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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Visual & Performing Arts*

Evaluating the impact of media strategies on the educational role of new museums

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ABSTRACT

Museums as a place to promote art and culture continue to develop, so the presence of new museums (ie. Patiayam museum) certainly has branding challenges to get a large number of visitors. However, new museums have the potential to attract visitors, especially students, by offering fresh and engaging learning experiences through interactive exhibits and educational programs. The unique appeal of these museums, combined with effective promotional strategies, can spark curiosity among younger audiences and encourage school trips or group visits. A qualitative approach was employed, involving observations and semi-structured interviews to gather data from diverse informants. Accessibility, both physical and digital, was identified as a key factor influencing museum visits. Informants also highlighted the museum's educational value, emphasizing its role in providing immersive learning experiences that cater to diverse learning styles.

KEYWORDS: branding, education, media promotion, Patiayam museum

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Introduction

Museums are cultural phenomena of historical records and have become one of the tourist attractions to enjoy (Andermann & Arnold-de Simine, S., 2012:9). Museums can also be inferred as a gallery that displays different cultural attributes (Davidson & Sibley, 2011:179) and various historical objects as sources that are educative to the visitors (Overskaug, et.al., 2010:108). Historical nuances and valuable objects become a commodity to look at (MacLeod, et al., 2015:325). Museums can be regarded as a place to educate (Ames, 1988:157) and a commercialized place to gain profit (Marstine, 2008:56). Traditional museums are, in fact, currently facing global reality; the ever-growing ease of access to information through the internet has seen the role of museums to fade out (Hughes, 2010:83). In the early 20th century, museums had played vital roles in the sustainability of a country's tourism industry (Belenioti & Vassiliadis, 2016:115). New museums will also confront challenges (Message, 2006:605), in which market competition in selling commodities as a preferred destination will take place (Boylan, 2006:61).

One such example is the Patiayam Museum, located at the Patiayam site in Kudus, Indonesia, which, despite being relatively new, faces the task of promoting the region's rich prehistoric heritage. The museum was established to showcase the fossil findings and archaeological treasures discovered in the Patiayam Hills, which is known for yielding ancient fossils of extinct animals like elephants, hippos, and deer, as well as evidence of early human activity (Aji, A.P., 2023). The museum presents a collection of well-preserved fossils, stone tools, and artifacts that help visitors understand the geological and cultural history of the area. The exhibits are designed to take visitors on a journey through time, offering insights into life during the Pleistocene epoch. Its modern and engaging presentation, combined with educational programs, makes the museum not just a repository of ancient artifacts but also an important center for learning and research on prehistoric life. The architecture of the museum is designed to harmonize with the natural surroundings of the Patiayam Hills, making it a scenic and informative destination for both casual visitors and researchers. Although still expanding its collection, Patiayam Museum represents a growing effort to preserve and promote Indonesia's prehistoric past.

Emerging museums should offer well-designed concepts to be able to draw visitors' attention and be educative (Llop & Arauzo-Carod, 2011:20), as well as giving insights to them (Marty, 2006:139). The visitors will observe how captivating the new museums are regarding the information and uniqueness being shown (Starn, 2005:94). Indonesia has numerous museums that provide distinguishing concepts. Nevertheless, the manager still finds it challenging to seek enthusiastic visitors who are willing to come and learn new things (Wibowo, 2015:13). Museum branding is somewhat the right option in starting a new museum (McClellan, 2012:282). Branding will make it easier for the museum to be recognized, accessed, and to engage visitors as it has a high tourism potential that is introduced to the public (Richards & Wilson, 2004:1933). Branding can persuade and contribute a good image to a new museum (Scott, 2000:38), make a great impression (Vivant, 2011:113), legitimate, and give the power to attract visitors (Ajana, 2015:321).

Studies on museum branding are relatively limited and controversial since a brand primarily embarks on finance, society, and humanity. Some researchers call for researching historical or cultural Branding (Rentschler & Osborne, 2008:446; Griffin, 2008:47; Kotler et al., 2008:144; Bradburne, 2001:80). Branding can help deliver a product to uphold a mature concept offered to consumers. Apart from Branding as a strategy, promotional media as a selling tool makes it easier for a product to be recognized by many. Museum branding directed at education, especially for students, offers an excellent opportunity to combine learning with cultural experiences. As part of a branding strategy, museums can strengthen their role as educational resources by developing an identity that focuses on students as the primary audience. According to some researchers, historical or cultural Branding, which emphasizes historical and cultural values, has the potential to link museum identity with educational goals (Rentschler & Osborne, 2008). By adopting this approach, museums can create a learning environment that is informative and engaging for students.

