

THE ROLE OF PERSONAL INTEPRETATION AS AN EDUCATIONAL MEDIA FOR VISITORS AT THE SONOBUDOYO MUSEUM

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Abstract

Interpretive media are available at the Sonobudoyo Museum, but the inaccurate placement of collection information and directions sometimes make it difficult for visitors to navigate certain areas. The museum's limited space is also a problem, as some rooms produce conflicting sounds, which can interfere with interpretation. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to identify and analyze the role of personal interpretation models as an educational media for visitors at the Sonobudoyo Museum. This research is descriptive qualitative research with data collection techniques through observation, interview, documentation, and literature review. The techniques of selecting informants used purposive sampling with the criteria of visitors to the Sonobudoyo Museum who used the services of a guide. There were 12 visitors of Sonobudoyo Museum who were interviewed in this study. The results of this research indicate that the Sonobudoyo Museum implements personal interpretation by providing around 16 guides. The Museum guides have met 4 indicators of personal interpretation that are enjoyable, relevant, organized, and thematic. The fulfillment of these indicators means that the personal interpretation implemented at the Sonobudoyo Museum plays an important role as an educational media, especially in enhancing visitor's knowledge and educational experiences.

Keywords: Interpretation, Personal Interpretation, Museum, Educational Media, Sonobudoyo Museum.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has various types of forms that are packaged according to the interest of tourists. One of the most popular types of tourism in Indonesia is cultural tourism (Atika & Pramono, 2026). This is because Indonesia has a wide variety of cultures and traditions that differ from region to region. Culture and tourism can go hand in hand.

From a cultural perspective, the existence of tourist attractions can boost tourism by showcasing the diversity of cultural heritage that attracts travelers. Indirectly, the tourism industry also contributes to the development and preservation of Indonesian culture (Hartaman et al., 2021).

Cultural tourism attractions are tourism attractions developed based on

human creations and works that have become cultural heritage and values in society (Yu & Xu, 2019). One such space that can be used as a place to protect cultural heritage or historical relics so that they remain preserved is a museum (Carvalho & Camacho, 2023).

Museum is one form of cultural tourism destinations (Badurina et al., 2025). As a form of cultural tourism, museums need their own attraction for tourist as their identity and characteristics. In its evolution, a museum can become part of the tourism product and a communication media for visitors to learn about the history and culture of region that visited (Sinaga, 2022). Museum offer visitors the opportunity to explore specific themes and topics of interest, thereby enhancing the touris experience. Therefore, it is important to provide visitors with informative and engaging presentations in the form of interpretations (Renold et al., 2023).

Interpretation is a form of explanation of a destination or tourist attraction that explains its history or significance to visitors so that it is easier to understand. One type is personal interpretation, which is interpretation delivered directly by the guide (Andrianto & Kusumah, 2023). A guide can communicate directly with visitors so that visitors can explore the entire museum with an

accompanying and explanation of everything in the museum from the guide (Tsaniah et al., 2022). Interpretation in museums is essential for communicating information about collections and helping visitors to understand their surroundings, whether objects, environments, or concepts (Zhang & Zhang, 2026). Interpretation is also a strategy for attracting tourists by providing information in the context of educational tourism (Nurhalimah et al., 2023). Several museums in Indonesia rely on personal interpretation through guides to provide visitors with a more in-depth educational experience (Tsaniah et al., 2022). One such museum located in Yogyakarta is the Sonobudoyo Museum.

The Sonobudoyo Museum is a regional history and culture museum and is classified as a classic Javanese architectural building. This museum has a function in managing museum objects of scientific and cultural value, such as collections for educational and cultural development and guidance. In terms of collections, the Sonobudoyo Museum has a variety of collections on display. These collections originate from several cultures, including Javanese, Balinese, Madurese, and Lombok, which gives the Sonobudoyo Museum its unique character, as it does not show just one culture. The presence of diverse of

interpretation within the Sonobudoyo Museum is crucial to serve as an educational medium for visitors (Fahmi et al., 2025).

Several studies on interpretation in museums have been conducted, those are research conducted by Apriska et al. (2022), which focused to identify nine types of interpretation and ten types of interpretation tools that were generally of good quality, but still required improvement in the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of guides in three butterfly parks in Bali (Balitopia, Kemenuh, and Bali Butterfly Park).

