



Enhancing Visitor Experience at The Subkoss Museum Through Historical and Cultural Education

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Abstract: This study explores strategies to enhance the visitor experience at the Subkoss Garuda Sriwijaya Museum through historical and cultural education. Visiting museums is essential in education, as it offers contextual learning experiences that allow visitors to understand history and culture directly through interaction with authentic local artifacts and narratives. Using a descriptive qualitative method, this research aims to analyze the role of educational initiatives in strengthening the museum's function as a public learning space. The findings reveal that contextual education, emphasizing the values of Indonesia's independence struggle and local cultural heritage, effectively enhances visitors' emotional attachment and intellectual engagement. Key innovations include the integration of interactive media, thematic guided tours, and experiential learning activities, all of which collectively create a more dynamic and meaningful museum experience. The museum also offers public programs, including history competitions, community discussions, and participatory activities, which expand educational outreach and foster social cohesion. These efforts have led to a consistent increase in visits from diverse demographic groups. This study concludes that collaboration between museum managers and stakeholders in the education sector is crucial for developing sustainable, engaging, and participatory museum programs. It contributes to the field of museology and public history by demonstrating that educational innovation can transform museums into vibrant centers of community learning and cultural preservation.

Keywords: historical and cultural education; subkoss museum; visitor experience

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INTRODUCTION

According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM), a museum is defined as a permanent, non-profit institution that serves society and its development by acquiring, conserving, researching, communicating, and exhibiting tangible and intangible heritage for education, study, and enjoyment. In this context, museums are no longer seen merely as physical repositories of historical objects but also as active educational institutions. Over the past decade, museums worldwide have undergone a paradigm shift from passive institutions to interactive and participatory learning environments that promote critical thinking and cultural awareness (Firdaus & Armiyati, 2020; Suwandi, 2002; Yusuf et al., 2020). This shift underscores the increasing significance of museums as educational centers that align with 21st-century learning needs, while also presenting challenges, particularly for regional museums in Indonesia, which must balance heritage preservation with public educational demands.

The Subkoss Garuda Sriwijaya Museum in Lubuk Linggau, South Sumatra, is a regional museum dedicated to documenting Indonesia's armed struggle for independence, particularly the role of the South Sumatra Sub-Command (SUBKOSS). As of November 2024, the museum houses 140 historical items, including archival photographs, weapons, vehicles, and personal belongings of national heroes such as Adnan Kapau Gani (Hanafiah & Widjaja, 1996; Ravico et al., 2025). Occupying a 1,700 m² heritage building with a multi-functional past since 1934, the museum serves as a strategic educational and research hub for the local community. It offers access to historical collections, Ulu script literacy programs, and cultural preservation activities. These facts show that the museum not only serves as a collection space but also holds significant potential as a center for local historical education (Ravico & Sofiarini, 2019; Samsudin, 2019; Susetyo & Wahayuni, 2025).

Despite its potential, the museum faces challenges in engaging visitors. Many regional museums in Indonesia, including Subkoss, still rely on conventional exhibition approaches that lack interactivity and contextual relevance, especially for younger generations (Sustianingsih, 2020; Tim Penyusun, 2003b). Consequently, museums are often perceived as outdated and disconnected from modern educational methods. Recent research underscores the necessity for educational innovation in museums to meet the expectations of digital-native audiences, who prefer visual and participatory learning experiences (Lagut et al., 2021; Susilo & Riyanto, 2023). The issue lies not only in the content but also in how it is delivered, which must now meet public demands for immersive and meaningful engagement.

This study is grounded in a preliminary survey of visitor feedback at the Subkoss Museum, which reveals a strong correlation between visitor satisfaction and the quality of educational interaction. A promising strategy to address this is by strengthening the role of museum guides as facilitators of contextual and dynamic learning. Guides are not merely narrators of history; they serve as emotional and intellectual bridges between objects and visitors. They have the capacity to transform static displays into engaging narratives, connecting them to local identity and collective memory. As communicative agents, guides significantly influence how visitors interpret and internalize historical messages (Pramasto & Anugrah, 2017; Yusuf et al., 2020).

