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## A Review of the Literature on the Effect of Airborne Particulates Matter Towards Museum Visitors and Museum Artefact

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**Abstract:** Airborne particulates matter is significantly harmful towards museum visitors and displays artefact. The suspension of airborne particulates such as dust, pollens and particles originated from various indoor sources like dusting, sweeping, vacuuming, openings and museum visitors. Meanwhile, the outdoor sources are from construction, industrial, agricultural and transportation activity. Once airborne particulates interact with various substances in the air, it formed into organic or inorganic chemical compounds and then deposited onto the surface of the artefact, which creates deterioration in terms of soiling defect. Besides, particulates also can reach the human lung, enter deep into alveoli and dissolve into blood capillaries, thus cause heart attack to the museum visitors. So, the aim of this paper is to review the sources and effects of air pollution and airborne particulates matter, which give the significant impact towards tourist and soiling artefact. This paper reviews the current knowledge of air pollution, particulates pollutants inside museum environment, the impact of airborne particulates towards museum tourist and chemical characteristics of soiling artefact. The currently available studies are biased towards chemical properties of airborne particulates, which affect human health. However, more information on the chemical effect of heavy metal elements such as Ferum, Manganese, Copper, Lead and Zinc towards inorganic artefact and tourist health is needed to enable risk assessment inside National Museum of Malaysia.

**Key words:** Airborne Particulates Matter • Soiling Defect • Artefacts • Tourist • Museums

### INTRODUCTION

Air pollution significantly affects global climate, human health, flora, fauna and materials. A new WHO air quality model confirms that 92% of the world's population lives in places where air quality levels exceed WHO limits [1]. The museum included, where it is a building that stores and conserves all types of national artefact. The outdoor air pollutants will enter museum building from different sorts of opening such as doors, windows, air duct and visitors.

The pollutants such as carbon monoxide (CO), carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), particulate matter (PM), soot particles and ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) will enter the museum [2, 3]. Then, they settled inside the

museum gallery horizontally and vertically either on the walls or floors.

The airborne particulates matter deposition significantly harmful towards museum artefact as it causes the material to decay. The deterioration of artefact includes metal corrosion, surface cracking, painting discolouration, fading of dyes and soiling defect [4, 5]. Carbonaceous compounds (elemental carbon and organic carbon), sea salt, mineral dust, biological materials (pollens, spores, bacteria, viruses), heavy metals (Al, Fe, Cu, Zn, Pb), secondary sulphate, nitrate and ammonium particles are some of the chemical components in the airborne particulates that trigger the soiling defect of artefact.







Previous studies have reported that soiling defect of inorganic artefact i.e.; metal, stone and ceramic glass (refer Table 1 below) are influenced by the presence of heavy

metal elements such as Fe, Mn, Cu, Pb and Zn which can catalyse the oxidation and hydrolysis of sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) to form sulphuric acid[6].When sulphuric acid reacted with stone, aqueous ions were formed thus, mass from the stone was lost.

The inorganic artefact is being selected for this research because the soiling rate of inorganic artefact is higher as the time taken for the airborne particulates matter to react with the surface of artefact is faster than organic artefact[7]. Hence, the inorganic artefact deteriorates faster. The organic artefact is those material made from animal and plant product while inorganic artefact is created from non-living materials[8].

Through some time, the surface of the inorganic artefact will be darkened and it will be difficult and expensive to clean the surface[9]. Thus, it is vital to preserve and conserve the artefact as the materials are valued solely for their visual qualities. These works of arts are irreplaceable and the value of some pieces is extraordinarily large. Even small rates of soiling may lead to unacceptable cumulative damage over centuries. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to review the sources and effects of air pollution and airborne particulate matter which give the significant impact towards soiling defect of museum artefact.

Table 1: Samples of Inorganic and Organic Artefact Taken During Site Visit to National Museum of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur.

|                    |   |   |   |
|--------------------|---|---|---|
| Organic Artefact   | Old handwritten Al-Quran (Paper)  | Wayang Kulit (Leather)  | The Royal Headgear (Cotton & Silk)  |
|                    |  |  |  |
| Inorganic Artefact | Stone Box (Stone)   | China Teapots (Ceramic Glass)   | Elephant Bell (Metal)   |
|                    |  |  |  |

**Literature Review**

**Air Pollution:** The World Health Organization (WHO) reported recent news in September 2016, which highlighted the effect of air pollution exposure with 3 million deaths each year. Moreover, about 6.5 million deaths, are 11.69% of all global death, were associated with indoor and outdoor air pollution [1]. This shows that air pollution is one of major concern towards global death.