Another study on interpretation was conducted by Junaid et al. (2022), the research took place at the Makassar City Museum showed that the management had implemented personal interpretation through tour guides. Still, visitor assistance was not optimal because not all staff acted as permanent guides. Therefore, the museum still needs support in terms of staff availability, especially guides, to optimize the implementation of personal interpretation

From the literature review above, it is clear that the application of interpretation is essential in places where there is a wealth of information for visitors to learn about. Based on the explanations provided, this research adopts a different approach to personal interpretation. The study aims to expand understanding of personal

interpretation by involving visitors to provide perspective on personal interpretation at the Sonobudoyo Museum. The novelty of this research focuses on the theory that emphasizes the principles of effective interpretation through a study of a specific museum, namely the Sonobudoyo Museum, using theory by Ham (1992) which has 4 indicators to identify personal interpretation. There are Enjoyable, so that visitors are motivated and interested in participating (interacting) in interpretation activities; Relevant, by conveying information that connects the story with the concept and location; Organized, by conveying information systematically; and Thematic, by presenting a perspective and focusing the information to be conveyed to visitors. The responses from visitors can help to analyze the role of personal interpretation as a form of educational media for visitors.

METHOD

The type of research conducted in this study is descriptive qualitative research. This approach is based on direct data collection to describe reality in detail, allows flexibility in adapting to field conditions, and involves interactions using the participants' daily language (Waruwu, 2023). It was chosen because the study focuses on visitors'

perceptions, allowing for varied and in-depth responses.

The research was conducted at Sonobudoyo Museum Unit 1, with museum visitors serving as the research participants. Informants were selected using purposive sampling to recruit participants who were most relevant to the research objectives (Subhaktiyasa, 2024). A total of twelve visitors who used guide services were interviewed. Participant recruitment continued until data saturation was achieved, indicated by the absence of new themes in successive interviews (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Although additional interviews were considered, no substantial new information emerged after the twelfth interview. Visitors who did not use guide services were excluded because the study specifically examined perceptions of personal interpretation delivered by museum guides.

Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, documentation, and literature review. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman (2014) model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, meaningful statements were coded, grouped into categories, and synthesized into broader themes, which were then interpreted to

explain the educational role of personal interpretation at Sonobudoyo Museum (Bingham, 2023). The findings were continuously reviewed throughout the analysis process to ensure consistency and credibility.

RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Research Finding

Sonobudoyo Museum is a history museum and special museum, with a collection focused on cultural artifacts. The museum has two main buildings, which serve as showrooms divided into several rooms and themes. The first building is called the Thomas Karsten building, which has a traditional concept and style and is divided into several rooms containing 12 themes. At the same time, the second building, named Hastabrata, has a more modern concept and is divided into 6 floors with their respective themes.

Informants in this study are visitors who are visiting the Sonobudoyo Museum using the services of a guide. Information collection was carried out through an interview process where informants can explain their personal interpretation of the Sonobudoyo Museum. There are 12 visitors who have been interviewed in this study. By interviewing 12 informants, the researcher

felt that the data obtained had reached a saturation point where no significant new information could be obtained, so that a sample of 12 informants was considered sufficient to fulfill the research objectives. The following is a classification of the research informants.

a. Informant Profile Based on Origin/Place of Residence

This information is intended to determine the origin of the region or place of residence of visitors to the Sonobudoyo Museum who are informants in this study. The following is a table of the number of informants classified based on the informant's regional origin.

Table 1. Number of Informants per Region of Origin

Regional Origin	Total
Yogyakarta	4
Bandung	3
Purworejo	2
Surabaya	1
Ponorogo	1
Semarang	1

Source: Researcher's Data (2025)

Based on the table above, more visitors as informants come from Yogyakarta. This is because the location of the Sonobudoyo Museum itself is located in Yogyakarta, so that local visitors have easier access. This is in line with the findings of Azhar & Muslichah (2024), who explained that domestic tourists often choose destinations that are easy to reach and have

strong cultural appeal because they provide experiences that are relevant to their daily lives. In addition, the cultural connection is that the Sonobudoyo Museum's collection is Javanese cultural heritage, so local visitors feel more connected to the culture that still applies (Saputra et al., 2026). Even so, visitors from outside Yogyakarta can also easily visit the Sonobudoyo Museum because of its location in the city center.

b. Informants Profile Based on Age or Generation

Information about age aims to determine the age composition of visitors to Sonobudoyo Museum. In this study, 12 informants were divided into 3 age ranges based on the theory put forward by Dimock (2019), with the division of generations adjusted to the research informants as follows.