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the strategic role of museum guides within the context of a regional historical museum dedicated to Indonesia's struggle for independence. Unlike previous studies that often emphasize collection development or digital technology in museums, this research contributes to the scientific discourse through a human-centered approach that highlights direct educational communication between guides and visitors as a medium for contextual, living history education. The emphasis on the Subkoss Museum also provides a unique case in which local cultural values and national identity converge in the practice of public education through historical narratives.

By focusing on experience-based educational strategies in a regional museum context, this article offers a fresh and contextually grounded perspective on the fields of museum studies, cultural education, and public history in Indonesia. It highlights how regional museums, often overlooked in national discourses, can serve as critical agents of localized knowledge production, identity formation, and historical consciousness when equipped with innovative, visitor-centered educational practices. The emphasis on lived experiences, narrative engagement, and emotional connection transforms the museum space from a passive display area into an active site of learning and cultural dialogue.

In addition to offering academic contributions, this study also holds substantial practical implications. For museum professionals, it provides a framework for redesigning guide training programs, developing interpretive strategies rooted in rich local context, and curating exhibitions that are not only informative but also capable of fostering emotional engagement among visitors. Meanwhile, for policymakers, the study emphasizes the importance of allocating resources and policy support not only to physical infrastructure but also to enhancing the capacity of human resources within museums. Thus, this article advocates for the repositioning of regional museums as dynamic, community-oriented institutions that are actively engaged in public education and cultural preservation. Building upon these considerations, the study aims to examine the contribution of museum guides at the Subkoss Garuda Sriwijaya Museum in enhancing the quality of visitor experiences through educational approaches, while also exploring how such practices can strengthen the museum's role as an inclusive, contextual, and transformative learning space.

METHODS

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at gaining a deep understanding of the role of historical and cultural education in enhancing the museum visitor experience, specifically at the Subkoss Garuda Sriwijaya Museum in Lubuk Linggau City. According to Krik and Miller (1986), this research represents a specific tradition in social sciences that fundamentally relies on human observation, both in its domain and context (Moleong, 2017). This approach was chosen because it is suitable for exploring the meaning, perceptions, and firsthand experiences of visitors and museum guides regarding the educational activities conducted within the museum.

Data collection in this study was conducted using multiple techniques to ensure the validity and depth of findings. The first method employed was participatory observation, in which the researcher was directly involved in the natural setting of the museum environment. By immersing themselves in daily activities, the researcher was able to closely observe the interactions between museum guides and visitors within exhibition spaces. This included guided tours, interpretive sessions, and educational visits from schools and community groups, all of which served as valuable data sources for understanding how historical narratives and cultural messages were communicated (Sugiyono, 2017; Suyati, 2000).

The second technique involved conducting structured interviews with key informants, including museum guides, institutional managers, and selected visitors. These interviews were designed to test the working hypotheses, particularly concerning the challenges related to information delivery that were perceived as insufficiently interactive or difficult to comprehend. The interview questions were systematically developed based on the core research problems to gain deeper insight into the methods of content delivery, the educational strategies employed, and the visitors' impressions of their learning experience (Sugiyono, 2017).

The third data collection technique was document analysis, which served to triangulate and enrich the primary data. A variety of sources were examined, including visitor logs, educational materials, narrative descriptions of collections, and visual documentation such as photographs of museum activities. These documents were used not only to corroborate observational and interview data but also to facilitate interpretation and support analytical predictions (Ibrahim et al., 2018).

