

# Public Relations Strategy in Improving Museum Image as Public Education Vehicle and Tourist Attraction

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**Abstract**—As one of the public education facilities, museum was still perceived as a less attractive place by community as well as visitors. Even though in some destination, it was developed into a tourist's attraction, the image of a museum as old-fashioned and boring places were, even so, perceived by some people. As a non-profit institution, museum often has difficulties in marketing and promotion so that the public relations were proposed to be a solution to disseminate information and image for attracting visitors. This research would emphasize the PR strategy of Geology Museum in Bandung, Indonesia. The method was qualitative research by using a case study approach. The situation analysis was conducted before evaluating the PR strategy used by the museum. The results showed that the museum faced some challenges, such as conservation issues for the artefacts, public service, and the advancement of technology. The use of social media and events became an example of public relations strategy to improve the museum image as a vehicle of public education and tourist's attraction.

**Keywords**—*public relation; improving museum image; public education*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Museum is one vehicle for public education. This notion could also be improved by developing it into a tourist attraction, as well. According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the museum defined as the 'non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment' [1]. This is similar with the definition of museum, according to The American Association of Museums (AAM) [2], that stated a museum as a public or private non-profit institution that has a permanent primary purpose of education and aesthetics and open to the public. Thus, ideally a museum is not only visited by local people, but also visitors from other regions. Hence, it also plays an important part as a tourist attraction.

In sufficing the tourist experience, the museum is not just giving a hedonic pleasure for visitors, but also a mean of knowledge and insight for them. Visitors or tourists become

another group of 'public' than consumed the museum. Their experience would emphasize the educational tourism activities.

This research will focus on improving the image of the museum as a vehicle for public education and tourist's attraction. There were some phenomena that underlined the research. First, the image of the museum, which is considered as a place to store artifacts and tedious necessity transformed from a vehicle for public education and providing an enjoyable travel. According to Johnson & Sink the museum is seen as a means of mass education [1]. Thus, the museum public relations not only acts as a technician in building audience by focusing attention on conveying information to the public or visitors, but the need to package the information presented is becoming more interesting and related to the needs of the community.

Second, we meet the challenge to survive the existence of a museum, including the preservation of valuable historical collections owned by the museum. Capriotti, in his study, revealed that there are museums that have a narrow view of their public [3]. This is because basically the museum is still focusing on the visitors and those who are familiar with them. Meanwhile, the mass media has not been recognized as public, even though the museum did a lot of publicity through the media, the mass media are only considered as a channel of communication to inform the activities and events at the museum through publicity.

Third, the museum is a non-profit institution and often have financial constraints that position public relations as an option that is effective in promoting the museum as a vehicle for educational and tourist attraction. Huang, suggested to move beyond the four models of public relations that consists of two-way communication, interpersonal communication, mediated communication, and symmetrical communication [4]. He added the fifth dimension in Asian perspective; the social activities were proposed to improve the public relations strategy to be more effective and efficient.

Preparation of developing PR strategy must consider four things: 1) credibility of the Public Relations Officer (PRO), 2) coordination within the institution, 3) the harmonious relationship between the PRO with the resources, and 4) packaging the message creatively to the target audience [5]. In

addition, the stakeholder's perception of image and organization reputation should be assessed regularly because it can be changed over time [6].

This research was conducted in Geology Museum, Bandung, Indonesia. The museum is famous for its collection, such as pre-historic of living creature's fossils and Tyrannosaurus Rex (T-Rex) fossils replica. The number of visitors come to this museum increased every year. Data illustrated that there were 512.885 visitors visited the museum, and the number increased to 540.357 in 2014.