Table 2. Number of Informant Ages per Generation

Generation	Range of Year	Age Periode (years)	Total
X	1965 - 1980	45 – 60	1
Millennials	1981 - 1996	29 – 44	1
Z	1997 - 2012	13 – 28	10

Source: Researcher's Data (2025)

Based on the table above, it is known that visitors from Generation Z are

more than the other 2 generations. This is because Generation Z is at an active age in seeking new information and experiences facilitated by technology (Prole et al., 2025). Sonobudoyo Museum offers education and informal education, and entertainment that utilize technology, so this generation is more interested in visiting (Setiawan & Azizah, 2026).

c. Informants Profile Based on Occupation

Information about the job aims to find out the role of informants in their environment and the purpose of visiting the Sonobudoyo Museum. Of the 12 informants obtained, there are several occupations of the research informants as follows.

Table 3. Number of Informants by Occupation

Job	Total
Student	6
Employee	2
Housewife	2
Freelance	1
Teacher	1

Source: Researcher's Data (2025)

Based on the table above, the majority of visitors to the Sonobudoyo Museum who are informants in this study are students. Sonobudoyo Museum offers a learning experience by directly seeing objects that are usually studied by students, accompanied by interactive media so as to make the learning experience more enjoyable (Lestari &

Kamiliyah NH, 2025). This is a support for visitors, especially in the world of education, for the learning process with more interesting and interactive educational media.

Discussion

Personal Interpretation at Sonobudoyo Museum

Personal interpretation is an interpretation activity by tour guides to visitors to explain the meaning of the area directly. This interpretation is carried out to provide in-depth experiences and explanations for visitors. In cultural and historical tourism, such as museums, through this interpretation, visitors get broader information and knowledge related to history and culture, and visitors can ask questions directly to the tour guide if there are topics that are not understood. Sonobudoyo Museum implements a personal interpretation model which currently has around 16 guides divided into two sessions who act as facilitators for visitors to get information related to the collections on display in the museum. Four indicators can be applied in personal interpretation activities in accordance with Ham's theory, namely:

a. Enjoyable

Interpretation, especially personal interpretation, can be enjoy and fun. Communication carried out in a pleasant

atmosphere can attract visitors' attention and interest, so that visitors are interested in engaging in interpretation activities (Edney et al., 2023). The result of the interview conducted with the 5th informant stated that:

"The guide is fun. Then it's good when explaining so we can easily understand. If we enter the museum without a guide, we don't know what the items do, so we understand the explanation of the guide who is nice, detailed, and patient too, smooth, not convoluted. Easy to understand." (Interview, 23 April 2025)

These findings support Edney et al (2023), who argue that enjoyable communication enhances visitors' attention and engagement during interpretation activities. The guide's ability to explain museum collections in a clear, detailed, and approachable manner not only reduced visitors' confusion but also fostered a positive learning atmosphere. This finding is consistent with (Yi et al., 2022), who found that clear and visitor-friendly interpretation contributes to visitor satisfaction by making information easier to understand. Furthermore, the interactive communication between guides and visitors transformed the museum visit into a more engaging experience, reducing boredom and increasing visitors' comfort throughout the visit, thereby reinforcing the educational function of

personal interpretation (Lestari & Kamiliyah NH, 2025).

b. Relevant

In personal interpretation, the information conveyed by the guide must be appropriate and related to the object being explained. This indicator is one of the important indicators in personal interpretation to meet the needs and help visitors understand the explained of the guide (Weng et al., 2020). This can also make visitors feel confident that the information conveyed is accurate (Wang et al., 2021). This finding is reflected in the statement of the 11th informant:

"Yes, I think the information from the guide is quite relevant to what is displayed in the museum. The explanation is connected to the collection in the museum, so it doesn't wander anywhere. We can understand the historical context and why the object is important. Also, when we were in the batik cloth section, it was explained using analogies that already exist in everyday life. Like this batik cloth is used during the seven-month maternity event, then the other is used at weddings, then the batik cloth for death." (Interview, 26 April 2025)

These findings support the principles of personal interpretation, which emphasize that interpretation should be directly related to the resource being presented while connecting new information with visitors' existing knowledge and experiences (Weng et al., 2020). By using familiar analogies from

everyday life, the museum guides helped visitors construct meaning from the collections rather than merely receiving factual information (de Kluis et al., 2024).

