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Guidance as a Component in Managing the
Holocaust Heritage in Informal Education – A
Case Study of Sites and Institutions
Commemorating the Holocaust of the Jewish
People.

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ABSTRACT

Visits to sites commemorating the Holocaust heritage are an important and central foundation in the teaching of the Holocaust and in the shaping of the Israel collective memory. Despite the importance of these commemorating sites to the Israeli society, the literature review reveals almost a complete disregard of the management of the guidance in these sites. The present study will try to narrow down the gap in the literature and will focus on the guidance activity which serves a central component in the visiting experience with possible far reaching social, educational and political implications.

The approach taken in the present innovating study relies on a body of knowledge from Management Sciences. This approach suggests that it is possible to conceptualize the experience of visiting a heritage site as a consumer experience, with the heritage as a resource and the guide as the one involved in managing both. In view of this approach, the guide sees the heritage inventory presented in the site as a resource given, at least to some extent, at his/her disposal. This approach relies on the model suggested by Tunbridge & Ashworth (1996), conceptualizing the production process of heritage in tourism and focusing on "Commodification" of the heritage - a process in which events, objects and characters from the past undergo a purposeful process of transformation, through history preserving agents, and turn into a core product - the heritage. This core product is meant to address the current demand trends while being advertised to various markets aiming to yield different benefits from it. The experience of visiting heritage sites is made accessible to visitors through the guides on the site, whose activity is of critical importance (Cohen, Ifargan, & Cohen, 2002; Oren et al., 2010).

The aims of the study

This study wishes to reveal the targets of guidance, its contents (central messages and lessons, content of subjects), the narratives it uses and its practices as reflected in the perceptions of the guides and their actual guidance. The study tries to expose the managerial practice used by the guide for the purpose of managing the experience of visiting. In addition, the study aims to reveal the guides' self-perception of their role as the ones in charge of managing the visiting experience.

The study population

The study was done in 2013 – 2015 in four out of ten institutions commemorating the Holocaust heritage in Israel and authorized by the Ministry of Education. The study included 15 guides: Beit Haedut – Nir Galim (three guides); Terezin House (three guides); Shem Olam – Kfar Haroeh Yeshiva (two guides); Ghetto Fighters House Museum (Beit Lohamey Hagetaot) (five guides) and two independent guides working in different Holocaust institutions in Israel. The study population was comprised of 9 men and 6 women, between the ages of 25 – 64, with 8 months to 30 years employment range as guides in different Holocaust institutions.

The study tools

Due to the pioneering character of this study and the existing body of knowledge, a qualitative study strategy was used. The study was done in two stages: The first stage included a comprehensive literature review and six interviews. Two structured in-depth interviews were done with guides working in institutions commemorating the Holocaust heritage. Another four interviews were done using an expert sampling (Mr. Amir Hasechel, Mr. Avi Segal, Mr. Arie Barnea, Dr. Boaz Cohen) with the intention of reaching an extensive understanding of the studied phenomenon. Also, the researcher has participated in enrichment lectures regarding the new Holocaust

instruction program of the ex- Minister of Education, Shay Piron, and in a lecture in the Holocaust memory in the formal education system. The second and main stage of the study was also divided into two parts: 30 non-participatory and unstructured observations of guidance in institutions commemorating the Holocaust heritage (in most cases two observations were conducted for each of the guided participated and interviewed for the study). Following, the main tool of the study was used – semi-structured in-depth interviews with each of the guides who were observed.

Analysis of the findings

The analysis of the findings was done along the collection of data and following it. The present study is based on the constructive qualitative paradigm, which emphasizes the holistic understanding of phenomena and the importance of context in its interpretation and relies on "Grounded Theory". The analysis process included four stages combining the approaches of Shkedy (2003) and Gross (1995).

