

Protecting an Underwater Cultural Heritage through Visual Communication Skill

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Abstract

The famous quotation, "A picture speaks a thousand words" illustrates how effective visual communication is in delivering messages. If properly managed, visual communication tools may persuade public perception and inform audience opinion. In Indonesia, underwater heritage sites have limited range of visualization, so it is not a surprise that these sites are enjoyed by limited communities. In managing heritage, the involvement of the community and multiple stakeholders from different backgrounds are needed to enhance better management. This paper presents how to design a concept of visual communication such as video and still photography which can bridge the limited access between community and their heritage in order to build an understanding of the underwater cultural heritage protection and its historical value.

Introduction

Current forms of visual communication are scattered throughout our lives, from waking to sleeping, we are bombarded with a storm of visual communication through various media. Various forms of images, symbols, graphics are creating a billboard jungle that is slowly manipulating our subconscious to feel a "closeness" with the message conveyed by the billboard. Traffic signs, icons on the computer and company's logos are a simple form of visual communication that is constantly affecting our awareness of the meaning of a symbol. "Seeing is believing" and "a picture speaks a thousand words", combine to create the first rank of visual communication that needs attention if we want to instill an awareness of an idea. Visual communication is done correctly and directed to the appropriate dose can be used to manipulate the masses.

The development of audio visual media technology in particular is directly influencing the form of visual communication, graphic and other forms of moving images that can be combined with sound thus improving the model of visual communication into an audio visual communication that delivers far more intense impact, especially for the people of Indonesia. The most popular audio visual communication is video. Indonesian people are familiar with the concept of story telling, as it is used in delivering messages from generation to generation. This oral culture has very strong affects in Indonesia, however, development of audio technology immediately replaced oral culture.

In 1960 Professor George Gerbner, a former Dean of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, United States (U.S.), conducted a study of the impact of television on humans live and cultural change in society and pointed out "Cultivation Theory". This theory stated that a regular repetition on television show has influence on the mindset of an audience; the more often people exposed to a message, the more acceptable that message as a reality and truth. Believe on the television show could be

positive and also could be negative depending on the message that was delivered.

One's initial interest in watching a show will determine how often people will continue watching the show and be re-exposed to the message that was delivered by the media. Here the role of design will determine the success of a show that will be implemented to influence the target audience. It has the potential to influence attitudes and change certain values, especially in the group 'heavy viewers' (defined as people who watch television more or equal than four hours per day)¹. A good design will certainly give a positive effect in accordance with the expectations of the institution that produces the message, but designing a bad audio-visual communication can have a negative effect on the messages delivered.

Cultivation Theory is highly relevant in the endeavour to photograph the conditions of Indonesian society because it is very dependent on television as an entertainment center and a vast information network. Attainable television has an active role in the dissemination of entertainment and information with a relatively low cost.

Although people have been exploring space, i.e. set foot on the moon and photographing the surface of mars, the underwater world is still somewhat of a mystery. Until now, many parts of the ocean floor have not been touched by human technology. The exploration of the ocean has lasted for centuries, but the seabed is still included as 'the last frontier' (personal experience of over 5000 dives). For a small contingent of the community stories and underwater heritage can be easily seen but for most Indonesian people these stories and heritage will remain mysterious and unattainable.

Indonesian society in particular often considers cultural remains as nothing more than a pile of junk expected to be sold as treasures. For most people the function of the underwater heritage is directly economic within a maximum extraction model (based on 10 years of personal experience). Historic function, aesthetics and science have not yet reached an understanding on the role of historical relics under water. Underwater heritage is very rarely seen by the public; even the majority of Indonesian people had never seen these sites, so that almost no attention and appreciation arises in the media.

For years underwater heritage in Indonesia has been looted both legally and illegally. For some relics, it was indeed proper to lift and rescue on land, but retain greater value if left beneath the sea. For example, World War Two (WWII) relics scattered throughout the archipelago, including the remains of warships, aircraft and vehicles that were piled under the sea, have a historical, aesthetic, and sentimental value much larger than the value per kilogram of iron. It is more feasible to leave relics under the water where they can be used as historical and cultural sites that can bring economic value through the development of sustainable marine tourism. Study of the conditions and opportunities for restoration and conservation of underwater heritage is very important to support long-term planning of the visual utilization of sites and relics.