According to the pie chart in Figure 1 below presented by [10], there are five major sources of gas emission to the environment. The sources are from electricity, transportation, industry, commercial, residential and agriculture sector. In 2014, the electricity sector was the largest source of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for about 30% of the U.S. total. This is due to the release of gases during the combustion of fossil fuels, such as coal, oil and natural gas, to produce electricity to the country.

Meanwhile, in Malaysia, the Compendium of Environment Statistics (CES) 2015 had presented a statistics on the emission of pollutants to the atmosphere with the latest year in 2014[11]. It is shown in Table 2 below; the most significant emission source of pollutants in Malaysia is transportation sector with a figure of 2092.0 tonnes in the year 2014. The movement of people and goods by cars, trucks, trains, ships, aeroplanes and other motor vehicles produce carbon dioxide through combustion of the petroleum-based product, like gasoline in internal combustion engines.

Thus, what can be concluded here is that the major sources of pollution in U.S is from electricity sector whereas in Malaysia, the transportation sector. U.S population and country is bigger compared to Malaysia. Thus they need more power to supply to each part of the industry in the country.

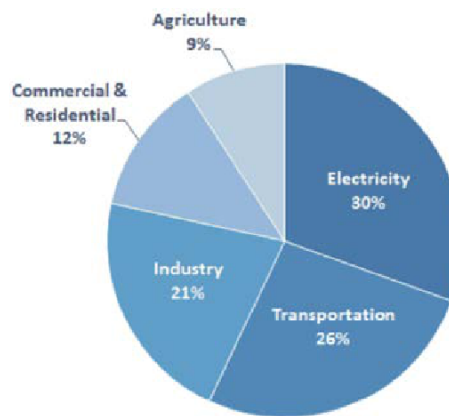


Fig. 1: The Total U.S Greenhouse Gas Emission by Economic Sector in 2014 [10]

Table 2: Statistics Emission of Pollutants to the Atmosphere[11]

| Source of Emission | Year ('000 tonnes) |        |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------|
|                    | 2010               | 2014   |
| Industrial         | 113.9              | 101.9  |
| Motor Vehicles     | 1829.7             | 2092.0 |
| Power Plant        | 619.2              | 742.9  |

**Air Pollutant in the Museum:** When referring to the air pollutant, it can be defined as small particulates [12], anthropogenic chemical emission [13], or any solid, liquid or gases substances in the air that can cause harm towards human, environment, animals, vegetation and material [14]. Pollutants may include almost any natural or artificial composition of airborne matter capable of being airborne.

Air pollutants are grouped in categories for ease in classification; some of the categories are solids, sulphur compounds [2], volatile organic chemicals, particulate matter [3], nitrogen compounds [9], oxygen compounds [15], halogen compounds, radioactive compounds and odours [16].

Previously published studies have identified several factors of air pollutant inside the museum building. The increase of air pollutant are influenced by the reduced ventilation rates, tightly sealed buildings, use of housekeeping supplies, pesticides, furnishing and synthetic building materials [2, 17, 18]. The air pollutants also originated from area source, such as newly painted surfaces, or from point sources like storerooms [5, 19, 20].

Besides, the sources of air pollutants in the museum can be generated from combustion process from vehicles or wood products [7, 21]. Meanwhile, the process of heating and cleaning of museum gallery are the factor of air pollutant existence [22]. In addition, the building furnishings such as carpet, paints, boards and furniture made of pressed wood products are contributable towards the increase of air pollutant in the museum beside human occupancy [2, 23, 24].

It shows here that many factors contribute towards the increase of air pollutants in the museum. It is easy for an outdoor pollutant to penetrate indoor environment of the museum. Thus the penetration and increase of air pollutant in the museum pose a significant risk towards artefact. Some of the pollutants are sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, nitrogen oxide, ozone and hydrogen sulphide [25–27]. Hence, the effects of indoor air pollutants towards materials are varied due to the types of pollutants exist in the air.

**The Museum Environment:** The conservation of museum artefact is influenced by the indoor environment of the museum such as the Museum microclimate and air pollutants. Temperature and relative humidity (RH) variations, metabolic actions and excretions of microorganism and gaseous and airborne particulates matter all play an important role in the deteriorations of artefact [2, 28–30]. So, the temperature, humidity,

particulate matter and gaseous buffering determine the microclimate of the museum.