The findings

The findings show that the guide aspires to give the visitor a deep emotional and cognitive experience with implications for the past and the future. It is done through clusters of guidance targets, with hierarchy among them: to introduce the historical, heart rending, story of the Holocaust and the Second World War to the visitor and to create a memory about it; to give information about people and/or events that were not exposed and/or to remedy injustices; to raise interest, understanding and thought in the visitor; to cultivate humanistic and/or Jewish and/or national values, and to encourage the visitor to act. Different sources (documents, testimonies, items, objects, etc.) and practices (personification, use of questions, etc.) are used, through interpretation and delivery of interpretation on the site, in order to establish the narrative adopted by the

guide, for the support of the messages of the guidance, to mediate the story and to create internal unification among them.

The management of the guidance and the management of the visit experience are influenced by different factors, some of them institutionalized (for example: vision, targets, policy and operational flexibility, marketing and branding efforts, scope and subjects of the visual documentation), other are personal relating to the identity of the guides [for example: worldview regarding the Holocaust (narrative) and its lessons and messages, the importance and the extent to which the subject/exhibit is close to the guide's heart], and some are relating to the guide's perception of the visitors (for example: perception and assessment of previous knowledge, perception of the visitors' level of attention and interest), the guide's personal guidance style and perception of the "free hand" he/she has in managing the guidance (related to the level of monitoring the guide during his/her guidance), some related to the visitors (for example: socio-demographic characteristics, length of visit, level of attention and interest) and other factors (for example: external events). In light of these variables, the guide, consciously, manages the experience of the visit and guidance by choosing the subjects to be focused upon during the guidance, the way of presenting them, the strength and complexity of the explanations and the scope of targets. This is done while relating to the "spirit of the institution" but by mainly relating to the guide's worldview and understanding of the lessons from the Holocaust.

One of the most conspicuous findings of the study is that segmentation of the visitors (in terms of age, employment characteristics, level of attention and interest, previous knowledge, etc.), which is done by the guide before and during the visit, is used by the guide as a decision making tool with regard to required modifications of the guidance content and to the way of management. It influences the width and depth

of the subjects and explanations presented to the visitors. The visitors' segmentation also serves for the personalization of the visit's experience. Thus, the guide tries to provide and create a feeling that the visit is relevant and important to the visitor's present and future. This feeling is intended to increase and/or to create further personal interest and bond, and to increase the experience of the visit.

Even though, from a declarative perspective, there is a distinction among the institutions commemorating the Holocaust based on the established narrative. It was found that in all cases of guidance, more than one narrative was used. Mostly, a combination of the universal and Jewish-particular narratives and the active, spiritual, cultural and religious heroism narrative were used. The personal, collective and historical narratives were also used. Thus, a combined and homophonic (a term from the world of music describing a texture made of many voices, characterized by a leading main voice and other voices "subjected" to it that mainly serve for accompaniment and enrichment of the texture), which is intended to answer the needs of a variety of audiences and/or enable pluralistic educational approach. Nevertheless, the guide is the one deciding upon the weight of each narrative during the guidance in accordance with his/her targets and perception of the lessons and messages of the Holocaust. This decision has far reaching implications on the experience of the visit.

The findings point to the existence of two types of guidance: the first, "Active Experiential Guidance", and the second, "Touristic- Explanatory Guidance". This typology was based on organizational and pedagogic criteria that were revealed and characterized in the present study – characteristics of managing the guidance, structure of guidance, contents of activity, the involvement expected of the visitor, and also an observation relating to "who is in the center of the guidance". "Active Experiential Guidance" usually takes the form of a seminar combining different subject units, while