Effective Branding can shape students' perceptions of museums as places that store historical artifacts and as sources of knowledge relevant to the educational curriculum. Promotional media play a critical role in not only attracting visitors but also in enhancing the educational impact of museums, especially for students and educational institutions. By leveraging digital platforms, social media, and interactive applications, museums can create dynamic learning environments that cater to the interests and needs of students, fostering deeper engagement with historical and cultural materials (Livingstone et al., 2013). Digital tools such as virtual

tours, gamified learning experiences, and augmented reality can transform static exhibitions into interactive educational spaces, allowing students to explore complex subjects in more accessible, relatable ways. These initiatives help transform museums from passive repositories of knowledge into active educational partners, where students not only absorb information but engage critically with it, making personal connections that deepen their understanding. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), such collaborations encourage students to “own” their learning experiences, promoting long-term retention and intellectual curiosity.

In this context, branding museums as centers of education is more than a marketing tool; it positions museums as vital extensions of the classroom. By integrating museum visits into school curricula and aligning exhibitions with educational standards, museums can reinforce their role as key contributors to formal education. This symbiotic relationship strengthens students’ academic development, providing diverse ways of learning that complement traditional teaching methods. Ultimately, museum branding that emphasizes educational values not only promotes the institutions themselves but also underscores their significance in fostering a well-rounded, enriched learning experience.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative method (Guest, G., et al. 2006). The object of this study is the Patiayam Museum located in the city of Kudus, Central Java, Indonesia. This location was chosen because of its scope as one of the archaeological museums with the discovery of elephant fossils aged 700,000 years to 1,000,000 years. This museum was opened in 2009. The uniqueness of the Patiayam Museum as a new museum attracts the attention of the public, but the lack of material support certainly makes the uniqueness of this museum limited to be enjoyed by the public. Therefore, it is important to examine the branding strategy for the new museum. This study used 12 informants, according to Guest et al. (2006) who stated that they recommend 6-12 informants in qualitative research. The data collection techniques involved observation and semi-structured interview, during which informants gave other enticing ideas, leading the researcher to delve into them. A semi-structured interview is a data collection method where the researcher uses a prepared set of questions but maintains the flexibility to explore new topics that emerge during the interview. This method combines structure with freedom, allowing the researcher to delve deeper into ideas expressed by the informants. This approach makes the interview more dynamic and interactive, enabling more prosperous and in-depth data collection.

The criteria for selecting informants include the requirement that they have visited the Patiayam Museum at least five times, ensuring they possess sufficient experience to provide meaningful insights about the museum’s appeal. Additionally, informants must demonstrate a strong interest in Indonesian museums to contextualize their motivations and engagement with local culture and history. Furthermore, informants should be active internet users to assess the impact of online promotional media on their decisions to visit the museum and the time spent there. A diverse demographic representation, encompassing various age groups, genders, and professional backgrounds, is also essential to capture a broad range of perspectives on accessibility and museum promotions. Lastly, informants must have clear motivations for their visits, such as learning, recreation, or pursuing hobbies (e.g., photography), which aids in analyzing how well the museum meets these diverse needs.

Table 1: Demography of informants

Name	Sex	Age	Occupation	Domicile
Informan 1	Female	18	Senior High School	Kudus
Informan 2	Male	17	Senior High School	Kudus
Informan 3	Female	14	Junior High School	Kudus
Informan 4	Male	23	University Student	Demak
Informan 5	Male	21	University Student	Surakarta
Informan 6	Female	13	Junior High School Student	Kudus
Informan 7	Male	14	Junior High School Student	Semarang
Informan 8	Male	15	Junior High School Student	Boyolali
Informan 9	Male	23	University Student	Klaten

Informan 10	Female	24	University Student	Semarang
Informan 11	Female	14	Junior High School Student	Semarang
Informan 12	Female	15	Junior High School Student	Semarang

Table 1 provides a detailed demographic profile of the informants who participated in the interviews. The table outlines the informants' gender, age, occupation, and domicile. A diverse range of ages is represented, spanning from 13 to 24 years old, with occupations including students and college students. Additionally, the informants come from different regions, including Kudus, Demak, Surakarta, Boyolali, Klaten, and Semarang. This demographic variety reflects a broad spectrum of perspectives and experiences, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of factors influencing museum visits. The diversity of age groups, education background, and domiciles helps ensure that the data gathered encompasses various motivations and accessibilities when visiting museums, contributing to a more holistic analysis of museum engagement.

