Research Article

Ethical heritage interpretation in Indigenous contexts: An ethnographic case study

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Abstract

This paper is an ethnographic case study conducted to examine the ethics of heritage interpretation within Indigenous contexts. The Mari-Mari Cultural Village located in Sabah, which is Malaysian Borneo as the study area. The main objective is to investigate the ethical culture of self-criticality, and the reflection was present or absent in the interpretation conducted by the on-site guides at the cultural village. It also aimed to uncover other potential ethical issues that might impede the appropriate interpretation of the Indigenous cultures depicted at the cultural village. Personal interviews were conducted with selected on-site guides, and direct observations were made through participation in the guided tours. Interviewed responses were transcribed and analyzed using an iterative thematic coding approach to identify major themes or main ideas. The results indicated two principal ethical issues affecting the heritage interpretation conducted by on-site guides of MMCV. The first issue was lack self-criticality and reflection culture, which the on-site guides were deficient in the quality of interrogating themselves and their sources of research and sourcing. The second issue was associated with the notion of ethnic intruders where the same on-site guide would interpret not just the culture related to his/her own Indigenous background, but also their cultures whom he/she had little knowledge about it. The research concluded with an emphasis to ensure interpretation of Indigenous cultures were made in a proper manner that would significantly improve but at the same time not to erase or distort the understandings of the Indigenous cultures.

Keywords:

Cultural village; ethics; heritage; indigenous tourism; interpretation; Malaysia

1 Introduction

Indigenous peoples across the globe have been engaging in tourism since the mid-1800s (Whitford & Ruhanen, 2016). Examples include the Scandinavian Sami, Asian ethnic minority groups, African Indigenous guides, porters and servants, Australian Aboriginals who are allowing visitors to experience cultural ceremonies, and Canadian First Nations working as guides, hunters and interpreters for early travellers and immigrants to the region (PATA, 2014; Hall et al., 2009; Laing et al., 2014; Cahir & Clark, 2010; Nicholson, 2001). Indigenous tourism has experienced exponential growth since the 1980s (Butler & Hinch, 1996). This tourism niche is an attractive and marketable tourism product as well as an opportunity for the more autonomous development of Indigenous communities (Pereiro, 2016). As Nielsen and Wilson (2012) state, Indigenous culture draws much attention as it is viewed as a unique tourism 'asset'. Craik (1994) reports that curiosity and interest in 'exotic' destinations and their Indigenous inhabitants have continued to spark the imaginations of wealthy European adventurers since the start of the 1900s. An increasing number of Indigenous peoples are getting involved in the tourism industry as a way to reform their economies (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2019). With the hope of improving the socio-economic deprivation facing too many Indigenous peoples, governments have continued to incorporate tourism into their poverty reduction, sustainable development and social enterprise agendas, particularly for communities that possess robust natural and cultural assets, both tangible and intangible (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2019; Korstanje, 2012; Warnholz & Barkin, 2018).

Defining and conceptualizing Indigenous tourism can be challenging as there are many definitions and debates revolving around the term Indigenous or Indigenous tourism (Ryan, 2005; Nielsen & Wilson, 2012; Ruhanen & Whitford, 2019; Carr et al., 2016). Indigenous tourism has its roots in some of the earliest anthropological tourism studies (Nielsen & Wilson, 2012). One of the earliest conceptualizations of Indigenous tourism can be traced back to Smith's (1977) seminal Hosts and Guests that establishes Indigenous tourism as part of 'ethnic tourism' and is promoted in reference to 'exotic peoples' and activities including visits to 'native' homes, observation of dances and ceremonies and shopping for 'primitive' wares. Several decades later, the same researcher defines Indigenous tourism in terms of four Hs: "Indigenous tourism is taken as that segment of the visitor industry which directly involves native peoples whose ethnicity is a tourist attraction. Indigenous tourism involves four interrelated elements: the geographic setting (habitat), the ethnographic traditions (heritage), the effects of acculturation (history), and the marketable handicrafts" (Smith, 1996, pp 283, 287).