using a variety of activities. This type of guidance is intended for organic, mainly institutionalized groups (for example: pupils, soldiers). It typically lasts about 6 – 9 hours (with a number of breaks with an approximate total of an hour) and participants are expected to be active. A central characteristic of this type of guidance is that its focus is on the interaction between the guide and the visitors. The second type of guidance, "Touristic- Explanatory Guidance", is guidance in a museum space. This type of guidance is intended for individuals, families and groups (random or organic). It lasts for merely 2-3 hours (without a break) and it mostly consists of one guidance unit with a narrow scope of subjects. Visitors are typically passive in this type of guidance. A central characteristic of this guidance is its focus on the guide. There are some common categories for both types of guidance (such as, targets, narratives, messages and lessons presented to visitors and parts of guidance practices). However, there are differences between the various dosages of the guidance components. It is possible to look at the situation as experiences that are consisted of similar components that vary in weight and the amount of components in the mixture created by the guide. In both types of guidance there is integration between the cognitive style and the emotional-experiential style. The common practice is personification through presenting the story of an individual.

The guides attribute much importance to their role in shaping the awareness of the Holocaust and they emphasize the roles of education, mediation, "what lights and brings life" of events and characters at that period of time and of endowing the Holocaust heritage. Also, they highly value the roles of integration (cognition and emotion; historical knowledge - about developments, trends and processes important for understanding the Holocaust) and the interaction with the visitors (suitability to the group, an ability to raise questions, discussion and thought regarding subjects or

characters and their actions, raising complexities and meanings). The structuring of the story, bringing life to the occurrence or character, essential summary of the information, and, on the other hand, the ability to expand and give details on relevant contexts, the choosing and interpretation of exhibits/personal stories in their context and referring to the process and the group dynamics of the guidance.

Discussion and summary

The management of guidance is a central component in the understanding of the visit experience and its implications, something that, until now, has not received the attention of research despite its importance in the representation of the Holocaust heritage and the restructuring of it in the collective memory of the Israeli society.

The representation of a combined-homophonic narrative, which puts an emphasis on the narrative adopted by the guide, accompanied by other narratives and is integrated (and at least not contradicting) the institutionalized narrative, show the perception of the guides about the ability not to put the universal narrative and the Jewish-particular narrative (and the other narratives) one against the other.

Furthermore, this integration reflects the perception of the guides that a balance and integration of narratives give a wider picture of the time of the Holocaust and this is supported by the "Dialogical Model" (Gadamer, 1999 in Yogev & Nave, 2004) regarding "placated narratives". This integration of narratives is done with the purpose of creating a pluralistic educational discourse and/or openness for a variety of target audiences (Jewish and non-Jewish) who have different narrative perceptions about the time of the Holocaust.

In the guide's perception, the target of the guidance is to provide the visitor with a meaningful experience for the present and the future, corresponding with the

personal ideology adopted by the guide, without contradicting the "spirit of the institution". The guide, while moving in the site, refines the wide historical content into a combined unit of paragraphs, stories, photos and objects. This enables the guide to selectively shape the visitor memory, through directing him/her while emphasizing selected narratives, messages and lessons and turning the visitor's attention to exhibits and monuments with accordance to a certain ideology. These targets are attained through Interpretation and Delivery of Interpretation (Shapira & Worka, 2013) of the guide on site. The Interpretation and Delivery of Interpretation are meant to create a holistic experience for the visitors combining emotional, personal and cognitive aspects in addition for them being educational and learning tools (Gross, 2011; Oren et al., 2010). The findings of the study show that the guides use a variety of practices, which contribute to the enrichment of the educational experience, to the handling of the complexity of the subject (Gross, 2011) and address a variety of learning forms (Khalid et al., 2011; Wagner & Elion, 2004).

In summary, the guides who serve as, and also define themselves as, memory agents (Halbwachs, 1992) and identity agents (Peldhay & Atex, 1999), are interested in delivering not only the events of the past which they want people to remember, but also their perception of the meaning of these events, and in this way they take an active and significant part in management of the Holocaust heritage.