The museum also has a special-routine program called 'Night at the Museum' which managed to attract more public attention. The program is carried out once a month. People can feel the thrill of visiting the museum at night. In addition, there are various other entertainment events such as games, live music, talk shows and culinary experience. If people are not able to visit the museum during the day, this program becomes an interesting alternative.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Public relations strategy consists of developing planning to meet the organization objectives. It also includes a list of key issues, agreement on targets, production forecasts and gap calculation, selection strategies, prepare an action plan and budget, implementing and monitoring [7]. As a process, PR also use the managerial approach that consists of defining the problem, planning the programs, taking action, communicating, and evaluating the programs [8]. Then, Baines, et al, developed the Six Point Public Relations Planning Model to follow the basic plan [9]. It consists of the analysis of the situation, defining goals, defining publics, media selection, budgeting, implementation and control.

### A. Situation Analysis

Environmental analysis is considered as the first step in the process of formulating the strategy. It analyzes the opportunity and threat from external environment, as well as, the strength and weaknesses of internal environment. Thus, there were two starting points of communication to do the analysis. The first point of view is from organizational perspective to gain insight of the internal environment. The later is from the social or public point of view to understand the external environment [10]. Thus, it is necessary to conduct an analysis of the internal and external situation analysis to find out how to plan public relations strategy.

### B. Defining Objectives

The objectives should be defined before starting formulating the strategy [11]. A clear objectives play as a key role in the overall planning process [7]. Through strong environmental analysis, a clear objective could be defined better. Good objectives are SMART (specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and timely) [9]. Therefore, the purpose of public relations programs should also have those characteristics.

### C. Defining Publics

Museum needs to consider their public, both internal and external public. The external public also includes local people and visitors from other region. Therefore, to achieve those various public concerns and promote the positive image of museum, public relations could play [12,13].

Hence, to understand the public, the PR first agenda deals with examining the needs, desires, attitudes or behaviors, responses, trend, and traits of the target audience. Furthermore, the public understanding would be as reference to develop program to improve the expected image [14]. In other words, Oliver stated that PR strategy should consider ways to integrate all of its activities through the program (public relations program) based on a stakeholder analysis.

### D. Media Selection

The right media will have greater influence to public opinion [15]. Since there were a lot of media in the society, the need to develop an integrated media for effective communication on the PR strategy needs to be developed. Oliver also stated the importance of integrated communication in PR. Furthermore, media relations can be considered as a relevant tool to communicate with the local community [3].

### E. Budgeting

In the context of museum services in a country, adequate financial resources required to enable the museum to achieve appropriate standards of service [13]. A set budget will require a careful estimation on the workload, materials, and costs [9]. To set up the budget, PR professionals should know how much time it takes to carry out a variety of tasks and what benefits could be gained from the task. Similar to this Soemirat and Ardianto also noted that PR program should be supported by logical or adequate budget and expenditure [16].

### F. Implementation and Control

Management in the implementation stage is very important. The ability to implement the plan in consistent way is challenging. Implementing the PR strategy to improve the image and value of museum visitors needs also to be monitored and evaluated. A complete evaluation needs to be developed from initial stage of developing strategy to assessing the influence of PR program implemented to the public [17].

## III. METHOD

This study uses descriptive qualitative research. This study will be described public relations strategy undertaken by the Geology Museum to enhance the image of the museum. The research instruments were observations and in-depth interviews with the key and supporting informants. The key informants were The Head of the Museum, Public Relations Manager, and The Museum Tour Guide. The Supporting informant consists of visitors (teachers, students, family, local journalists, and Head of Culture Department of Culture and Bandung tourism).

The results for this study are descriptions of observations and interviews regarding the process of defining the public relations strategy to the analysis for the situation, defining objectives, defining the public, media selection, budgeting and implementation and control.

**IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Geology Museum had number of issues relating to the conservation and providing facilities for research, education and tourism. In addition, on improving public services, it also faced with the challenge in technology and managing museum in the global era. Innovation needs to be developed to conform with the current state of society. This was stated by the head of the Geology Museum that the museum management paradigm must be in accordance with the development of society.

The PR Manager at the museum stated that when conducting the internal situation analysis, they attempted to design and create an innovative program so that the museum could be more attractive. They also assessed the public response on event held by the museum.

The tour guide also gave the similar idea. Regular meeting was conducted to set up theme that could meet the current public concern. It also implied that public response and opinion became the basic reference for further programs.