Advocating the principle of Indigenous control of culture, Butler and Hinch (1996, pp 10) define Indigenous tourism as "Tourism activities in which Indigenous people are directly involved either through control and/or by having their culture serve as the essence of the attraction". Their view is shared by de Burlo (2000, pp 204) who states "…those activities which directly involve Indigenous people. In this type of tourism, the

native groups are in control of enterprises which have Indigenous culture as a main attraction". These definitions are bound by two foundational notions namely 1) the centrality of Indigenous culture and identity and 2) the locus of control where Indigenous peoples are in charge of the way their culture is showcased and made available through tourism endeavours (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2019; Hinch & Butler, 2007; Pereiro, 2016).

One of the often-discussed topics within the Indigenous tourism literature is interpretation. Definitions of the term vary and are expanding alongside the roles or functions it is deemed to play. At its core, interpretation is an effort to communicate the value of a given resource to an audience (Ham, 1992). Its activities are planned or structured --- guided tours, formal talks, wayside exhibits, signage, visitor center displays, and brochures for self-guided walks (Knudson et al., 1995; Beck & Cable, 2011; Finegan, 2019). The individuals who deliver the content of these activities are called interpreters. Although all interpretation includes information, information is not interpretation; interpretation reveals meaning and truth based upon information (Tilden, 1977; Beck & Cable, 2011). Moscardo (2007) takes the definition or role of interpretation a step further by arguing interpretation also develops a sense of place, and in 2016, Walker and Moscardo report that interpretation can also create a sense of responsibility (i.e. promoting transformative change in tourists' place images and personal values), especially when Indigenous values and interpretation are incorporated. Definitions or roles aside, existing interpretation literature has heavily emphasized interpretive methods, program demand and program outcomes in terms of evaluation, guiding principles and content (Finegan, 2019; Walker & Moscardo, 2016).

Ethics in heritage interpretation, particularly within Indigenous contexts, which essentially look at the roles of interpretation or interpreter beyond that of a communicator or a meaning/truth revealer, are not much investigated. Finegan (2019) raises several questions that are related to a culture of criticality and reflection within heritage interpretation as a profession. Essentially, his questions highlight the point of "how one learns what one interprets", which is as equally important as the methods for interpreting knowledge and measuring success in delivering content. This issue may be particularly critical in Indigenous tourism interpretation as what one interprets, how one interprets, and most importantly, how one learns what one interprets will influence visitors' conceptions of Indigeneity. Interpretation incorrectly or insufficiently done may result in the distortion of local culture (Boonzaaier & Wels, 2017).

Using Mari Mari Cultural Village (MMCV hereafter) located in Sabah, Malaysian Borneo as the study area, this study seeks to examine the ethics of heritage interpretation within Indigenous contexts. Specifically, it investigates the extent to which the ethical culture of self-criticality and reflection is present or absent in the interpretation conducted at the cultural village. It also aims to uncover other potential ethical issues that may impede the appropriate interpretation of the Indigenous cultures depicted at the cultural village. This study is significant because its findings can be used

to gauge whether the interpretation at MMCV is conducted in a manner that is ethical and responsible to advance, and not distort or impede, the understandings of the Indigenous cultures that they interpret. It is only when the interpretation advances the interests and/or rights of the Indigenous communities that the management of MMCV can hope to achieve what they set out to accomplish i.e. preserving the Indigenous cultures.

2 Methodology

Established in 2008 and owned by a private tour operator named RIVERBUG Traverse Tours based in the Malaysian state of Sabah, MMCV is one of the top tourist attractions in Sabah (TripAdvisor 2019 rated it 4.5/5.0 based on 1,155 reviews). It operates as a living museum with the aim of preserving the cultures of the five major Indigenous communities living in Sabah – Dusun, Rungus, Lundayeh, Bajau and Murut – by sharing the Indigenous knowledge, history, culture and tradition with visitors. A visit to the cultural village allows one to see and experience first-hand the cultures and traditions (e.g. traditional houses, costumes, skills etc) of these Indigenous communities back in the olden days when electricity was unavailable as well as in the present days (MMCV, n.d.).