Theoretical recommendations

This study may contribute to the body of knowledge dealing with narratives regarding the combination of narratives, the examination of their role and contribution to the shaping of a collective awareness, as well as the way they have developed so far and futuristic development. This study revealed that the guides created a homophonic narrative combining all the narratives known in the relevant literature. These findings

contradicts different studies claiming that the visitors is exposed to a certain narrative, and not to a combination of narratives. Also, the findings of this study contribute to the body of knowledge dealing with guidance of tourism and especially with guidance of heritage tourism, referring to the central role of the guide in managing the experience of the visit as a factor with important and essential implications. Another contribution may be for the body of knowledge dealing with teaching of the Holocaust, referring to the restructuring and importance of a hierarchy of targets of Holocaust teaching. The results of the study show that the guides have a "hierarchic" perception of the Holocaust teaching targets (in a similar way to Maslow's pyramid of needs).

Practical recommendations

This study has a variety of recommendations for those involved in endowing and managing the Holocaust heritage. To the system of education (formal and informal), recommendations dealing with knowing and learning the way the Holocaust heritage is presented to the visitors (contents and practices) in the different institutions involved in commemorating the Holocaust heritage, planning and monitoring the contents of visits, integrating them into a learning program. In the margins of the study, there are recommendations referring to the role of the teacher and/or the companion and his/her identity and also to the examination of the way of managing heritage sites and especially Holocaust heritage sites. Other recommendations are directed to the managers of institutions commemorating the Holocaust heritage referring to managerial applications such as aspects of inspection and authorization. The results of the study show that the guides manage different aspects in the experience of the visit according to their personal perception and worldview about the Holocaust. Managers of heritage sites should consolidate their policy on the subject – do they give this freedom to the guide or do they ask him to stick to a certain experience. In view of the

study's results, those in charge of managing the guidance on the site, and also the bodies teaching guides for Holocaust heritage sites, should understand in depth the relationship between the different components of the visit experience. Examination of this, may influence the ways in which the visit experience should be managed and the providing of tools to the guide to manage the experience of the visit. Also, the results of the study show that the ability to influence the visitor is at the base of the guidance. This information can serve bodies interested in recruiting guides

Limitations of the study

The limitations of this study stem from not sampling institutions commemorating the Holocaust heritage which are not under the inspection of the Ministry of education (for example: "Ginzach Kidush Hashem" in Boney Bark, "Holocaust Cellar" in Jerusalem, "The Jewish Fighter in the Second World War Museum" in Latrun), as well as the lack of representation of guides from Yad Vashem – the official commemorating institution of Israel, with the largest and most varied scope of visitors, from the study. Other limitations include the sampling of guidance only in Hebrew, for Israeli, mainly Jewish, audience, and also due to the pioneer nature of the study and the performance of it by merely one investigator.

The results of this study show the need for some follow-up studies:

- a. . It is possible to see from the study that those who manage the experience of the visit in institutions commemorating the Holocaust heritage do not have a body of knowledge regarding the implications of the visit on the visitors. This study shows that there is a need to analyze and investigate the visit's experience in these sites in the same way a process of assimilation of messages (a campaign) is investigated while trying to logically, responsibly and effectively manage the experience of the visit.

- b. In view of quantitative study, an examination of the visitors' experience while examining possible relations between the messages and/or targets of the guidance and their implications for the visitors.
- c. An examination in view of a quantitative approach of the relation between the guide's worldview (beliefs and ideas shaping a perspective on a certain topic), his/her perception of the role, personality/characteristics and his/her biographic background, and the messages and practices used during the guidance.
- d. An examination of targets, contents, messages and practices of the guide that are used with non-Israeli and/or non-Jewish audiences and also to the Orthodox audience.
- e. An examination of targets, contents, messages and practices of guidance in sites commemorating the Holocaust heritage in the world while emphasizing the self- perception of the guides' role in these institutions.
- f. An examination of the way the character of the guidance influences the demand for a visit of the site and satisfaction from visiting it.

Key words: Holocaust, guidance management, informal education, the management of heritage tourism, visit's experience.