The external situation analysis was conducted by survey and observing the suggestion boxes or example of the response of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and via the online site TripAdvisor. The result of internal and external analysis is as follow:

**TABLE I. INTERNAL ANALYSIS OF GEOLOGY MUSEUM**

<b>Internal analysis</b>	
Strengths	Geology Museum building is a historic building that is protected by the Government, Has the most complete pre-collection in Southeast Asia, The location is a strategic museum center of the city of Bandung, The admission price is affordable, Having a modern display system (digital) and audio-visual equipment, and Having interesting programs such as Night at the Museum.
Weaknessess	Less innovative, Visitor management is still need improvement, Promotion and information website is still not effective, Media campaigns are limited and tend to be conventional, Lack of human resources and budget, Limitations parking facilities, special disabled toilet, and a lounge area.

**TABLE II. EXTERNAL ANALYSIS OF GEOLOGY MUSEUM**

<b>External analysis</b>	
Opportunities	Received support from the central and local government, The number of visitors is increasing every year, Advances in technology in the show exhibits the museum collection, The development of communication technologies facilitates the dissemination of information and promotion online, and Raising the standards of the museum into international standards.

Table 2. cont.

Threats	Competition with other tourist attractions, Too large number of visitors make the museum become less than optimal care, Museum programs are underdeveloped due to limited funding and bureaucracy, and A decrease in the number of visitors in some event program held by the museum.
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<sup>a</sup> Source: Research Data, 2017

The goal-setting process was developed based on situation analysis. Based on that analysis they developed the programs, such as “Night at the Museum” and “Public Meeting and Discussion for Popular Geology” called “*Sarasehan*” every month.

Geology Museum identified the external public the general public, visitors/tourists, researchers, students, a special-interest group, journalists, national and local governments.

To reach these publics, the PR Department utilized some publication media, such as website, social media (twitter, Facebook and Instagram), online media and mass media. However, the use of the Geology Museum website was still not optimal. Another study was also mentioned that the state-owned company has not exploiting the potential of a website as a communication medium and not optimally design the official website as a strategic media communication [18].

Geology Museum established good relationships with journalists to increase positive news in the mass media to improve the image. The media relations had been pretty good, and should be supported by the fast information system to publish the news at the media.

The operational budget derived from the government. The museum has to develop budget plan on the previous year to secure the current programs implementation. However, the museum still found problems due to inadequate budget. PR programs could overcome the problems through engineering the media and merging some resources used for communication. Such as developing interesting event and encouraging the visitors to engage with social media for promoting the event. Hence, they didn’t need costly advertising or publicity.

The museum planned to develop it as a public service institution. At the implementation stage of the program, the Museum staff plays as a key component to deliver the service for the visitors. Geology Museum also cooperated with group of people at the community and other education institution to implement the strategy. One of the PR program was holding a meeting and discussion with the community about popular geology, called “*Sarasehan*”. However, the tendency of people who come to that event decreasing. The PR department was still conducting research for this problem.

The PR programs were evaluated through internal meeting weekly, quarterly, and each semester. The PR Department also conducted an informal meeting after holding an event. It was usually done after two-days of an event taken place.

The evaluation discussed about determining the development programs, tackling problems in the implementation of the program and creating an innovation of the next programs. The number and the satisfaction of visitors were also some issues that were evaluated.

#### V. CONCLUSION

This research was conducted for analyzing the PR strategy at a non-profit institution, such as a government-own museum. The PR strategy for developing the museum as a vehicle for public education and tourists' attraction.

This research found that the cooperation with the community can ensure the PR programs could be implemented. Creativity and innovation of the executive and staff also played an important thing in developing the PR Strategy. Regular event should be also conducted to gain public participation in visiting the museum. Those activities could contribute the museum image as an education facilities and tourist's attraction.

There was also a need for further research to be conducted at the private museum. The recommendation from this study is that for developing more innovative and creative program. The promotion of the programs should also be conducted through various media for reaching larger target audience.

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