As this study was focused on examining the ethics of heritage interpretation in an Indigenous context, which was a complex investigation requiring a profound examination of thoughts, feelings and anticipations of the individuals under investigation, an ethnographic case study was conducted including personal interviews and direct observations. Given the qualitative and exploratory nature of the research, purposive sampling was used. Data collection was done for a period of two weeks in July 2019. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with six of the fifteen on-site guides of MMCV within the compound of the site. Each interview took between 30 and 40 minutes, was conducted in the national language (i.e. the Malay language) and was recorded using a voice recorder. The interview questions were mostly focused on the questions raised by Finegan (2019) which were related to the ethical culture of self-criticality and reflection (i.e. questioning oneself as an interpreter as well as questioning one's sources of information). Some other questions were included to gauge the on-site guides' ethnic and employment background, their knowledge of the Indigenous cultures being depicted at MMCV, their method of interpretation (i.e. what they interpreted, how they interpreted and how they learned what to interpret), and their aspirations and perceived roles as an on-site guide or an interpreter at the cultural village.

The researcher also participated in three guided tours to make direct, overt observations of what cultural themes of the Indigenous communities were interpreted by the on-sites guides and how they were interpreted. During these observations, field notes were collected in a notebook which supplemented the interview data as well as allowed the notification of other potential ethical issues. Each guided tour lasted approximately three hours. Interview responses were transcribed verbatim and

translated into the English language without distorting their original meaning. The transcribed responses were then examined using an iterative thematic coding approach which involved identifying themes or major ideas by successive or repeated rounds of reading and coding responses. While six on-site guides participated in the interviews, each of them was able to offer multiple answers to the interview questions, thus the number of responses was greater than six and the tables and other results offered were based on the number of responses.

3 Findings and discussion

3.1 Culture of self-criticality and reflection

As the following three tables demonstrate, the on-site guides of MMCV lacked the culture of self-criticality and reflection (i.e. questioning themselves and their sources) in their profession as heritage interpreters. This finding provides a piece of evidence for Finegan's (2019) assertion that heritage interpretation as a profession lacks a culture of criticality about research and sourcing, which is deeply problematic when working in Indigenous contexts. A culture of interrogating oneself as a heritage interpreter and one's sources of knowledge is a culture of research. In other words, being critical of oneself and one's sources requires one to assume the role of a researcher.

To gauge the on-site guides' understanding of the roles of a responsible and ethical heritage interpreter (who should play the dual roles of communicator and researcher), they were asked to describe their roles as an on-site guide at MMCV. As Table 1 shows, most of the responses (72%) centered upon the role that was geared toward the customer service front (e.g. giving good service to visitors, helping visitors, or ensuring visitors' happiness and safety). Only 14% of the responses were more closely associated with the conventional role of an interpreter as an information communicator or a meaning revealed. Nonetheless, merely communicating information or revealing meanings positions the on-site guides of MMCV as passive conveyors of information, which they are not. While they understand and play their role as a communicator, they have yet to understand and develop in themselves the other imperative role of a heritage interpreter, i.e. a researcher. It is only when they are able to see that they need to also be an analytical and pensive researcher who questions oneself and one's sources, that they can hope to present the cultures of the five Indigenous communities depicted at MMCV in a manner that advances the interests of these Indigenous communities.