In addition to primary sources, secondary data from relevant literature were also utilized to strengthen the contextual and theoretical foundations of the analysis. Data analysis was conducted based on the concept of Miles and Huberman (1994), which involves the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was maintained through source and technique triangulation, which involved comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the information (Zulfirman, 2022). Through this method, the research aims to provide a clear picture of how the historical and cultural educational roles carried out by museum guides contribute to creating meaningful experiences for visitors to the Subkoss Garuda Sriwijaya Museum.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the context of contemporary museology, the educational function of museums has emerged as a core component that is equally significant as the functions of preservation and collection. Museums are no longer perceived solely as spaces for storing historical objects; they have evolved into non-formal educational institutions that serve the public by delivering knowledge in ways that are both meaningful and engaging. This transformation responds to the growing expectation that museums should not only protect the past but also contribute to shaping a more informed, critically aware, and culturally connected society. The relevance of museums in the 21st century increasingly depends on their ability to facilitate learning experiences that are contextual, emotionally resonant, and intellectually stimulating. This educational mission aligns closely with broader educational paradigms that emphasize inquiry-based learning, active participation, and the co-construction of meaning. As such, museums are uniquely positioned to foster historical consciousness, civic values, and cultural appreciation through interpretive strategies that connect visitors to the stories behind the collections on display. The museum environment becomes a dynamic space where informal learning thrives, allowing visitors from diverse backgrounds to engage with complex narratives and diverse perspectives (Akbar, 2010; Susetyo & Wahayuni, 2025).

Museum education is manifested through a variety of methods designed to bridge the gap between objects and their audiences. Guided tours remain one of the most effective tools for contextualizing exhibits and providing structured learning opportunities. These tours enable visitors, particularly students, to engage directly with historical narratives through interactive storytelling, critical dialogue, and inquiry-based discussions. Educational workshops complement these efforts by providing hands-on learning experiences that foster creativity and exploration, particularly among younger audiences. Thematic exhibitions curated around specific social, historical, or cultural issues can provide a deeper understanding and relevance, enhancing the interpretive value of the collection.

Additionally, museums are increasingly utilizing digital technologies such as interactive touchscreens, augmented reality (AR), and audio-visual media to enrich visitor experiences and provide multisensory learning opportunities (Ibrahim et al., 2018; Tim Website Dikbud, 2022). These innovations not only modernize the museum space but also respond to the preferences of digitally literate generations. However, such efforts must be guided by pedagogical frameworks that take into account visitors' diverse learning styles, motivations, and sociocultural backgrounds to ensure inclusive and meaningful engagement with heritage content.

The successful delivery of museum education relies heavily on interdisciplinary collaboration among curators, educators, and exhibition designers. Curators play a pivotal role in crafting the historical narratives and providing scholarly depth to the interpretation of collections. Museum educators, on the other hand, are responsible for translating these narratives into accessible and engaging content tailored to the diverse needs of various visitor segments, including school groups, tourists, and researchers. Exhibition designers contribute by shaping the physical and visual aspects of the learning environment, ensuring that the spatial layout, lighting, signage, and multimedia elements effectively support the educational objectives. At the Subkoss Garuda Sriwijaya Museum, for instance, the educational dimension is clearly demonstrated through guided tours that recount the resistance and sacrifice of South Sumatra's fighters during the Indonesian Physical Revolution (1945–1949). Here, the museum guide acts not only as a narrator but also as a mediator, building emotional resonance and helping visitors connect with their national and local identities. Such interactions turn passive observation into active meaning-making. Ultimately, museum education is not merely about transmitting factual information; it is a transformative process that cultivates empathy, strengthens cultural identity, and encourages critical reflection on history and heritage.

One of the major challenges in contemporary museum education is presenting historical and cultural narratives in ways that are not only informative but also engaging, relatable, and emotionally resonant. It is no longer sufficient for museums to deliver facts or showcase artifacts without context; instead, the interpretation must connect the past to the present, linking historical events and cultural heritage to the lived experiences of modern society. This requires a shift from didactic presentation to dialogic engagement, where visitors are not passive recipients of information but active participants in the creation of meaning. A contextual approach, therefore, becomes essential in ensuring that history is not perceived as distant or static, but rather as dynamic,

relevant, and continuous. By framing collections within contemporary social, cultural, or personal realities, museums can help visitors feel a deeper connection with the heritage on display. This method also enhances the potential of museums as spaces for critical reflection, identity negotiation, and cultural continuity. As a result, the educational function of museums becomes not only cognitive but also affective, touching on values, memory, and a sense of belonging.

