

Challenges and Issues on Marketing the Museum in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Some issues on the museum marketing concept implementation have emerged since their existence. One of those issues was perceived as commercializing the institution and getting more people to come to the museum. In a developing country like Indonesia, the number of visitors to museums is relatively low. Creating a marketing program is expected to get potential visitors' attention. However, most museums in Indonesia are managed by the government, thus implementing marketing concepts also have their challenges. This paper aims to explore the obstacles and challenges faced by museums in this situation. As preliminary research, the methodology used for this paper is a mix of desk study and a survey. The literature study was taken into account to explore the possible issues in museum marketing, while the survey was intended to describe the characteristics of museum visitors in Indonesia, as well as their general opinion of the museums they have visited. A survey has conducted by distributing questionnaires using online and offline means to respondents who have visited museums in Indonesia. From this study, the visitors' perception is then classified into several categories to identify the challenges which relate to the implementation of marketing in the museum. There were some essential preliminary findings related to how people associated the meaning of the museum, the visitors' intention on how they spend their leisure time, and how the museum should respond to the current situation.

Keywords: museum marketing, museum visitor, museum management, marketing.

1. INTRODUCTION

The changes in consumer behavior, globalization, and openness toward global information, force museums to adapt to the situation. In the mid-2000, marketing for the museums needs to be emphasized that it should not be considered as a negative thought (Rentschler, 2007; Sandell & Janes, 2007; Komarac, 2014). Considering museums should always be inclusive places, that provide abundant knowledge, and are easily accessible by the public, the social marketing concept might be more suitable for the museum context (Gonsales, 2021). There were also some concerns, that museums would become a commercial entity like an amusement place or a picnic spot, and they would no longer be sacred as people will overlook its education purpose if they apply marketing principles (Ross, 2019; Barnes & McPherson, 2019; Zbucha, 2015). However, the transition of museums to accommodate the visitors' expectations kept growing (Gilmore & Rentschler, 2002; Komarac, 2014; Zbucha, 2015; Brida, 2016; Cerquetti, 2016; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). Foley and MacPherson (2000) also mentioned some changes in museums and what would cause problems within this change. The shifting orientation of the

museum from object-based to people-based (Komarac, 2014; Rentschler & Hede, 2007) might be something normal and expected by most visitors. This tendency is also developing in Indonesia, especially for museums which some of their visitors are exposed to global culture. These visitors might have visited modern and enjoyable museums in some developed countries while some others might have learned as well about what a modern museum is supposed to look like. Facing the global economic environment, museums must also be able to have sustainability and competitive advantage (Tsai & Chin-Tsai, 2018; Komarac et al., 2017; Merriman, 2008). Nonetheless, what might be a small improvement perceived by visitors, is a complicated thing for the museum administrators and curators. They need to learn about marketing and change their point of view to adapt the marketing concept. However, museums need to have their standpoint of fundamental values, like social interaction, character building, preserving their valuable collection, and education (Zbucnea, 2015; Gilmore & Rentschler, 2002; Kawashima, 1998).

In Indonesia, the highest number of museums are mostly located in Jakarta. According to statistics, the highest museum attendance in Jakarta is the National Monument which reached 1.94 million visitors in 2018, followed by the History Museum of Jakarta, also known as Museum Fatahillah, with 810 thousand visitors. In contrast, the National Museum, which is supposed to be the main reference of museums in Indonesia, was only visited by 263 thousand visitors in 2018 (DKI Jakarta Province in Figures, 2019). The different figures between the number of visitors are likely caused by various standards of services delivered by museums in Indonesia. Although there is a guide of museum standardization (Ministry of Education and Culture of The Republic of Indonesia, 2017), diverse locations, funds, and other resources put some museums to face some challenges.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on literature research, marketing research can be grouped into several themes, such as museum visitors (numbers of visitors, how to engage the visitors, etc.), services aspects of the museum, branding, and new technology. The marketing concept is mainly used by the commercial business. Many people still think that marketing means selling, commercializing, or manipulating people to buy a product. Although some of those are part or inevitable results of a marketing program, the concept itself relies on customer satisfaction (Kotler et al., 2008).