Table 1: Interviewed on-site guides' aspirations and perceived roles

Aspiration category	Examples	No. of responses	% of responses
Personal development	To gain knowledge; to develop/enhance skills such as communication,	5	36

	management and customer service; to increase confidence level.		
Cultural exchange	To share/present local cultures; to learn other people's cultures.	5	36
Social interactions	To meet people from different backgrounds.	3	21
Career development	To move up the career ladder.	1	7

Role category	Examples	No. of responses	% of responses
Visitor-oriented	To give good service to visitors; to help visitors; to ensure visitors' happiness and safety.	10	72
Company-oriented	To take care of company's assets; to ensure the site's cleanliness.	2	14
Interpretation-oriented	To educate people about local cultures; to give information to visitors; to present local cultures accurately.	2	14

To further examine the extent to which the on-site guides of MMCV were deficient in the culture of self-criticality and reflection, they were asked several questions that would make them be critical and reflective of themselves as well of their sources of knowledge. As Table 2 indicates, two of the six on-site guides did not consider themselves a good steward of Indigenous culture, history and perspective. While their honesty of not being a good steward is commendable, it can be worrying because it calls into question their ability to help advance the interests and/or rights of the Indigenous communities that they present to visitors when they do not even see themselves as a good steward of Indigenous culture, let alone taking the moral and ethical initiative to ensure what and how they present the Indigenous cultures will help advance, not erase or impede, particular understandings of these cultures. When the other four on-sites guides were asked in what ways they considered themselves to be so, their answers included because they shared/educated people about Indigenous cultures (50% of responses), because they continually learned about their own culture and other cultures and encouraged other people to do the same (33% of responses), and because they still practiced certain aspects of their culture and tradition such as speaking their Indigenous language, choosing the traditional cigarette over modern cigarette etc (17% of responses).

When the on-site guides were asked what they interpreted, how they interpreted, how they learned what to interpret and why they had chosen to interpret what they interpreted, all of them responded that they were informed by a guiding narration provided by the MMCV management. Thus, all of them will present more or less the same information in a similar fashion for the same reason because they are all bounded by the same guiding narration. In terms of what they interpreted; the guiding narration had already predetermined the cultural themes of the five Indigenous communities to

present to visitors (see below). The only time when they ventured out of the guiding narration was when visitors asked questions that were outside of the realm of the predetermined themes.

i. Dusun – population, traditional house, rice wines (*lihing* and *montoku*), bamboo cooking, rice storage (*tangkob*), three fermented pickles (wild ginger/*tuhau*, mango/*bambangan*, and rice fermented with vegetables).

ii. Rungus – population, longhouse, honey making, traditional fire making, beads making, musical instruments.

iii. Lundayeh – population, traditional house, jars, headhunting, symbolic crocodile (*ulung buayeh*), traditional rope and vest making.

iv. Bajau – population, traditional house, wedding ceremony, traditional cakes (*kuih jala*, *kuih penjaram*), *pandan* juice making.

v. Murut – population, traditional house, blowpipe, traditional trampoline (*lansaran*), coffee, henna tattoos, traditional handshake, shaman (*bobohizan*).

In terms of how they conducted the interpretation, one on-site guide would take a group of visitors from one Indigenous culture (called "house" at the cultural village) to the next. A guided tour typically started with the Dusun house, followed by the Rungus house, Lundayeh house, Bajau house and ended with the Murut house. At each of the house, the on-site guide would explain the selected themes (as mentioned above) to visitors, followed by demonstrations that were done by the other employees of MMCV. At times visitors were invited to take part in certain activities such as jumping on the *lansaran* at the Murut house or trying the traditional cakes at the Bajau house. A guided tour of all the houses would usually take one and a half hours. The same on-site guide interpreting the cultures of all of the five Indigenous communities presents its own set of ethical dilemmas, which is explained later in this paper.

It was discovered that although the on-site guides learned what they interpreted mostly from the guiding narration, they had made their own efforts to increase their general knowledge and specific knowledge of the five Indigenous cultures depicted at MMCV. They searched for information using search engines, read books, watched related videos on YouTube, participated in field trips organized by the company (e.g. the Kalimaran festival in the district of Tenom), learned from senior guides and visited museums and other cultural institutions such as the Sabah State Cultural Board. Although some of these sources are definitely more credible than the others (e.g. information from the Sabah State Cultural Board is more trustworthy than information from a YouTube video), they are all "facts" that have been declared by someone else. In other words, the on-site guides rely on the research of others. They may have gained more information from these sources. However, more information does not necessarily mean more truth and knowledge. There is still room for them to be critical of these