This approach is also consistent with museum education theory, which views museums as learning environments where visitors actively construct knowledge through interactions with objects, interpreters, and their prior experiences (de Kluis et al., 2024). Relating historical information to familiar cultural practices made the collections more meaningful, enhanced visitors' understanding of their historical significance, and improved information retention (P. Li, 2024). These findings further support (Wang et al., 2021), who argue that relevant and contextual interpretation increases visitors' confidence in the information presented while strengthening the educational value of museum experiences.

c. Organized

Personal interpretation should be done in a structured way so that the information conveyed is easy for visitors to follow or understand. The information is well packaged in an easy and logical order so that the flow of explanation can be connected from beginning to end coherently. Organized interpretation can help visitors focus on the museum collection better. The following are

the results of the interview with the 3rd informant.

“The guide explained in a structured way, in that order. Starting from a brief introduction to the room or collection in general. Then discuss the specific details of the collection from the name, where it was found, what function it serves in sequence, from prehistoric times to the present..” (Interview, 19 April 2025)

The findings indicate that the Sonobudoyo Museum guides used an organized interpretive approach, presenting information sequentially, beginning with an introduction to the exhibition room and continuing with detailed explanations of each collection. This structured delivery helped visitors understand the relationships among historical objects and their contexts, making the information easier to follow (Nizar & Diwangkara, 2025). These findings support the principles of personal interpretation, which emphasize that interpretation should be organized around a coherent narrative to promote visitor understanding and engagement (Ham, 1992).

The museum consists of two exhibition buildings that require considerable time to explore. Therefore, effective time management is essential to ensure that visitors receive sufficient information without becoming overwhelmed (Septiyani

& Chendraningrum, 2025). As expressed by the tenth informant:

“The guided time is quite long, about 1 hour. The information provided was sufficient, and the guide was smart, so I felt comfortable because the explanation was easy to understand....” (Interview, 26 April 2025)

This finding suggests that the guides successfully balanced the depth of information with the duration of the tour, allowing visitors to remain engaged throughout the experience (Specht & Loreit, 2021). A well-organized interpretation not only enhances cognitive understanding but also supports meaningful learning by enabling visitors to connect individual collections into a broader historical narrative (Yuliawati et al., 2025). Furthermore, effective time management prevents information overload and visitor fatigue, thereby maintaining attention and improving the overall educational experience (Lestari & Kamiliyah NH, 2025).

d. Thematic

In personal interpretation, especially in museums, thematic indicators are important to apply. This is done so that visitors who take part in interpretation activities get an opening to the information that will be conveyed by the guide. Sonobudoyo Museum has two museum buildings, each of which has

its own theme, which makes it easier for guides to explain and visitors to understand concepts related to museum collections. The statement obtained through an interview with the 8th informant is as follows.

“The guide in each room always says ‘okay next we go to this room, next to this room’, so it's like we don't feel unfamiliar with the room because from the beginning we were told that we had entered the room, for example in the Javanese House, then in the Hindu-Buddhist Influence room, and so on.” (Interview, 24 April 2025)

These findings indicate that the guides consistently introduced the theme of each exhibition room before explaining the collections, allowing visitors to recognize the context and purpose of the exhibits. This supports the principles of personal interpretation, which emphasize that thematic interpretation enables visitors to organize information into a coherent story, thereby enhancing understanding and recall (Ham, 1992). From the perspective of museum education, thematic presentation also facilitates constructivist learning by providing a conceptual framework through which visitors can relate new information to prior knowledge and progressively develop an understanding of historical and cultural developments (H. Li & Zhang, 2025). Consequently, the thematic arrangement of Sonobudoyo Museum not only assists guides

in delivering information systematically but also enables visitors to follow the historical sequence more easily and develop a more meaningful educational experience (Karimah et al., 2026).