The concept of customer satisfaction is very applicable to museums. Several definitions of marketing for museums in the mid-1990s were the basic marketing that tried to be implemented for museums. McLean (1997) showed the most suitable definition of marketing related to museums were those of Lovelock and Weinberg which at that time were mostly emphasized on services delivered to museum visitors. Although it was not clear enough to be interpreted and implemented by museum administrators; nonetheless, McLean argued that those definitions were the most useful for museums. Later on, Rentschler and Gilmore (2002) proposed how service should be delivered in museums, which include the museum architecture, programs, accessibility, and communication. Other service dimensions of the museum which extensively studied may include the accessibility, education, servicescapes, service quality, and communication of museums (Conti, 2020; Capriotti, 2010; Lagrosen, 2003; Gilmore & Rentschler, 2002; Frochot & Hughes, 2000; Bitner, 1992).

As early as the discussion about marketing the museum, Lewis (1994), and later, Kotler et al. (2008), emphasized that marketing is to give what the customers need, not to fulfill all their

demands. Thus, it is important to remember the marketing at philosophy or concept level instead of practicalities such as advertising and publicity. This early argument was to respond to the concerns of museums administrators about the commercialization and the integrity of the museum. Marketing should be an approach toward the approach of people-based or visitors-centered and will lead the organization to work. Therefore, it is important to understand what the customer thinks about the museum and later create how the marketing should work for this segment.

Marketing itself is a broad subject of discussion. Many aspects can be interconnected to marketing. The basic concept of marketing may include market segmentation, positioning the product in customers' minds, and the classic 4P (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion). Marketing is not only limited to goods but also can be applied for services. The special thing about services marketing is mainly about the product, which is intangible and perishable. Not only different from its goods counterpart, but each service may also have different marketing strategies according to its nature. In the museum context, the marketing topics may range from service delivery process, service quality of museum, to what these days discuss about the use of social media and modern technology adoption in a museum.

For museums, Kotler et al. (2008) proposed a holistic marketing model, which indicates the different parts of the organization must work together and has each own responsibility in making things work. This concept consists of integrated marketing, relationship marketing, internal marketing, and socially responsible marketing. Integrated marketing is coordinating the 5Ps; Product, Price, Place (in this case, may refer to location and access), People, and Promotion. Relationship marketing in museums is intended to maintain a long-lasting relationship with stakeholders while facing the influence of visitors, society, and competitive pressures. Internal marketing refers to the museum staff members that need to be considered to keep the organization's operation working well. Lastly, socially responsible marketing requires commitment to the public at large.

In commercial marketing, as a part of product development, branding is one of the subjects extensively studied. Whereas museum is far from being commercial, branding is also proposed to show what a particular museum has to offer to society. Branding in the museum refers to the specific name of the museum that reflects its collection. The right branding strategy can make a museum stand out and known for the service they deliver. Therefore, it conveys what kind of experience and knowledge the public will receive from visiting a museum (Liu & Chen, 2019; Moreno-Gil & Ritchie, 2017; Rentschler et al., 2014; Evans et al., 2012).

Black (2001) showed a simple interpretative approach to developing a marketing concept for a museum. This approach asked four main points: what the theme to be presented, why it should be presented, who the audience is, and how it should be presented. It should be considered the factors which influence the "how"; not the answer of the question of how it should be presented, nor to set up some prescription. Visitors and museums are different from one another and have each of their uniqueness. However, regarding the audience or visitors, some authors suggest finding out more about the visitor behavior (Barron & Leask, 2017; Kay, et al., 2009; Martin, 2002; Goulding, 2000), as it should be clear about who is the target, what are their nature, needs, and expectations. After identifying and understanding its visitor, the next step is to set up the right promotion tools that may drive a potential audience to visit a museum (Buljubasic, et al., 2016).

3. METHOD

This research uses quantitative descriptive to get the visitors demographic and the visiting frequency, as well as their perception toward the museum. Although a study of perception in museum visitor experience could be carried out using qualitative study (Passebois-Ducros & Euzéby, 2021), several studies have previously performed similar quantitative research in perception (Kolb, 2008; Cerquetti & Ferrara, 2018). This research collected the data using self-administered questionnaires, distributed using an online questionnaire link as well as using an offline accidental sampling method. There are two parts of questionnaires; the first part was to measure the demographic of respondents, and the second part is a poll to measure their general perception toward the museums in Indonesia. The questions composed on the questionnaire were open-ended and intended for mapping the museum visitors.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Challenges faced by museums in Indonesia can be discussed in three parts. The first part is the characteristics of museum visitors in Indonesia, the figures, and frequency related to their museum visit. The second part is about people's perception of the museum and the third part is about the people's motives for visiting the museum.