¹ http://www.lombokpost.co.id/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=1708:hindari-efek-negatif-nonton-tv-pada-anak&Itemid=543

Solutions

In Indonesia where poverty rates are still very high; Sustainability concept in managing natural resources and cultural heritage is “expensive” and often not affordable for local community. Instant benefits are more considerable for the locals than thinking about the future. The mindset is "there will be no next day if today cant be succeeded well". With these conditions there is a pattern of instant understanding of an economic object (relics underwater can be classified as one of economic objects). Changing the pattern of *instant view* of the outlook process is something that is not easy. The solution to this problem can be approached through three approaches namely Regulatory, Economic and Combined Regulatory and Economic.,

Regulatory approaches

Regulations made by the government to restrict and regulate the use, including allowing or not allowing an activity that affected on utilization. The concept can apply on a heritage object under air. Included therein is the extraction and/or non-regulatory approaches. In this kind of rule approaches need strong control and strict law enforcement so that this rule can be run properly.

Case study: Biak

Establishment of Maritime Conservation Area (MCA) aims to restrict the activities at sites where there is a archaeological remain within. One of the suitable places for the application of MCA is Biak - Papua. WWII Catalina aircraft is situated near the beach. This site is tourist attraction. The formation of the MCA has a relatively low conflict of interest, and could potentially provide economic benefits through the development of the site.

This approach can be successful if:

- There is strong government interest and regulatory action and limited public resistance.
- If the location does not already entail (or little) activity contrary to the values of conservation.
- Requires proper socialization, meaning the target-oriented rules that apply specifically to all stake holders have an interest, either directly or indirectly also to the wider community in general.

Economic Approach

Creating economic benefits of a heritage object which can be enjoyed directly by the public will voluntarily enact community conservation of underwater heritage.

Case study: Tulamben - Bali

Tulamben is a small village in Karangasem regency - Bali. This village is one of the poorest villages in Bali. On Tulamben beach there is a WWII shipwreck., In 1963 when Mount Agung erupted, the ship was dragged into the water about 50 metres from the beach and sunk under 18-30m water depth (based on personal

experience since 1991). Since the mid-1980s, small groups of recreational divers began diving at the wreck site (based on personal experience with the community since 1990). Slowly the name Liberty Ship Wreck Tulamben became increasingly popular. The local community then switched their professions from fisherman to the tourism service. The village of Tulamben is no longer poor, communities benefit directly from the existence of heritage. Several times outside forces have attempted to disturb the site but the people of Tulamben have defended the site, including violence when it needed (based on personal observation).

The Liberty Ship Wreck Tulamben has become part of local people's livelihood, their economy depends on the presence of the ship; its condition, restoration and conservation efforts are very important, when Liberty Ship Wreck Tulamben became the most famous dive site in Indonesia and natural heritage conservation process has occurred in Tulamben.

This approach can be successful if:

- The locals have not made an extraction of these remains, or in the other words salvage does not occur as a result of the economic advantages which is opposed to the conservation values.
- The community has minimal resistance especially if it is related to the existence of alternative livelihoods.
- Educating the local community is intended to provide understanding the economic benefit of sustainable development of the underwater heritage objects.

Regulatory approaches and economic

In the location of underwater heritage that has been massively exploited, a combination of regulatory and economic approaches is the most sensible choice for rehabilitation and conservation. In this case the government must enact legislation on the protection and utilization of heritage objects and at the same time approach the public, especially related to ongoing negative utilization (salvage) by providing alternative income solutions that can replace the income earned from salvage of underwater heritage (see Ridwan this volume). Here, the role of socialization is continuous, consistent and needs to be designed and carefully follow the developmental stages of the application of the rules as well as offering alternative livelihood opportunities. Using audio-visual communication methods can accelerate this change in mindsets towards the desired concept.

Case study: Morotai

Morotai was an important part of the history during WW II. As a result, this island enriched WWII underwater cultural heritage such as aircraft, tanks, Armour Personnel Carrier (APCs) which have found on land and underwater. Unfortunately, from the 1980s until now there has been massive looting on the site. The remainder-war has a lot of cut and sold in kilograms by both local people and also immigrants who load the iron from the remaining-war to the wrought-smelting. Government awareness of these sites arose after Morotai became part of the new district of North Halmahera, Morotai, and later, an

independent district separated from the North Halmahera. This awareness is quite late, and very few cultural heritage sites remain intact. Remaining sites include WWII aircraft wreckage Bristol Beaufort & B, an Australian-made fighter sitting at a depth of approximately 45m South of the island of Morotai. Wreckage was accompanied by several other scattered aircraft and also some vehicles that still leave the steering wheel. If economic regulatory approaches appropriately ran strictly, then rapid economic alternatives can be offered to the public. Those witness to this history of exploitation and use of heritage as part of a limited maritime tourist attraction can raise awareness of the wider community with conservation plans that have been targeted over a longer period of time.