A key strategy for achieving this contextual connection is the application of a local approach rooted in regional culture and wisdom. Instead of relying solely on abstract or national-level narratives, museums can enhance visitor engagement by highlighting localized stories, individuals, symbols, and traditions that are already embedded within the community's collective memory. Presenting history through familiar languages, visual aesthetics, or customs fosters a sense of ownership and personal relevance among visitors. For instance, incorporating local heroes, dialects, rituals, or artifacts into exhibitions enables museums to present history not as something remote, but as a living part of the visitor's own lineage and identity. This grounded approach reinforces the role of museums as custodians of not just national heritage, but also regional and community-specific narratives that are equally significant (Hasanadi, 2017; Rizal, 2021; Susetyo & Ravico, 2021b; Zulfirman, 2022). Moreover, it supports efforts to preserve intangible cultural heritage that may be at risk of fading amid globalization. Through this method, visitors are empowered to see themselves reflected in the stories being told, fostering deeper engagement and cultural pride.

At the Subkoss Garuda Sriwijaya Museum, the implementation of this local-contextual strategy is clearly reflected in its curatorial and educational practices. The museum highlights the contributions and sacrifices of the people of Lubuk Linggau, Musi Rawas, and surrounding regions in their resistance to Dutch military aggression during the Indonesian struggle for independence. Exhibits such as traditional weapons, artillery, wartime letters, and command documents are not displayed as isolated artifacts, but are carefully organized into thematic narratives that showcase the active role of the South Sumatran community in the national revolution. This is further reinforced through the symbolic integration of the Ulu script, an ancient local writing system, used in the naming of buildings and gallery spaces within the museum. Educational programming, such as public discussions on the history of Lubuk Linggau, traditional game competitions, cultural dance performances, and the "Sang Pemenang" creative contest, serves to create multisensory and participatory experiences that resonate emotionally with the audience. These initiatives collectively demonstrate how regional history, when contextualized through local culture, can transform the museum into a vibrant space of remembrance, affirmation of identity, and intergenerational dialogue.

Table 1. Public Programs at the Subkoss Museum

Name of Activity	Year of implementation	Scale	Organizer
One-Day Seminar on "The Struggle History of SUBKOSS 1945-1949"	2019	Local	Subkoss Museum
Creative Dance Competition	2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2024	Province Local	Balaputra Dewa Museum Department of Education and Culture
Traditional Games Competition	2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2023, 2024	Local Local	Balaputra Dewa Museum Department of Education and Culture
Traveling Exhibition: "Getting to Know South Sumatra's Writing Traditions"	2020	Local	Balaputra Dewa Museum
Joint Exhibition: "The Struggle History of the People of South Sumatra 1945-1949"	2021	Province	Balaputra Dewa Museum
The Winner Competition: "Payo to the Museum"	2022	Local	Subkoss Museum
Book Discussion "Ulu Script"	2024	Local	Cultural Preservation Center Region VI
Dance Festival "Silampari Khayangan Tinggi"	2024	Local	Cultural Preservation Center Region VI

Furthermore, the Subkoss Garuda Sriwijaya Museum integrates history study programs as an essential component of its educational services. These programs often extend beyond the museum walls, involving

structured visits to historically significant sites directly connected to the museum's collections, such as former battlegrounds or headquarters used during the Subkoss military campaigns. By linking exhibited artifacts to their original geographic and historical contexts, participants are encouraged to experience history in situ, fostering a deeper appreciation for both national and regional narratives. This method helps bridge the gap between abstract historical information and the lived realities of past struggles. In addition, the museum organizes a wide range of supplementary activities, including seminars, public lectures, thematic competitions, guided educational tours, and field-based learning projects. These initiatives are designed not only to disseminate knowledge but also to stimulate critical thinking, creativity, and cultural pride. As a result, the museum evolves into more than a static display space; it becomes a vibrant, multidimensional learning environment that combines intellectual exploration with the preservation of local cultural wisdom.

The integration of field-based educational approaches, particularly site visits and participatory programs, has proven to be a powerful tool for enhancing visitor engagement and educational outcomes. Experiential learning in museums enables participants, especially students and young audiences, to contextualize abstract historical events through direct observation, sensory experiences, and guided interpretation. These immersive methods allow learners to construct personal meaning from historical content, thereby making the learning process more memorable and impactful. At the Subkoss Museum, the connection between displayed objects and their broader socio-historical setting is consistently emphasized through interpretive storytelling and field interactions. Such an approach not only enriches historical understanding but also encourages visitors to see themselves as part of an ongoing historical continuum. It also enables the museum to serve a dual role: preserving tangible cultural heritage and fostering intangible experiences that promote civic values, intergenerational learning, and regional identity.