Museum visitor's profile.

The respondents of this study can be profiled as follows. There are 58,3% are female respondents and 41,7% are males. Teens and young adult visitors up to 25 years old are only 23,8% while adult visitors between 25-40 years old are 37,7% and those who are older than 40 years are 38,3%. In terms of educational background, those who finished undergraduate study are 50,6% while 22,2% have finished high school and 27,2% hold postgraduate degrees. Fifty percent of the respondents are employees, 12,8% are professionals, 18,9% are students and the rest are self-employed, part-timers, and others. Therefore, in general, the museum visitors' profile in Indonesia are mostly women, have a bachelor's degree education, are aged between 25 and 40 years, and work as an employee.

There are 60% of respondents claimed they visited museum in the past year (between November 2017 to November 2018), which can be further breakdown into only 25% of all respondents visited one museum in the past year, 19% have visited museums twice during the year and only 16% visited equal to or more than three times. Among these people who visit the museum in the past year, 87% of them said they enjoyed the visit. Only 5,6% of them didn't enjoy the visit and 7,8% said maybe. However, if the sum was added to the rest of the other respondents who have visited museums in Indonesia in the past (more than the past 12 months) and enjoyed their visit, the total is 63,3% of them enjoyed their visit to the museum.

The reason most given by the respondents related to the previous question about the enjoyment is "interest". In this category, respondents showed a special interest in museums. It reflected in their answers such as "I love museum", "I like how it feels like riding a time machine to the past", "I like history and museum can give a lot of information with some visual descriptions" and "it's a place to visit when we travel and it's cheap". The second most given reason was related to knowledge. It shows how respondents have understood the role of museums in education. This means people who visit the museum already know what to expect and have a particular interest to visit a museum. Positive appreciation from people also shows the awareness about the important role of museums as part of education and source of knowledge.

However, the negative comments about museums seem to outdo the positive image a museum tries to build.

Some of the reasons for those who did not enjoy their visit to museums are “unclean”, “not interesting”, “no explanation (of the objects/collections)”. What people meant by unclean is might refer to “unkempt”. The floor and surroundings of most museums in Indonesia are clean in general, but the display (vitrines, objects, etc.) are sometimes dull, dusty, and unkempt. The modest appearance of some museums may also convey the unattractiveness of the whole place. Museums are often seen as gloomy and cold; however, due to the sensitivity of their rare collections, the objects should be displayed in a certain manner, thus certain temperature and minimal light exposure. Some visitors may not aware of these requirements, so they perceive it as sombre and spooky. Therefore, potential visitors should be informed beforehand. Museums should communicate more with their audiences/visitors, especially about the benefit of museums, the way objects should be displayed, and what to expect from museums. That way, visitors may be prepared and enjoy their visit to the museum. Some information about a certain object is also important to visitors. People visit a museum to get some information and a story of the collections. So, every object should be accompanied with useful information, because displayed collections without a story, would not be different from a stockpile of things. One of the major roles of the museum is education, therefore, researchers and educators in museums are responsible to present the knowledge to the public, and competent people in charge in this area are scarce (Zbucnea, 2013). These things are quite a challenge for some museums to accomplish.

Visitor perception.

Visitor perception is one of the challenges for museums in Indonesia to be dealt with. There is an assumption that museum is perceived as unattractive and serious. Interestingly, the result of this research shows various aspects and different public opinions about the museum itself. Despite how the museum is associated with something old and outdated, it is also associated with knowledge and education. The latter goes along with a study in East Midlands museums in 1994-1995 (Black, 2001) which showed the highest score of public perception about the museum are educational (96% agreed) and interesting (84% agreed).

