3-basic approach of display is vast depending on the categories of the object exhibits. History category is preferred to be displayed in an intellectual display approach, while as fashion, festival, language, music, artefact and influential people/figures categories, they are preferred to be displayed using the aesthetic approach. Thematic display approach is considered effective to present the object of food, dance and architecture category. The result of the research is then developed into proposed display design as a reference for museum designer or administrator to display objects effectively.</i></p>

Introduction

Museum holds primary evidence for establishing and furthering knowledge and provides opportunities for the appreciation, understanding, promotion and protection of the natural and cultural elements of heritage (Rashid 2015). Every museum has its own purposes of exhibiting some materials either for research purpose, conservational purpose and educational purpose

(Salim, Herwindo, and Saliya 2022). Modern museums also provide a recreational dimension for visitors instead of those 2 primary purposes. The success of the museum in achieving its purpose is strongly related to the strategic display system of the museum.

The study of museums in Indonesia is an endless study since Indonesia is rich both in natural and cultural heritages. Although most Indonesians seldom visit museums, they need a vessel in which they are able to remember, cherish

and preserve valuable heritages, especially among young generations. As being stated by [Ambrose and Paine \(2018\)](#), museums are keepers of collective memory, thus museums can play a valuable role in providing an understanding of identity and in fostering a sense of belonging to a place of community for their user. Therefore, continuous study of museums needs to be conducted in order to meet its purposes.

The International Council of Museums' latest definition of museums is “museums are democratizing, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue of the past and the future. Acknowledging and addressing the conflict and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people” ([International Council of Museums 2022](#)).

In this manner, designing museum displays are not merely to present an object-information package, but to pay more attention to the necessity of object-subject interaction which constitute during the perceiving of the material things and the sensorial experiencing ([Dudley 2009](#)). Therefore, it is important to design a museum display system based on the needs of the visitor; which strategy do they deemed necessary to effectively deliver the information so that it becomes properly manifested to the visitor. This is in accordance with the “New Museology” paradigm where the community is not only a museum audience, but becomes a museum collaborator and needs to be involved in museum planning ([Allam and Yulianto 2019](#)).

Poly McKenna-Cress and Janet A. Kamien in their book “Creating Exhibitions” suggests that visitor experience is one of 5 important aspects that need advocacy in terms of exhibition planning, development and design. Advocacy for visitor experience is about reminding us all that the visitor is at the heart of the exhibition endeavor—that most importantly “it’s for someone, not just about something” ([McKenna-Cress and AKamien 2016](#)).

[Tedjo \(1988\)](#) in “Pedoman Pendirian Museum” (Guideline for The Establishment of Museum) published by Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture proposed 3-basic approach in displaying museum object and information which are: (1) Aesthetic/Artistic. This method displayed a fast array of objects in an interesting manner. However, the information is presented

minimum as a simple identification. This method emphasizes the beauty or details of each object as an individual; (2) Intellectual/Educative. This method displayed objects along with a more in-depth information. Most of the time the object is displayed in “theme” manner in correlation with other objects; (3) Thematic/Romantic/Evocative. This method displayed most of the objects in the form of dioramas. Hence the visitor could have some extent of experience regarding the surrounding or context of the objects ([Ibrahim et al. 2020](#)).

Nowadays museums have come to the necessity of finding and implementing new technologies to enhance the attractiveness of their exhibits. There are a wide range of selection presentation media, which is supported by latest technology, that can be used on those 3-basic approach of display. Multimedia and audiovisual displays are the most common one. Another sophisticated one is interactive display using mixed reality supported technology, that allows visitors to interact with the virtual object using certain electronic tools as presented by C. Loskos at the 5th International Symposium on Virtual Reality, Archaeology and Cultural Heritage ([Loscos et al. 2004](#)). All these presentation media are the modes of displays that can be implemented on those 3-basic approaches of display, and help to overcome the necessity of space since the technology allows physical presence to be transformed into virtual presence.

The choice of which approach to be chosen to display an object relies on how visitors are expected to have personal experience with the object. In the case of the Museum Etnis Tionghoa Indonesia or Chinese Indonesian Ethnic Museum, which is a community-based museum established as a source of education about the role of Chinese descendant in Indonesian history, the involvement of visitors in the planning of the museum is imperative.

The museum is located in Bandung, as the capital city of West Java Province – Indonesia. It is owned by Yayasan Dana Sosial Priangan (YDSP) which is called Museum Etnis Tionghoa Indonesia or Chinese Indonesian Ethnic Museum. Yayasan Dana Sosial Priangan (Priangan Social Fund Foundation) is a foundation that was initially built to help people in difficulties, such as the loss of a family member or any catastrophe impact. In further development, the foundation also delivers healthcare services and cultural education services. One of the foundation’s

strategies to educate people culturally, is by establishing the museum, located in Graha Surya Priangan Building, Jl. Nana Rohana no. 37, Bandung. (see figure 1 and 2) The museum presents the influence of Chinese Indonesian people in many aspects in Indonesian development as a country.