sources of information. For example, they were asked if it would matter who wrote the books that they read. Four answered it would not matter as long as they got the information. The other two who answered otherwise indicated there might be different understandings between, for instance, Western authors and local authors, and they would, therefore, make comparisons. One of these two guides, who happened to be the oldest and had worked the longest (five years) among the on-site guides and who aspired to present local cultures accurately (see Table 1), indicated he loved to talk to and learn from the Indigenous communities and Elders. These Indigenous-knowledge holders should be the most reliable source of facts and knowledge.

When the on-site guides were asked what motivated them to make the extra efforts to increase their knowledge, their answers were so they would be able to answer questions from visitors (60%) and because the management of MMCV encouraged it (40%). Their answers show they look for more information so they can be a better service provider or a good employee, and not because they are critical and reflective. To them, information will suffice. They are not on the quest for truth and knowledge. However, as previous studies have noted, although all interpretation includes information, information is not interpretation. Additionally, it was discovered that the on-site guides did not choose the Indigenous themes that they interpreted to visitors; those themes were already dictated in the guiding narration given to them by the management of MMCV. They only interpreted outside the realm of the guiding narration when visitors asked about something that was beyond the predetermined themes.

Table 2: Interviewed on-site guides' self-criticality and reflection – questioning themselves

Question		No. of responses	% of responses
Are you a good steward of Indigenous culture, history and perspective?	Yes	4	67
	No / not really	2	33
What do you interpret?	Based on guiding narration	6	67
	Because the visitor asks	3	33
How do you interpret?	I was informed by guiding narration.	6	60
	I learned from senior guides.	4	40
How do you learn what to interpret?	Based on guiding narration.	6	50
	Make my efforts to increase knowledge.	5	50
What kind of efforts have you made to increase your knowledge of the five Indigenous cultures?	Print and online media (Google, YouTube, books).	8	47
	Participating in field trips organized by the company. E.g. Kalimaran Festival in Tenom.	4	23

	Learning from senior guides.	2	12
	Visiting museums and other cultural institutions (e.g. Sabah State Cultural Board).	2	12
	Talking to and learning from the elderly of an Indigenous group.	1	6
Why is it important that you increase your knowledge of the five Indigenous cultures?	To be able to answer to visitors' questions.	6	60
	The management encourages it.	4	40
Why have you chosen to tell those cultural elements to visitors?	Because they are in the guiding narration.	6	60
	Because the visitor asks.	3	30
	Because I know and am confident about what I tell visitors.	1	10

To examine the extent to which the on-site guides' questioned their main source of knowledge used to interpret the Indigenous themes at MMCV i.e. the guiding narration, they were asked three questions – who gathered the knowledge used in the guiding narration, how the knowledge was gathered, and why the management of MMCV had chosen to interpret those Indigenous cultural themes. Although most of them had some idea as to who gathered the knowledge (i.e. the company's Research and Development department) and how the knowledge was gathered (i.e. the Research and Development department conducted field works and referred to books), what they knew was only a scratch of the surface. When they were probed further as to who the members of the Research and Development department that were involved in the knowledge gathering and compilation of the guiding narration were, either they assumed the R&D members were the senior employees and mentioned one or two names of those senior employees or they had no idea at all. But who exactly collected and extracted the knowledge for use in the guiding narration and whether the individual(s) had the social license from the Indigenous communities to conduct the work of knowledge gathering and extraction remained questions yet to be answered by the interviewed in-house guides.

When they were further asked about how the knowledge informing the guiding narration was collected (when and where field works were conducted, what books were referred to, was anybody interviewed in the process and if the answer was a yes, who the person was and if he/she had credibility within the community and to speak on its behalf), they were basically clueless. When they were asked why they thought the management had chosen to tell those Indigenous cultural themes, they mostly did not know why (60% of responses). Their presumption was either those Indigenous themes were popular (30% of responses) or were easy to tell (10% of responses). In fact, a follow-up interview with one of the persons put in charge of compiling the guiding narration revealed that the on-site guides were correct in their guess that those Indigenous themes were selected because they were the popular or typical ones.