Results

The conceptual map is adjusted to the interview analysis. Based on the interview, the findings cover materials related to the effect of promotional media on the new museum's image and popularity. Further, the discussion focuses on some relevant aspects, including the knowledge about the museum and the effectiveness of promotional media run by the museum. This present work analyzes how promotional media can eventually influence the popularity or brand development of a new museum.

This section delves into the findings gathered from interviews with 12 informants, focusing on their perceptions and experiences with museums. The interviews aimed to explore several dimensions, including what attracts visitors to museums, the effectiveness of media promotions, and the educational value museums provide. Informants highlighted a variety of factors that influence their decision to visit a museum, such as the appeal of historical artifacts, and recommendations from others. Additionally, insights were gathered on the role of museums as family-friendly recreational spaces, as well as their potential to offer unique and enriching learning experiences. The responses also underscored the significance of promotional strategies, particularly the role of social media and word-of-mouth in drawing visitors. Moreover, accessibility emerged as a critical factor, both in terms of physical access to the museum and the ease of finding information online. Informants highlighted specific challenges, such as limited facilities for individuals with disabilities and inadequate public transportation options, which hindered visitor access. Additionally, several participants noted difficulties in navigating museum websites, making it harder to find essential information, such as opening hours, ticket prices, and event schedules. These insights reveal how improving accessibility—both physically and digitally—can significantly enhance the overall visitor experience and widen the museum's appeal to more diverse audiences. This topic becomes particularly interesting as it underscores the museum's potential to foster inclusivity and cultural engagement across broader social groups.

Furthermore, these interviews reveal how museums are perceived not only as places for entertainment and leisure but also as important educational institutions that foster curiosity, critical thinking, and cultural awareness. The perspectives offered by the informants help paint a clearer picture of the key elements that contribute to the broader appeal and social value of museums.

1.1 Accessibility of Museum

The comparison in Figure 1. highlights the different accessibility indicators for physical and online exhibitions in museums. Based on the research by Norberto Rocha et al. (2020, 2021), there are three main types of accessibility in physical exhibitions: physical, attitudinal, and communicational accessibility. Physical accessibility in physical spaces encompasses architecture, access, accommodation, and the use of objects and facilities.

Indicators	Physical	Attitudinal	Communicational
Attributes	1a. Architecture, physical access, accommodations and use of space 1b. Design and use of objects and facilities	2a. Inclusive practices, welcome and engagement 2b. Institutional policy/mission	3a. Communication (onsite and external) and signage 3b. Media, equipment, resources, etc.
Barriers: obstacles, non-inclusive practices, missed opportunities and untapped potential of adaptations, whether identified by the visitor, researcher, or reported by the museum team.			

Figure 1. Accessibility indicators for physical museums (Norberto Rocha et al., 2020).

Attitudinal accessibility refers to inclusive practices, welcoming environments, and institutional policies. Communicational accessibility in physical exhibitions including onsite and external communication, signage, and media resources. Here, it emphasizes communication that reaches a wider audience, using diverse media and resources to ensure inclusive and plural communication. Those models show the importance of adapting accessibility to suit the specific demands of physics while maintaining a focus on inclusivity and user experience.

Physical Indicators

Museum Purbakala Patiayam, located in Desa Terban, Kecamatan Jekulo, Kudus, spans a vast area in the Patiayam hills, which is part of a region covering 2,902 hectares. The museum itself, while not as large in building size compared to other prominent museums like Sangiran, still plays an important role in showcasing the rich prehistoric findings of the region. The facility is relatively modest, designed with a minimalistic style and large glass fronts.