Figure 1. Graha Surya Priangan Building where the museum located



Figure 2. The interior of the Museum EtnisTionghoa Indonesia

The history presented in the museum spans from the migration of Chinese people from mainland China to Indonesia until the Chinese Indonesian in Indonesia today. The main purpose of the museum is to educate visitors about many significant historical events that involved the Chinese migrants in Indonesia who actively built the nation and enriched Indonesian culture in harmony with the locals.

The historical information presented by the museum can be divided into 10 predetermined categories, that is: Culinary/Food, Fashion, Festival, Language, Dance, Music, History, Architecture, Artefact, and Influential People in History/Figures. Each of the categories has its own challenges in displaying methods due to the space limitations of the building. As the owner planned to renovate the museum for accommodating a more comprehensive and attractive museum, the need arises regarding what kind of display method that is more effective for each category based on the need of the visitors.

This paper's objective is to find the preferential display method of each category presented in the museum regarding the visitor's point of view, and finally suggest some display ideas for each category accordingly.

Method

This research is initiated by a preliminary survey of the object exhibits of the museum and categorizes them according to the type of the objects and refers also to the terms of reference of the museum manager. There are 10 categories of object exhibits in this museum as seen in the table 1 below.

Table 1. Information or object categories

Categories		
Culinary/food	Language	History
Fashion	Dance	Architecture
Festivals	Music	Artefact
Influential people in history/figure		

This step followed by designing a set of research questionnaires that elaborates the idea of 3-basic approach in displaying object exhibits in a museum and the categories obtained. The method used for this research is visual research, where the perception of the visitors about the preferential method of display is extracted using a

visual questionnaire followed by a structured interview. Since the idea of the research is to find a preferential display method of the visitors, the questionnaire acquired every respondent answer in 1 to 3 scale of which they preferred.

The questionnaire is both presented in printed form on papers and Google form. The respondent is allowed to choose which form is suitable for them. The respondents are asked to choose on the

questionnaire which display method on each category that they preferred. The questionnaire is equipped by some pictures and visuals to help them to understand the issue of the display method. The questionnaire is equipped with a sample picture of related method display to make the respondent easier to imagine and understand as seen on [table 2](#) below.

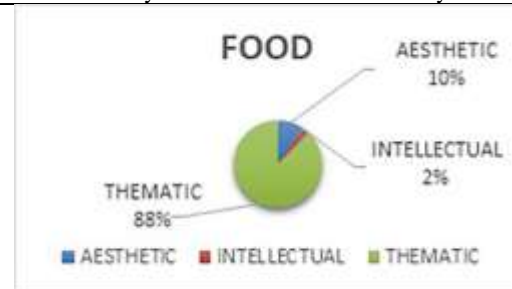
Table 2. Sample of questionnaire with sample picture as reference

Esthetic/artistic	Intellectual/educative	Thematic/romantic/evocative
1	2	3
		
Fashion	1	2
		

Result and discussion

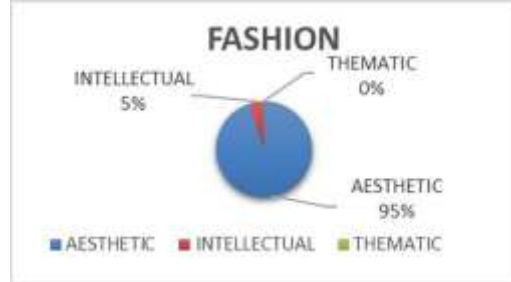
The questionnaire was delivered randomly to 120 museum visitors on 3 different occasions within 3 months. The respondents are diverse in terms of age, gender, and education backgrounds. Interviewing is conducted as complementary data to justify the reason for the choice. The result of the questioner is discussed below.

Table 3. Survey result and interview summary

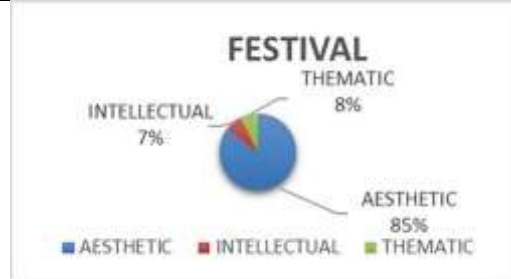


Most chosen display method: Thematic – 88%.