In Indonesia, public perception toward museums can be grouped into positive, neutral, and negative meanings. This categorization was based on the open answers of the survey. The positive perception is represented by words like excitement, interesting, education and a place to be visited with the family. The neutral perception is reflected by words such as history, a place to store historical things, rare objects, etc. The negative perception showed by words like serious, monotone, boring, and spooky. The negative perception about museums in Indonesia has also previously been studied by Akbar (2010), with a similar result. Although some museums in Indonesia have shown significant improvement since 2010, the negative perceptions remain the same. These overall results bring consequences for museums on how they should communicate their services to the public. Otherwise, uninformed segments may always perceive the museums like once they have visited a decade ago.

However, museums in Indonesia are also perceived positively. Several things associated with the museum are among others: as a source of information, knowledge, and a place to learn. In this case, some people have understood how important a museum is as a part of their life. These people think museums can give a lot of information, build knowledge, and be a suitable place to be visited with friends and family. Several respondents mentioned that they have visited museums with their children to show them proof of history, interesting artifacts, and to make

their children learn something new outside the school. The implication of these positive perceptions are some things museums should maintain; by offering good services and benefits of the museum. Several museums may also consider focusing on families as their main visitors.

Neutral or normal perceptions about museums in Indonesia are shown from how respondents refer to words such as history, classic, culture, rare object, monument, artifact, etc. These things are commonly seen as museum collections. Normal perception does not seem like an issue for museums, as these things may always be maintained to stay as-is. The most concerning thing to handle is the fact that museum is associated with negative things. Some alarming things mentioned by respondents are outdated, poorly maintained, spooky, boring, and old.

The challenges faced by museums in Indonesia are not likely the same from one to another. Some respondents noted that the museums they have visited were quite nice looking, have a bright and modern display. These museums are most likely received sufficient funds from the government and recruited staff with suitable competencies. Indonesia's National Museum is one of the museums that received positive appreciation from its visitors. Not only it is the biggest museum in Indonesia, but it is also managed directly by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Some other museums, although categorized as public museums, are managed regionally or under certain public organizations. Several museums still struggling to keep their operation running. Some of these less-fortunate museums are found in some remote locations, do not have access to get funds, or do not have sufficient personnel. These museums are not only suffering from unfavourable images, but they also have trouble maintaining and taking care of their collection. These museums urgently need help, not only from the government but also from the communities and society around them. Volunteering on museum activities, for example, people will learn about the complexity of museum operation. This might change the perception, that museum is not just a dusty, spooky place to store ancient objects, but a place to learn about a lot of things in an enjoyable setting.

Visitor motives.

In this study, the public intention to visit the museum was also asked. There are 56,7% of the total respondents said they are most likely and have interested to visit a museum shortly while 18,9% of them said no. Those who answered not interested, stated several reasons, among others, "it doesn't cross my mind", which implied they don't know what museum should be visited or which museum is worth visiting. Most stated reasons are not interested, because the museum is not interesting, and are busy or having a tight schedule. Smaller parts of the reasons stated by respondents are: they have visited a museum, no idea, bored, no interesting event, and prefer to visit other places. Those reasons showed the challenges the museum face as not interesting enough to be visited. Museums have not succeeded to convince the value or benefit to people to make them consider visiting a museum. Furthermore, it reflects the lack of attractiveness in museums, which somehow defies people to visit them. People do not have any idea of what they will benefit from visiting a museum, so they would never think of visiting a museum as a fun activity, like they used to expect it from the theme park, for instance. Therefore, they rarely plan to visit a museum, let alone decide what museum is worth enough to visit. The challenge for museums in Indonesia is to convince the public about the benefit they can get from visiting the museum.

Considering the pull and push factors (Recuero Virto, et al., 2011), museums not only should be able to create positive memorable experiences for their visitors but also provide most of what their visitors expect in a museum. As well as the authenticity of their collections, museums should provide acceptable infrastructure for the visitors. Facilities (rest areas,

refreshment areas, toilets, etc.), accessibility, and comprehensible information are some of the important things to be supplied in the museum.

5. CONCLUSION

Museums should deal with different visitors' perceptions by several things to do: maintaining the positive perception communicating their benefit and reducing the negative perception by tackling the doubt and giving more information about the museum. Furthermore, people should also be invited to help and involve in various museums' activities. That way, people are not just criticizing the museum, but considering to help and improve the museum to be a better and more enjoyable place to visit.

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