In terms of amenities, the museum features essential spaces like camp ground, exhibition rooms, management offices, educational areas, souvenir shops (will be open during the event), and a spacious public parking area, which ensures it can accommodate visitors comfortably. The museum area includes a designated camping ground for students, providing a unique opportunity for immersive learning in a natural setting. It is equipped with essential facilities like tents, campfire spots, and a sheltered area for group activities, creating a balanced mix of comfort and adventure. The camping ground is designed to foster teamwork, curiosity, and a deeper appreciation of the exhibits, combining outdoor experiences with educational enrichment. Camping activities facilitate the development of essential social skills in students, such as collaboration, communication, and leadership, which are crucial for holistic learning (Behrendt, M., & Franklin, T., 2014).

Access to the museum and camping ground is convenient, with multiple transportation options available. Visitors can reach the site by bus, which often has direct routes to the museum area, making it an easy choice for group trips or school excursions. Additionally, there are options for public transportation, such as local mini buses or shared taxis, that stop nearby, allowing flexible travel from different parts of the city. For those who prefer a more private journey, taxis and ride-hailing services also operate in the area, ensuring accessibility for a variety of visitors.

Attitudinal

In the context of the Patiayam Museum, interviews with museum staff and visitors revealed that the attitudinal dimensions of inclusive practices and institutional policy have already played a significant role in fostering an environment that promotes both learning and cultural appreciation. Inclusive practices are evident through the museum's efforts to ensure that all visitors, regardless of their socio-economic or educational backgrounds, feel welcomed and engaged. These efforts include the implementation of multi-sensory exhibits, tailored educational programs for different age groups, and improved accessibility, which have made the museum more inviting and accessible to a broader audience.

Additionally, the museum's institutional policy strongly reflects its commitment to conserving local heritage and promoting public education. Staff members emphasized the importance of preserving fossil records and cultural artifacts unique to the region, while also developing programs that stimulate critical thinking and interdisciplinary learning (Butcher, K. R., et al., 2021). This approach aligns with the museum's mission to serve as both a protector of historical knowledge and a facilitator of contemporary educational experiences. By maintaining this balance, the Patiayam Museum has successfully positioned itself as a key institution for both preserving the past and addressing current educational and community needs, as observed from visitor feedback and program success rates.

Communicational

Clear and accessible communication for museums is crucial in guiding and informing visitors. Instagram has become one of the most popular social media platforms among young people today, serving as a primary source of information for various topics, including cultural and educational experiences like museum exhibits. Many museums, such as the Patiayam Museum Patiayam currently relies solely on Instagram using the social media account @museum_situspatiayam (Fig. 2) to share information about its fossil collections, museum activities,

and historical artifacts.

Social media account from Patiayam Museum features educational content about fossils and ancient discoveries in the region, such as prehistoric elephant fossils found in local fields. The page also shares information about the museum's events and history. For students, this account offers an engaging way to learn about ancient history and fossils through colorful illustrations, interactive posts, and child-friendly language. The posts seem to introduce historical facts in a simple manner, making it easier for young audiences to understand the museum's purpose and exhibits. This aligns with Rahayu and Baridwan's (2020) observation that attractive Instagram content—whether through photos, feed design, or engaging invitations—can greatly influence a user's interest in visiting a profile page. A study conducted by Kotler (2000: 117) discovered that promotional media should not be ignored as it was part of the communication process to the community.