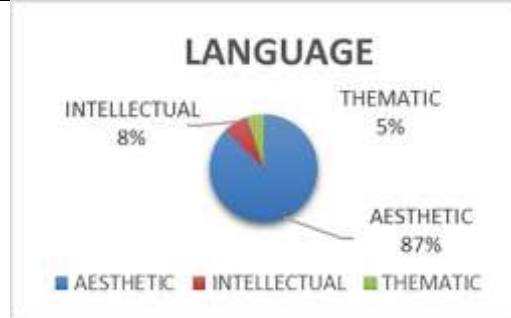
Most respondents wanted more information regarding the process and background of the food, i.e.: recipe, ingredients, making process, etc.



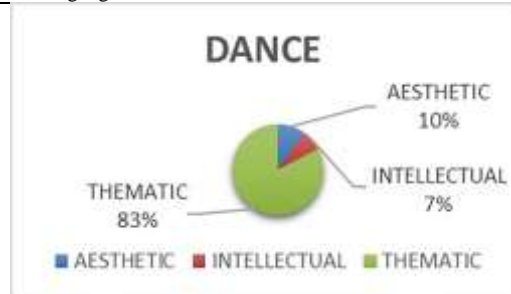
Most chosen display method: Aesthetic – 95%.
 Most respondents wanted more information regarding the process and background of the fashion, i.e.: type of fabric, culture regarding the wearing of the clothes, making process, etc.



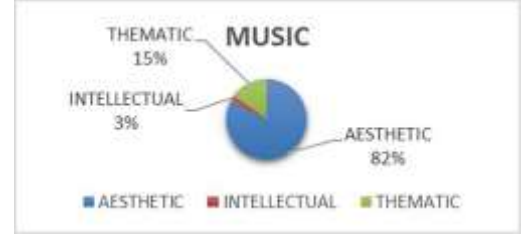
Most chosen display method: Aesthetic – 85%.
 Most respondents wanted more information regarding the process and background of the festival, i.e.: the beliefs or the legend behind the festival, preparation process, aspects of the festival, etc.



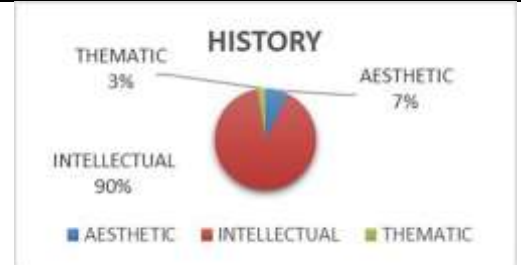
Most chosen display method: Aesthetic – 87%.
 Most respondents wanted more information of the kind of letters/word combination/usages in literature, the background of the development and the culture that shape the language, etc.



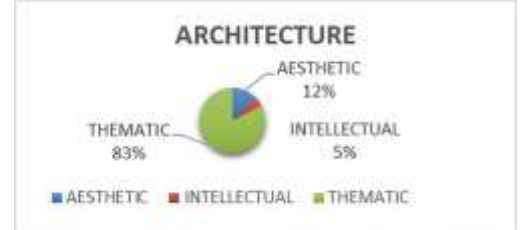
Most chosen display method: Thematic –83%.
 Most respondents would like to see the performance and to feel the ambience where the dance is being performed, also hear the music or the beat that accompanies it.



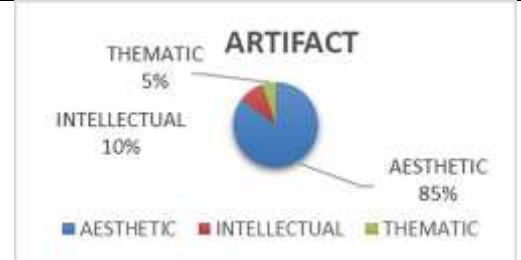
Most chosen display method: Aesthetic– 82%.
 Most respondents wanted to hear and see the performer and how the music being played, what equipment is being used and how to play it.



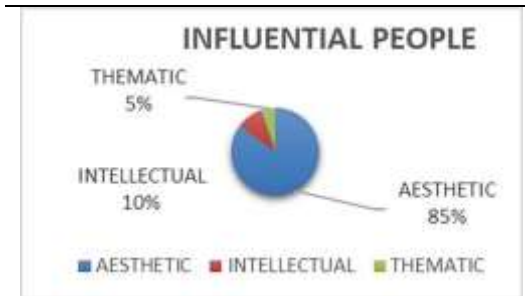
Most chosen display method: Intellectual – 90%.
 Most respondents would like to know many moments that shape the history, in many aspects during many years the Chinese and their descendants influence Indonesian culture.



Most chosen display method: Thematic – 83%.
 Most respondents would like to know many types of building being influenced by the Chinese, either residential or special buildings (religion etc.) and the concepts, techniques and materials regarding it.



Most chosen display method: Aesthetic – 85%.
 Most respondents would like to see and feel the ambience of how the artefacts are set together in their usage.