Camuffo [2] highlighting that the modern European museum produced high microclimate variability. It is a similar condition with the studies conducted in National Museum of Malaysia, where the level of moisture of indoor is not stable and are not well maintained. The main reason is that, lack of temperature and humidity buffering materials, low thermal mass and greenhouse effect of the glass and building walls.

Hence, with the combination of high changes in temperature and humidity and the airborne particulates suspended in the museum gallery, it will then generate various harmful effects towards building facades and artefacts. The effects can be such as mould growth, metal corrosion, paper brittleness, fragile textile, wood and cloth shrinkage, cellulose degradation, material expansion, painting discolouration as well as soiling defect [3, 16, 5, 27, 29, 31]. Apart from that, an increase in temperature will significantly impact the chemical reaction of airborne particulates matter and thus, accelerate the degradation process of artefact.

The temperature and humidity variance can be stabilised by incorporating the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. The HVAC systems are the key components that combine outdoor air with indoor air [17, 32] and one of their purposes is to prevent outdoor particulate matters from entering the indoor air.

The comparison from previous studies to see the efficiency of HVAC system which has been incorporated in the museum can be seen in the case study of Sepulveda House, California [5]. The indoor fine particle concentrations in the building were nearly identical to those outdoors because the building has no air filtration system. Whereas, at the other gallery where the HVAC system included, the indoor airborne particulates are mostly fine. Therefore, the microclimate variability may influence the conservator to regulate the indoor environment for the conservation of artefacts.

**Airborne Particulates Matter:** The airborne particulates matter, which includes dust, dirt, soot, smoke and liquid droplets emitted into the air, is small enough to be suspended in the atmosphere [3, 17, 27, 33, 4]. Airborne particulates may be a complex mixture of organic and inorganic substances and can be characterised by their physical attributes and their chemical compositions, which influence their effect on health. The smaller particles contain the secondarily formed aerosol

(gas-to-particle conversion), combustion particles and re-condensed organic and metal vapour. The larger particles usually contain earth crust materials and fugitive dust from roads and industries [5].

Moreover, particulate matters are divided into primary and secondary types. The primary particulates do not combine with other particles, while secondary particulate matter is the combination of two or more particles that forms a new composition[34]. The secondary particulates are more complex and more hazardous to human health and environment[4, 35].

The physical attributes of airborne particles include mass concentration and size distribution. Ambient levels of mass concentration are measured in micrograms per cubic meter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ); size attributes are usually measured in aerodynamic diameter. Particulates matter (PM) exceeding 2.5 microns ( $\mu\text{m}$ ) in aerodynamic diameter is defined as coarse particles as shown in Figure 2 below, while particles smaller than 2.5 microns ( $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ ) are called fine particles [36].

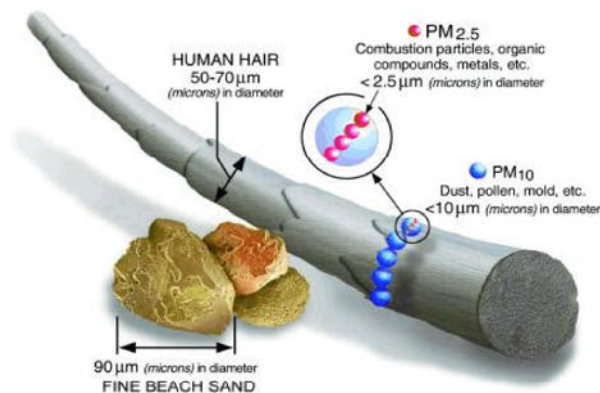


Fig. 2: The Size Comparison of PM Particles  
(Source: US EPA, 2016[10])

Recent research by Mohd Din [37] supported the previous studies, which suggested that airborne particulates matters in museums originate from different kind of sources. The sources include the use of HVAC system [2, 17], cleaning services [19, 38], vacuuming process [19], particulates from displayed artefact or storage room [39, 40], open entrance [15, 31], particulates from outside and from visitors [41, 42] and occupants in the museums [24]. From all the sources mentioned above, the airborne particulates matter will be suspended inside the museum gallery and then deposited onto the artefact either vertically or horizontally due to gravitational forces. The airborne will be deposited in the display boxes,

display textile frames, gallery floors, painting, sculpture and exposed artefact. After sometimes, the soiling defects can be seen obviously such as through blackening of the surface or brownish spots on paper. So, it is supported that airborne particulate matter significantly affects the soiling of the artefact.