It appeared the on-site guides of MMCV never questioned if those themes were selected with the consultation of credible Indigenous community members (e.g. the Elders) or how telling those themes could advance the Indigenous communities' interests, or would telling those themes harm the Indigenous communities in any way (e.g. reinforcing the old stereotypical depiction of Indigenous peoples as "exotic", "tribal", "primitive" or "the others").

Table 3: Interviewed on-site guides' self-criticality and reflection – questioning their sources

Question		No. of responses	% of responses
Who gathered the knowledge informing the guiding narration?	The Research & Development department of the company.	4	66
	The senior employees of the company, such as the senior guides.	1	17
	Not really sure.	1	17
How was the knowledge informing the guiding narration gathered?	Based on the field work conducted by the R&D department.	4	57
	Based on books, such as books from the Sabah State Cultural Board.	2	29
	Not really sure.	1	14
In your opinion, why chose to tell those Indigenous cultural aspects in the guiding narration?	Don't really know.	6	60
	Maybe because they are popular.	3	30
	Maybe because they are easy to tell.	1	10

3.2 Ethnic intruders

The notion of ethnic intruders is essentially discussed within the discourse of authenticity in heritage presentations. Timothy and Boyd (2006) categorize it as one of the concepts linked to inauthentic or distorted pasts. Nevertheless, when the concept is discussed from the perspectives of the legitimacy of cultural presentations and Indigenous rights and control, it can become an issue of unethical heritage interpretation. The idea of ethnic intruders derives from the involvement of people in the interpretation and management of places which have little to do with the heritage being explained (Timothy & Boyd 2006) or from the employment of non-native or non-original people to play the roles of others (Timothy 2011).

As previously mentioned, MMCV presented and interpreted the cultures of the five major Indigenous communities living in Sabah --- Dusun, Murut, Bajau, Rungus and Lundayeh. The same on-site guide would conduct the interpretation for all the five houses representing the cultures of the five Indigenous communities. For instance, an in-house guide of Dusun background would interpret not just the Dusun culture at the

Dusun house, but he/she would also do it for all the other houses: Murut, Bajau, Rungus and Lundayeh. This situation is a phenomenon of ethnic intruders and can be ethically problematic when analyzed from two perspectives, namely: 1) the legitimacy of cultural presentations and 2) the infringement of Indigenous rights and control.

During the interviews, the on-site guides were asked to self-rate their level of knowledge of the five Indigenous communities depicted at MMCV. As Table 4 indicates, most of the interviewed on-site guides were from the Indigenous Dusun background. In fact, the researcher discovered that most of the on-site guides of MMCV were Dusun people. Although most of them had quite extensive knowledge of the Indigenous cultures showcased at MMCV particularly that of their own, some of them had relatively poor knowledge of the Indigenous cultures that were beyond the realm of their own Indigenous background. For example, Guide 1 rated 20 to 30 per cent for his knowledge of the Rungus culture, Guide 4 rated 30 per cent for his knowledge of the Dusun culture, and Guide 6 rated 20 per cent for his knowledge of the Murut, Lundayeh and Bajau cultures. This calls into question the legitimacy of their interpretation of the cultures for which they lack knowledge of. How can they accurately interpret the Indigenous cultures that are not related to their own Indigenous background or that which they are not familiar with? Different interpreters will identify different characteristics and concepts and interpret differently (Finegan, 2019; Thimm, 2019). In the context of MMCV, how can, for instance, an Indigenous Dusun guide explain the Indigenous Murut perspectives on headhunting? How can the Dusun guide share with visitors the Murut's knowledge of headhunting? Will it even be possible for the Dusun guide to explain the Murut's relationship with headhunting, given his understanding and relationship with the practice of headhunting is likely very different from the Murut's?