Most chosen display method: Aesthetic– 85%.
Most respondents would like to know more information about many Chinese descendants who has influence in many aspects (sports, politics etc.) and their achievements or influence on Indonesia history.

Exhibits objects such as fashion, festival, language, music, artefact and influential people/figures preferred to be displayed using the aesthetic approach due to a wide range of objects from each category, spanned throughout centuries from the traditional form in mainland China to the diaspora artifacts. Despite the information might be limited, the respondents prioritize the ability to observe the real objects rather than gaining information that can be obtained from other sources.



Figure 3. Example of Aesthetic Display Method at National Museum of Chinese Writing, Anyang, China
Source: (National Museum of Chinese Writing, n.d.)

As for history, the respondents preferred display method is intellectual approach. The intellectual approach presented a series objects in correlation one to another; supported by comprehensive information regarding the objects. History is the only category with the intellectual approach as the most effective method to deliver the information about the object. Since in history, respondents would like to be able to receive vast information regarding the events.



Figure 4. Example of Intellectual Display Method Fort Ligonier Museum, Ligonier, Pennsylvania
Source: (Capitol Museum Services 2019)

Thematic display approach is considered effective to present the object of food, dance and architecture category. Although this display approach took more, even the largest space from the other method to display an object, the respondents comment that for these categories they would like to feel the ambience through diorama or spatial decors.



Figure 5. Aztec Market diorama as an example of Thematic Display Method at “Our Global Kitchen” Exhibit, Cleveland Museum of Natural History
Source: (News Herald 2019)

The design of Chinese Indonesian Cultural Museum in Bandung implemented using the concept according to one of the main objectives of Yayasan Dana Sosial Priangan (YDSP) which is to provide services that support education and culture, especially related to the Chinese in Indonesia. The education aspect is the basic reference to select the museum flows type and display strategies. Education approaches need to have a depth of information and correlation between one theme and another. Therefore, the concept of the selected flow is a one-way flow so

with a different theme from the first one. If the first one tried to reflect the public places ambiance, in the second break room will show the art installation of well-known Chinese Indonesian artists that can be replaced periodically.

The next theme will be about festivals, music, dances, and music instruments. This area will be aesthetically managed and will give the opportunity for the visitors to participate in the 'festival'. Some media that can be provided is a movement sensor device so that visitors can try to follow a dance shown in the monitor while taking a picture as if they were using the dance outfit too. There will also be provided Chinese traditional music instruments that visitors can try to play with. Another thing is a giant screen to show some festival shows where visitors can sit for a while to watch the show.

The Traditional costume area as per research questionnaire result, will be designed as a costume photobooth area. Visitors can choose any traditional costume provided in a special ambiance of Chinese style. The same ambiance of a semi real situation will also be the design in the food area. Food area will be designed as if visitors are going into a restaurant or food stalls, with some information of main cuisines and the relationship with some cultural event. The restaurant setting will give the ambiance and to develop experience related to Chinese culinary. At the Chinese Architecture area, visitors will be presented with virtual reality devices so that visitors can experience rooms in a Chinese house in three dimensions virtually. 3D-modelling of Chinese Architecture will be displayed, especially the two types of Chinese Indonesian houses.

Before the museum journey ends, visitors will have to go through a hallway that takes them in a fast forward or time lapse ambiance. It is expected that after the visitors gain all the information inside the main theme of the museum, they can take it to their daily life here, today, and tomorrow. At the epilogue area of the museum, visitors will be taken to a room with segmented giant screen which will display some words and pictures collected by the museum operator or submitted by the visitors digitally and also some mirrors to emphasize a self-reflection mode about what they can do to support the multicultural movement in Indonesia. On the overall museum theme could be added some Chinese proverbs that relate to the content and life in general, so it will give memorable messages to the visitors.

Conclusion

The study of the preferential display method that has been done within this cultural museum shows that the 3-basic approach of display is vast depending on the categories of the object exhibits. History category is preferred to be displayed in an intellectual display approach with a series objects in correlation one to another which is supported by comprehensive information regarding the objects. While as fashion, festival, language, music, artefact and influential people/figures categories, they are preferred to be displayed using the aesthetic approach to accommodate intensive interactions that gain first time impression between visitors and the object. Thematic display approach is considered effective to present the object of food, dance and architecture category as to expand spatial ambiance and experience for the visitor through diorama or certain spatial décor.

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Author(s) contribution

Krismanto Kusbiantoro contributed to the research concepts preparation, methodologies, investigations, data analysis, visualization, articles drafting and revisions.

Irena Vanessa Gunawan contribute to the research concepts preparation and literature reviews, data analysis, of article drafts preparation and validation.

Tantri Oktavia contribute to methodology, supervision, and validation.

Astrid Austranti Yuwono contribute to methodology, supervision, and validation.