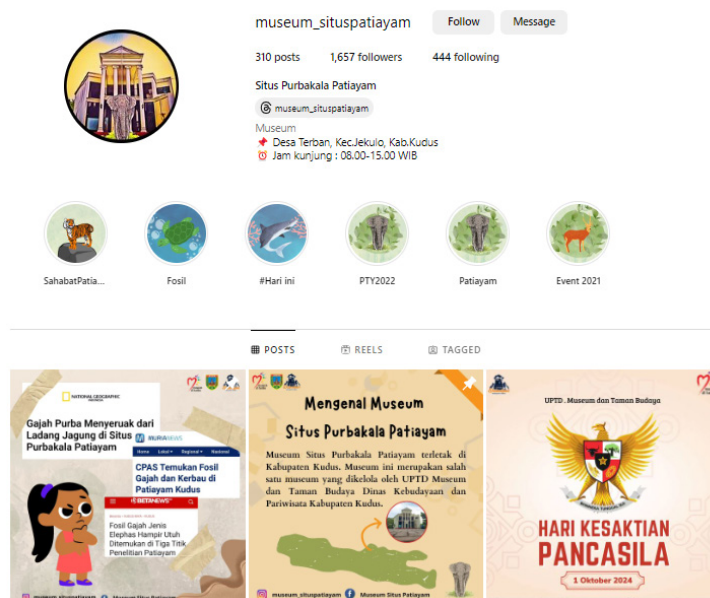


Figure 2. Instagram account of Patiayam Museum

Based on the interview with 12 informants, they have some ways to get the information about museums. The first one is getting information from neighbors, friends, and relatives. Next is from social media, e.g., Instagram and online ads on the internet (web banner). Almost all informants get flyers as the promotional media of museums. However, most of them also rely on promotional media on the internet, including social media and websites. Interestingly, those who look for the information on the internet previously found their friends' self-portrait photographs in the museum uploaded on social media.

1.2 Role in Education

Museums play a vital role in education by offering unique learning experiences that extend beyond traditional classrooms. They provide contextual learning opportunities, allowing students to explore subjects like history, science, art, and culture through real artifacts, interactive exhibits, and visual aids. Based on interviews with informants, it is clear that museums offer significant educational advantages. Many students reported that the interactive and immersive nature of museum exhibits helps them better understand complex topics. This approach helps students grasp complex concepts by connecting theoretical knowledge to tangible examples. Additionally, museums offer multisensory learning experiences—engaging sight, sound, and touch—which cater to diverse learning styles and enhance understanding (Fors, V., 2013). Furthermore, the educational advantages provided by museums often serve as a motivating factor for students to visit. These motivations align with Tien's (2003:2) observation that museums were initially established for purposes like learning, collection, education, conservation, pleasure, and research.

A museum offers an ideal learning environment where students can engage with knowledge in a more dynamic and interactive way compared to traditional classroom settings. Through immersive, hands-on experiences, students have the opportunity to explore subjects like history, science, and art by directly interacting with exhibits and real-world artifacts. This direct engagement helps bridge the gap between theoretical

knowledge and practical understanding, making abstract concepts more concrete and easier to comprehend. Furthermore, museums provide an atmosphere that stimulates curiosity and encourages inquiry-based learning, where students are motivated to ask questions, think critically, and make connections between different pieces of information (Kaye, C., 2023). The physical aspect of moving through a museum space, observing objects, and participating in interactive displays also promotes active learning, which is beneficial for physical and cognitive development. Additionally, the emotional experience of encountering culturally and historically significant items can foster empathy and a deeper emotional connection to the subject matter. Socially, museums often encourage group participation and collaboration, allowing students to work together, share ideas, and develop communication skills. Related to Doğan, Y. (2010) this holistic approach to learning not only enriches the mind but also supports emotional, physical, and social growth, contributing to a well-rounded educational experience.

Conclusion

A museum serves as a repository for storing, maintaining, securing, and utilizing material objects to facilitate the protection and preservation of the nation's cultural heritage. Enhancing visitor numbers is a pivotal strategy for ensuring the sustainability of museums. The study highlights that accessibility—encompassing both physical infrastructure and digital presence—is essential for augmenting the visitor experience. Museums, including Patiayam, are increasingly recognized not solely as recreational venues but as vital educational institutions that provide distinctive, hands-on learning opportunities. Many museums integrate multisensory components—such as auditory, tactile, and visual elements—tailoring their offerings to diverse learning modalities. This multifaceted engagement not only accommodates various learners but also promotes inclusivity and accessibility in education. Furthermore, the provision of enriched educational experiences, coupled with the strategic use of social media as a promotional tool, emerges as a significant approach to fostering museum preservation, particularly among younger demographics. This digital engagement not only enhances awareness of the museum's cultural preservation mission but also actively encourages youth to connect with their heritage in impactful ways. The incorporation of digital media into museum outreach efforts serves to bridge traditional educational practices with contemporary technological advancements, fostering a deeper engagement between younger generations and their cultural history. This dual approach contributes to the broader aim of cultivating a society that values and actively participates in the preservation of its cultural legacy.

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Biographies

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Authorship and Level of Contribution:

Conceptualization, R. A. and A. C.; methodology, R. A., and T. R.; validation, A. C. and N. S.; Formal analysis, R. A. and A. C.; investigation, R. A., A. C., and N. S.; resources, R. A. and T. R.; writing (original draft preparation), R. A. and A. C.; writing (review and editing), R. A. and N. S.; visualization, T. R. and N. S.; supervision R. A., A. C., T. R. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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