

ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION EFFICIENCY AND INTERPRETIVE FUNCTIONS OF TOURIST MAPS FOR HERITAGE SITES VISIT

Abstract

Tourist maps for visiting heritage sites are one of the most widespread and edited types of mapping, but this fact is not accompanied by the quality that these documents require, and therefore, they are far from improving visitor satisfying experiences, as well as contributing to heritage management needs.

Answering to this problem, research general objective is to determine how such maps can improve their efficiency as communicative and interpretive documents. To achieve it, this study addresses the task in three phases. The first one reviews the knowledge provided in this issue by Heritage Interpretation, Cognitive Psychology, Cartography and Graphic Design disciplines, and in each chapter are selected the more useful to improve map efficiency, and besides, those techniques and procedures chosen are suited to the particular case of the tourist maps. In the second phase, more than 230 tourist maps of different geographical regions worldwide are analyzed, it also are designed more than a dozen tourist map proposals and interviews with experts in heritage, tourism and mapping conducted as well. And the third phase addresses the cartographic culture of map users, through the results of 250 surveys to university students.

The results of the study show that the quality of some maps, from the cartographic point of view, is good, but that, in general, do not meet visitors' needs, as the results of the university population survey support that the cartographic culture of tourist map users has been overestimated.

As a result, this work proposes a new thematic map product: the "interpretive tourist map", whose originality lies in that it is a document that serves to guide and inform visitors of a site whose main attraction is the heritage, but also in that it interprets the heritage to contribute to its appreciation and conservation. This map opens the door to an unknown niche, that must be developed professionally, and this work summarizes a set of qualities that the contents of this map should meet.

From the tourism point of view, this research contributes to improve heritage sites' visitor management, encouraging visitor's comfort, and thus increasing their satisfaction, as it facilitates not only their intellectual access to heritage but also emotional. It proposes new heritage awareness tools that enable get heritage management objectives across the public who visit it, thanks to strategic communication techniques, those that pursue particular targets established by heritage managers.

In addition, results and proposals are extrapolated to digital fields like web or smartphone applications. Furthermore, this research covers the international level, which gives universality to the achieved results.

Keywords: Heritage interpretation, Tourism Mapping, Visitor management, Strategic communication.