When the on-site guides were asked what/how they would answer in the event a visitor asked a question that they were not able to answer because the question was not related to their own Indigenous background, all of them responded that they would be honest with the visitor by admitting they were not sure but would attempt to give an answer or provide their own theory based on what they thought would be logical or would make sense. This situation presents a worrying ethical dilemma for two reasons. The first reason is they may present a stereotyped interpretation of the Indigenous culture at hand that is limiting and fixated, which eventually imprints in the minds of visitors a skewed image and understanding of that Indigenous culture. This issue has been elaborately raised in the studies conducted by Bhabha (1983) and Scheyvens (2002). As Boonzaaier and Grobler (2012, pp 61) highlight in their study of community perceptions of tourism in the Tshivhase area of the Limpopo Province in South Africa "once a particular stereotypical image of a place has been constructed, people tend to accept and internalize that image, even in the absence of any supporting evidence. Such naivety makes stereotypes tenacious and resistant to change".

The second reason is it raises the question of what rights or power do the on-site guides have to assign logic to or make sense of someone else's culture? As Hinch and

Butler (2007) posit, when Indigenous culture is showcased through tourism without the influence of the actual originators, it leaves the door wide open to cultural expropriation and infringement of Indigenous intellectual property rights and copyright. When someone outside of the Indigenous group interprets the culture of that group, the group loses control over what aspects of their culture are being displayed to visitors, how they are being presented and the image and understanding that will form in the minds of visitors based upon the interpretive information given on their behalf without their presence or consultation.

Table 4: Interviewed on-site guides' level of knowledge of the five Indigenous cultures interpreted at MMCV

In-house guide	Ethnic/Indigenous background	Level of knowledge Dusun	Rungus	Murut	Lundayeh	Bajau
Guide 1	Dusun	70%	20 – 30%	50%	50%	30 – 40%
Guide 2	Dusun	75%	65%	70%	60%	65%
Guide 3	Dusun	70%	50%	50%	50%	50%
Guide 4	Bajau & Kedayan	30%	60 – 70%	80%	60 – 70%	95%
Guide 5	Dusun	70 – 80%	50 – 60%	60%	50%	80%
Guide 6	Rungus & Dusun	70%	50%	20%	20%	20%

During the observations, the researcher noticed some of the interpreters were not even the local people of Sabah. It was discovered that in the event of the tour participants were not acquainted with the English language (the language used by the in-house guides of MMCV for interpretation), they could request to have their own guide. For example, a Korean tour group could ask for their own Korean guide to make the interpretation of the Indigenous themes presented at the cultural village. When the on-site guides were asked from which source(s) those foreign guides obtained their information on the Indigenous cultures, they responded by saying "they have their own source, but in case they are not sure about something, they will refer to us". This situation presents ethical dilemmas similar to what has been previously discussed but to a much upsetting degree. Those foreign guides did not grow up learning the history and heritage of Sabah, let alone possessing in-depth knowledge and close encounters with the cultures of the five Indigenous communities to be able to deliver an accurate, even respectful interpretation of these cultures.

This phenomenon of ethnic intruders is not exclusively observable at MMCV. Timothy (2011) gives the example of the Kelevu Cultural Center in Fiji where almost all of its actors are Fijians depicting Maori, Tahitian, Samoan and Tongan cultural heritage. Thimm (2019) mentions the Aboriginal Art Galleries in Gastown and the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, both located in Vancouver where while the art in the galleries is produced by the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, the salespersons and shop owners are white Canadians, as are the guides who interpret

Aboriginal culture in the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. Indeed, what rights does someone outside of an Indigenous background have to allow him/her to assign meanings and values to culture and tradition that are not of his/her own and with what knowledge?