Picture 1. Personal Interpretation Activity at Sonobudoyo Museum



Source: Researcher's Documentation (2025)

The Role of Personal Interpretation at Sonobudoyo Museum as An Education Media

Personal interpretation in the museum has a role in education. Museum guides as facilitators and educators provide more in-depth information related to the collections on display in the museum, which is an added value for visitors to gain knowledge that is not written in full. This evidenced by the results of an interview with the 6th informant who argued that:

"...actually need places like this to introduce culture, especially since the price is affordable for all people in my opinion, and the guide is free. The collections displayed are also good, interesting, so to be used as

educational material is very good. Plus the guide's delivery was clear, she really mastered the material in both buildings. Sometimes we also asked a lot of questions and everything was answered." (Interview, 23 April 2025)

From the statement above, visitors can freely ask questions related to things that are lacking or not understood to be explained more clearly by the guide. With the museum guide, visitors get maximum information related to history and culture. The 6th informant's statement was also clarified by the 9th informant who said that:

"Suitable for education. The thing is, for those of us who are already old, at first we didn't know so we know. Especially children of student age, so they understand. So besides at school, I understand more here. At school, we only read about it, but here, it's explained to us, 'this is how it originally looked like'. So it's not just in wishful thinking. If in wishful thinking, sometimes if the stories are like fairy tales, but once you know like this, 'oh this does exist, something like this does exist'. Then here it is also original, like more than 80% of the collection is original and the most important thing is its history." (Interview, 24 April 2025)

From the 9th informant's statement, it can be seen that the role of museum guides is very helpful as an educational media. Not only for students, but also for the elderly who want to know the history and culture contained in the museum. Another statement was conveyed by the 11th informant who said:

"I think the role of guides at Sonobudoyo is really important for education. They don't just show visitors around or explain what the museum collection is doing, but they also make visitors understand history and culture in a fun way. Sometimes the info in the museum can feel stiff or boring, but if there is a fun guide, it all becomes more alive and easy to understand. In essence, they are the bridge between museum collections and visitors, so that what is displayed is not only seen, but also understood and appreciated by visitors." (Interview, 26 April 2025)

From the above statement, it can be seen that information from the guide not only serves as a means of education but can also increase visitors' appreciation of the collections on display (Zhang & Zhang, 2026). With in-depth and interesting explanations, guides can help visitors understand the historical and cultural values contained in museum collections.

The research findings indicate that personal interpretation at Sonobudoyo Museum serves a significant educational function by enhancing visitors' understanding of museum collections through direct engagement with museum guides. By offering clear explanations, fostering questions and discussions, and contextualizing collections within their historical and cultural backgrounds, guides facilitate the construction of deeper meanings from the exhibits. These results support the principles of personal interpretation, which

emphasize the creation of meaningful connections between visitors and heritage resources (Ham, 1992).

The findings further support museum education theory, which conceptualizes museums as active learning environments where knowledge is constructed through interactions with objects, interpreters, and prior experiences (de Kluys et al., 2024). Through discussions, demonstrations, and hands-on activities such as batik making, personal interpretation enhances visitors' understanding, information retention, and appreciation of cultural heritage. Additionally, it strengthens awareness of the historical and cultural values represented in museum collections (Solikah et al., 2026).

CLOSING

The purpose of this research was to identify the personal interpretation media and analyze the role of personal interpretation as a visitor education medium at Sonobudoyo Museum. The results showed that personal interpretation has been well implemented through the provision of sufficient museum guides for visitors.

The findings indicate that personal interpretation at Sonobudoyo Museum is consistent with the EROT theory, encompassing the enjoyable, relevant, organized, and thematic indicators. Guides create a comfortable learning atmosphere,

provide relevant and structured explanations, and introduce each museum room according to its theme, enabling visitors to better understand the collections and their historical and cultural significance. Consequently, personal interpretation plays an important role as an educational medium by enhancing visitors' understanding and creating more meaningful and interactive museum experiences.

This research provides practical implications for developing more effective and interactive museum educational programs. Future research is recommended to examine the effectiveness of personal interpretation among different visitor groups, such as visitors with different motivations or group characteristics.

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