One measurable indicator of a museum's educational success is the number and diversity of its visitors over time. Museum attendance serves as a critical barometer for assessing how effectively an institution fulfills its roles as a space for informal education, a cultural recreation site, and a public-oriented non-profit entity. High visitor turnout often reflects the effectiveness of a museum's outreach strategies, the relevance of its content, and the inclusiveness of its programming (Ibrahim et al., 2018; Sari & Sofiarini, 2024; Susetyo & Ravico, 2021a; Tim Penyusun, 2003a). At the Subkoss Garuda Sriwijaya Museum, an increase in annual visitor numbers has been observed following the implementation of educational innovations, including interactive tours and community-based programs. The museum's ability to attract diverse audiences, including students, researchers, tourists, and local communities, demonstrates its capacity to serve as a bridge between historical knowledge and contemporary public interest. Thus, visitor statistics should not only be interpreted quantitatively, but also qualitatively, as they reflect the museum's success in facilitating meaningful engagement, sustaining historical consciousness, and preserving the cultural identity of South Sumatra.

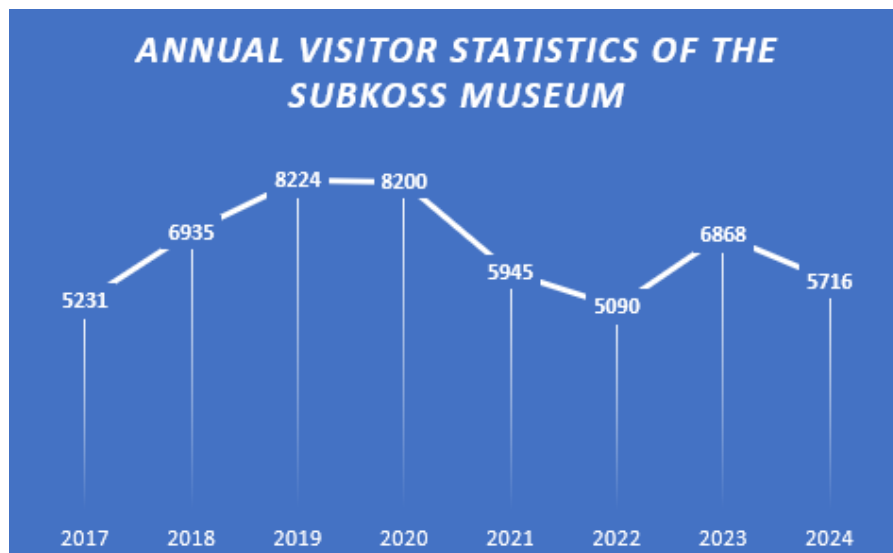


Figure 1. Subkoss Museum Visitor Data

As information technology advances and public expectations for interactive, immersive, and meaningful experiences continue to grow, museums must continually innovate in delivering education that is both accessible and engaging. These innovations are not merely about adopting new technologies for the sake of modernization; rather, they aim to expand the pedagogical reach of museums across generations, especially to the digital-native demographic. A significant transformation is evident in the integration of digital technologies, such as Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR), which enable visitors to experience simulated reconstructions of historical events in multisensory formats. These tools provide a level of experiential learning that traditional

exhibition methods cannot match, thereby enhancing emotional engagement and knowledge retention. Additionally, the use of QR codes on collection labels enables visitors to access supplementary content, such as audio narratives, archival footage, or hyperlinks to curated educational resources, directly from their smartphones, making learning more autonomous and personalized (Susilo et al., 2022; Syafutra et al., 2022). Several museums, including the Subkoss Garuda Sriwijaya Museum, have begun implementing QR-based systems to facilitate deeper and independent exploration of collections.