This approach can be successful if:

- Local community needs a strong government to enforce the law in line with the education on an alternative livelihoods for the people affected from the consequences of these rules.
- Options are almost immediately utilization, so if this could be idealized as principally conservation it will invite the attention of the wider society to help support.
- Need a way of communication and socialization that are objective and oriented on the rules that apply specifically to all stake holders. This must be of interest, either directly or indirectly, to the wider community in general.

An Example of a Case in utilization of audio-visual communication methods that have an impact on changing attitudes and values of the villagers in Les-Bali

- Messages that need to be delivered is the use of non environmentally friendly equipment in catching fish.
- Target audience: males, aged 15-40 years, public education, indigenous people Bali
- Language of delivery: low context
- Involving stakeholders: the central character of local community
- Communications media: posters, photos and movies
- Range of communications: local - international
- Frequency of submission: each occasion (a variety of media: posters, photos, movies)
- Social value of culture: the culture of Bali

Les is a village on the north coast of Bali. At first sight there is nothing special compared to other fishing villages along the north side of Bali. Only when you approach the coastal area, you will find the fish ponds and aquariums containing sea water ornamental fish. The livelihood in this village is fisherman for ornamental fish. Originally, they were using traditional fishing tools but later due to the increase of the demand of ornamental fish and also the trading pressure pushed them to switch by using potassium cyanide, which they usually called "potash" or "pushers". The use of significant potash has increased their ability to find fish and bring home a bucket of ornamental fish.

Gradually the use of potash has damaged the marine environment. Potash sprays can be potentially fatal to coral reefs covering an area of 1-2 m within two to three months. We can imagine if there were an average of 30 people working every day for years using cyanide what sort of impact this may cause. It is therefore no wonder in the early 2000s, the condition of coral reefs in Les are severely devastated. Nearly 70% of coral reefs around the village are dead and destroyed. In early 2000, several people from the archipelago's Ark Foundation and the Society palm visit the village. By experiencing handling "destructive fishing" in the Philippines, they offered an alternative way of catching ornamental fish, using barrier nets and small nets. The method used to educate and introduce the community is an audio visual communication through films and photographs.

The first step was - every time the Non-Government Organization (NGO) Yayasan Bahtera Nusantara and Telapak visits Les they followed the fishermen to catch fish using potassium cyanide and documented all the activities. After that they published a video and invited all the fishermen to watch it. It aimed to show the fishermen the damage that they had done to the natural environment due to their use of potash.

In 2002 the fishing village of Les consciously abandoned the potash method and switched to the net method. In that year the group that established an ornamental fish village in Les, a group of fishermen Mina Bhakti Soansari, warned others that if they continued using potash they would be punished by new village regulatory reforms (based on personal experience since 2000).

Conclusion

Three approaches above, we can draw a thread of thought and process that every stage of these steps need to be communicated with the community, both specific (narrow scope) and in the general (broader scope).

From the description on the effectiveness of audio-visual communication as well as the condition of underwater remains that are often still mysterious it can be concluded that audio-visual communication is a vital bridge that is able to reach people in the delivery of messages of conservation-oriented utilization of long-term of underwater objects in Indonesia.

Things that need to be considered in designing the pattern of effective audio-visual communication are:

- Messages to be delivered (regulatory approaches, economic or regulatory and economic)
- Target audience (gender, economic level, educational level, social conditions of culture, age)
- Language of delivery (high or low context language, a high context language is the language conveyed not directly, often 'winged' and in a form of communicating that requires interpretation from the listener. Low context language is a language communicated directly and "to the point" without much swapped stale. The selection is tailored to the context of language habits, and social culture of the target communication)

- Involvement and role of stake holders (and surrounding communities), as a crew, talent, models) in the production process of communication media (photos, pictures, movies, etc.) is.
- The selection of communication media (media photos / images or movies (audio visual communication))
- Distribution range communications (local, regional, national or international)
- Frequency of delivery (more often delivered more easily influence on the change of mindset, a note: avoid boredom by providing a variety of delivery methods, visual communication can also be interspersed in the forms of communication other)
- Note the values of social culture that can support the effective delivery of messages (eg. use of traditional dress in the visualization of people on guard to protect the conservation area, on Bali's people are called Pecalang).

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