#### Effects of Airborne Particulates matter Towards Museum Visitor:

Tourist is defined as a person who spends at least one night in a destination to which he or she had travelled [43]. In 2013, the total tourist arrived in Malaysia reached an amount of 25.72 million. Meanwhile, the amount of tourist visiting the National Museum is only 357,506 visitors[44]. The percentage of tourist who visited the National Museum over total tourism coming to Malaysia is only 1.39% which decreases 35% from the previous year statistic with a total of 551,412 visitors[45]. The drop of visitors' percentage is due to the haze crisis called the 2013 South-east Asian Haze [46].

The 2013 South-east Asian haze was notable for causing record high level of pollution in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei and Southern Thailand during the month of June and July [46]. As highlighted in the 2012 Annual Report of Jabatan Muzium Malaysia (JMM), the ratio of tourist from local, international and students are 0.59:0.24:0.17 respectively. This shows that more than half of the museum visitors are Malaysian.

Airborne particulates matter significantly impact human health[47, 48], flora, fauna, building materials[7] as well as global climate[49]. In the context of the museum, the tourist health should be seriously considered as well.

Particulates pollution can be a life-threatening issue for the museum visitors which include the four critical groups, i.e. infants[13] pregnant women[50] elderly and people with critical illness[36]. The infant is vulnerable to particles pollutants as their organ system and metabolic pathways are not matured enough. Recent literature suggests that exposure to air pollution during pregnancy can cause health problem for the mother and child as well as preterm delivery and low birth weight.

Moreover, the immune system of elderly already drops to 70% when they reach the age of 50's. The most dangerous situation is for the person that suffers chronic illness as their lung and heart cannot function well. If there is slight chemical pollutants enter their body, their illness will be more serious.

The adverse effects of airborne particulates towards visitor's health are like coughing, heart diseases, respiratory disease, asthma and even mortality.

### **Soiling Defect of Airborne Particulates**

**Matter:** Most of the museums in the world are located in urban environments, where pollution, originating from domestic heating, construction works, traffic and industry have harmful effects on buildings and decorative materials [7, 23, 27, 31]. So, black crust formations, material decohesion and dust deposition often occur on the exterior of the buildings, which can cause undesirable aesthetic effects of the artefact [9, 5, 28]. However, inside the museums, soiling and chemical weathering can occur due to both indoor and outdoor phenomena.

Several activities that taking place in a museum such as dusting, sweeping, spraying, vacuuming, floor waxing and interior furnishings [9, 5, 23], as well as the suspension of soil dust particles introduced by visitor [2, 16], have been found to be a significant indoor sources of air pollutant. In addition, deterioration, erosion procedures and restoration or construction works may cause higher particle abundance inside a museum.

Through museum activities, construction process and transportation emission, airborne particulates matter will react with chemical gases inside the museum and will be deposited onto artefact and thus cause soiling defect. Previous research has stated that soiling defect is also influenced by the presence of heavy metal elements such as Ferum, Manganese, Copper,

Lead and Zinc in the airborne particulates matter. Cadmium emission is originated from metal refining and smelting facilities; Mercury emission is from the industrial sector and Lead emission is from road transport sector [6].

So, Lead emission is significantly impacted the soiling defect of museum artefact. The information above supported the previous studies by [37], which stated that the major source of air pollution in Malaysia is through transportation sector.

**Research Gap:** Through literature studies, there are various types of research in the museums around the worlds that have been widely investigated in a Western country, European country, Middle East and Asian country [2, 3, 9, 5, 27]. Most of the studies are regarding chemical properties of airborne particulates soiling defect. However, there is still a lack of information in regards to the investigation of heavy metals in the airborne particulates matter, which deposited on the metal, stone and ceramic glass artefact. So the primary idea of this paper is to discuss the recent case studies from different countries around the world to determine the chemical

characterisation of airborne particulates matter that cause soiling of artefact inside National Museum of Malaysia.

### **CONCLUSION**

In overall, museum artefacts are prone to become soiled due to the exposure and accumulation of airborne particulates matter with the heavy metal element. The high concentration of airborne particulates matter from outside enters the museum galleries through openings and building cracks as well as visitor occupancy. The variability of temperature and relative humidity will encourage the heavy metal to react with airborne particulates matter. Thus, dust particles will suspend in the air and deposited onto the surface inorganic artefact such as metal, stone and ceramic glass. Besides causing soiling defect toward museum artefact, airborne particulates matter also expose tourist to severe asthma, coughing, heart diseases, respiratory disease and even mortality. Hence, the findings of this research could be used to help a betterment of HVAC system in the museum which displays Malaysian national heritage. At the same time, bring awareness towards museum visitor in regards to the impact of air pollution on human health.

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