What distinguishes this research from previous studies is its specific focus on contextualizing museum innovation within a regional museum setting that has strong cultural and historical roots. While many studies have emphasized innovation in large, urban-based museums, this study demonstrates that even regional institutions—such as Subkoss Museum in Lubuk Linggau can implement adaptive and collaborative educational strategies. One notable novelty lies in the integration of local wisdom and community-based education within the museum's digital and participatory programs. Unlike similar research that tends to generalize the role of digital innovation in museums, this study offers a localized model where digital tools are used not only for modernization but also to preserve and transmit regional identity, such as through Ulu Script classes and collaborations with local schools and universities. These programs include interactive local history modules with Universitas PGRI Silampari, integrated curriculum development with SDN 36 Lubuk Linggau, and the involvement of junior high students in ongoing museum visit programs in collaboration with the Lubuk Linggau Education Office (Susetyo et al., 2022; Susilo & Riyanto, 2023; Tim Penulis, 2005). This community engagement approach ensures that innovation is inclusive, sustainable, and socially embedded.

Moreover, the incorporation of interactive storytelling and gamification, such as "Guess the Collection" games, digital history quizzes, and character-based role-playing activities about local freedom fighters, adds another layer of novelty. These methods are not yet widely adopted in regional Indonesian museums, but they present a practical framework for increasing youth participation and informal learning outcomes. By blending narrative immersion with game dynamics, museums transform into active, playful, and reflective learning environments. From a scientific perspective, this study contributes to museum education literature by offering an empirical model for integrating regional identity, cultural continuity, and digital innovation within a participatory educational framework. It also provides new insights for educational technologists and cultural policymakers on how museums, regardless of size or location, can evolve into adaptive learning ecosystems. Ultimately, the findings affirm that museum innovation should be evaluated not only by technological sophistication but also by its cultural relevance, educational effectiveness, and ability to foster historical consciousness in society (Sari & Sofiarini, 2024; Sari & Susetyo, 2022).

Table 2. Comparison Table of Research Related to Museum Innovation

Aspect	Previous Research	This Research (Subkoss Museum)	Innovation/Novelty
Research Focus	National or major museums in urban areas (Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta)	Regional museum in Lubuk Linggau (Subkoss Garuda Sriwijaya Museum)	Focus on regional museums that are rarely studied in depth
Technological Approach	Adoption of digital technology (AR/VR, multimedia, touchscreen) for modernization	Digital technology (QR codes, gamification, storytelling) based on local context and community education	Use of technology as a tool for preserving local identity, not just modernization
Educational Basis	General or formal education based on the national curriculum	Participatory education based on the local community, collaboration with schools and universities	Local curriculum and regional history approach in designing museum educational programs
Visitor Activities	Passive or semi-active (watching, reading digital information)	Active and immersive (digital quizzes, role-play, 'Guess the Collection' game)	An interactive approach that encourages participatory learning experiences
Cultural & Local Values	Generally not specifically focused on local culture	Integration of local cultural values (Ulu script, local heroic history, regional narratives)	Incorporation of local narratives as part of historical education
Program Evaluation	Focus on visitor quantity or general satisfaction	Recommendation to collect user feedback from the trial stage	Highlights the importance of formative evaluation from users for continuous improvement
Contribution to Literature	Highlights the general impact of digitalization in museums	Provides an empirical model of local and technology-based museum education	New conceptual model for museum education in regional contexts

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the intervention involves screening short films titled 'RABI,' effectively improving students' knowledge and attitudes towards early marriage prevention in agricultural regions. The use of video makes it easier for respondents to understand the essence of the message, which aims to discourage early marriage. The local wisdom presented in the short film makes teenagers feel relevant to their lives in terms of culture, existing social norms, and prevailing beliefs within their environment. This finding can serve as the basis for implementing video-based education by integrating local wisdom in the region. These findings support the use of culturally relevant educational media in health education programs to promote positive changes in students' knowledge and attitudes. Local wisdom-based educational programs enhance the effectiveness of message delivery, strengthen student engagement, and increase acceptance to achieve health goals. This study also contributes to efforts aimed at reducing early marriage rates, improving adolescent health, and supporting health and nursing education.

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