4 Conclusion

In summarizing the main conclusions of this study, this section will begin by examining the specific research aims and implications of the results for the management and the on-site guides of MMCV. Limitations of this study will also be acknowledged. This section will finish with suggestions for future research. This paper analyzed the ethics of heritage interpretation of Indigenous themes conducted at MMCV. In particular, it was concerned with the extent to which the culture of self-criticality and reflection was present or absent in the heritage interpretation conducted by the on-site guides at the cultural village. It also aimed to uncover other potential ethical issues that might impede the appropriate interpretation of the Indigenous cultures depicted at the cultural village. The results suggested two principal ethical issues affecting the heritage interpretation conducted by the on-site guides of MMCV. The first issue was the lack of the culture of self-criticality and reflection. While the on-site guides understood and assumed their role as an information communicator (i.e. telling visitors about the Indigenous themes depicted at MMCV), they had yet to understand and develop in themselves the other imperative role of a heritage interpreter i.e. an analytical and pensive researcher who questioned oneself and one's sources.

This result provided evidence for Finegan's (2019) claim that heritage interpretation as a profession lacks a culture of criticality about research and sourcing, which is deeply problematic when working in Indigenous contexts. The second issue was ethnic intruders which are associated with the employment of non-native or non-original people to play the roles of others. At MMCV, the same on-site guide would conduct the interpretation of the cultures of all the five Indigenous communities presented at MMCV. In other words, he/she would also explain the Indigenous cultures that were outside the realm of his/her own Indigenous background. Although the notion of ethnic intruders has been discussed within the discourse of authenticity of heritage interpretation, this study argued it could also present ethical dilemmas when analyzed from two perspectives namely the legitimacy of Indigenous cultural presentations and the infringement of Indigenous rights and control.

The implications of this study are largely practical for the management and on-site guides of MMCV. As the heritage interpretation at MMCV revolves around the guiding narration compiled by the management, the first practical step should begin with the management. They need to start by interrogating themselves as the individuals who gather knowledge for the guiding narration as well as interrogating the sources of knowledge they use for the guiding narration and the means by which they conduct their research or process of knowledge gathering. They need to ensure the individuals who

are put in charge of gathering the knowledge for the guiding narration are individuals who are concerned with protecting or advancing Indigenous culture, history and perspective, who have the social license from the Indigenous communities to gather and present Indigenous knowledge, and who are willing to invest enough time, money and energy to work with Indigenous communities and Elders to collect and present information accurately from these Indigenous knowledge holders' perspectives. The management of MMCV also needs to ask the very important question of why they have chosen to tell the selected Indigenous themes. It was discovered that they have chosen to present those Indigenous cultural themes because they are popular or typical ones. Such answer shows the interpretation at MMCV is not on the right track.

As Finegan (2019) states, a responsible and ethical interpreter chooses to tell a story or to give a program "because it will advance the Indigenous interests by…". As they are using the Indigenous cultures for their business of operating a cultural village, they owe it to the Indigenous communities to present cultural themes or tell stories that will advance these communities' interests, and not harm these communities in any way (e.g. reinforcing the old stereotypical image of Indigenous peoples as "exotic", "tribal", "primitive" or "the others"). Once the management of MMCV has cultivated this culture of self-criticality and reflection in themselves, they need to train their on-site guides to be equally self-critical and reflective. They need to completely understand the dual roles of a heritage interpreter as a communicator and a researcher. They also need to fully grasp the power they have in shaping or influencing how people conceive Indigeneity, and that they must utilize this power in a manner that advances, not distorts or erases, particular understandings of the Indigenous communities that they present at their cultural village.

It should be noted that the evidence from the present study exists for a small sample of Indigenous guides at a very specific type of Indigenous tourism products. Thus, the results may lack representativeness for the other on-site guides of MMCV who were not included in the interviews or for all the other cultural villages that exist in Sabah. As the present study is a case study, the limitation of the subjectivity of the researcher and others involved in the case is also acknowledged. Future research is required to extend this focus on ethics of heritage interpretation into the other cultural villages and other tourism activities in which Indigenous people are directly involved either through control and/or by having their culture serve as the essence of the attraction. Such research is critical to ensure the interpretive programs used to depict the indigenous communities whose cultures are used for tourism are conducted in a manner that serves the Indigenous interests.

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