

Original Research

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## The Positioning Strategy of Ambon as a Music City: Case Study – Ambon City (Maluku, Indonesia) Towards World Music City

**Setyabudhi Rahardjo Situmorang\***

Department of Church Music, Faculty of Arts and Religion, Institut Agama Kristen Negeri (IAKN) Ambon, Maluku, Indonesia

**Esy Tiurmauli Sihaloho**

Department of Church Music, Faculty of Arts and Religion, Institut Agama Kristen Negeri (IAKN) Ambon, Maluku, Indonesia

### Abstract

Ambon City has been awarded as a Music and Culinary City of Indonesia by The Bekraf RI (Republic of Indonesia's Creative Economy Agency). This article discusses how the preparations that have been carried out by the city of Ambon towards the world music city and the various problems associated within it. A number of relevant stakeholders in Ambon were interviewed and opened various evaluations and problem solving. Various programs that have been carried out are in accordance with the standards requested by UNESCO, but the priority scale in the executed steps requires more careful attention. Some things that still need more attention are related to information, regulation, relations between stakeholders, organizing music festivals (live performances) and bureaucratic systems. This article concludes that efforts related to the world music city still need a serious effort in positioning Ambon in the midst of global competition.

**Keywords:** Positioning strategy; Ambon city of music; World music city.



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### 1. Introduction

Ambon City in Indonesia has a strong brand image as a producing area of singers whose voice is distinctive and has no doubt about its beauty. Nationally, many singers originated from Ambon since the 1970s, and at the international level there are those who are already well-known, namely Daniel Sahuleka. In Indonesia, the ability in singing is usually associated with people from Ambon (Maluku), besides Batak and Manado.

The people of Ambon (and Maluku) are very fond of singing and seen during worship in the church or during a thanksgiving party. In this city, music is something that is very close to everyday life. When a thanksgiving party or celebration is held, many members of the community often contribute to sing. In playing musical instruments, the people of Ambon city are closer to flute (from bamboo) and brass. Both of these instruments are still used as accompaniment to worship in churches in Maluku, although not every week.

Ambon as a city where people are very fond of music, especially the world of singing, is certainly inseparable from the performances of musical art which is also a means of promotion for local bands in Ambon and cities around Ambon (Maluku). Maluku, which has many tourist destinations, can certainly take advantage of the arrival of tourists in every performance held in Ambon City. This situation will turn up the potential of musical performances by various economic activities on the other side. As a city of music and culinary, as has been awarded the title by Bekraf RI, the creative economy businesses associated with musical activities need to be given serious attention in the city of Ambon.

There are many reasons why someone wants to watch a musical performance. According to Andreea (2005), the decision to watch a live performance can immediately be taken at the venue or through a process of purchasing decisions. Andreea's research shows the main reason why one watches a live show, is related to social needs and self-esteem, relaxation needs, escaping from everyday problems, how to socialize and spend quality time with friends, a way of self-introspection, and how to set someone's status as an intellectual.

Music is known to have a positive influence on human life. The Health Education Authority (HEA) (1999, p. 6) in the United Kingdom concluded that, 'art clearly has the potential to make a major contribution to our health, welfare and life skills' (Packer and Ballantyne, 2010). Similarly, in Australia, Packer and Ballantyne (2010) highlight the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive benefits gained through involvement with music and conclude that music has the power to 'glorify the human soul, change human experience and bring joy, beauty, and satisfaction in human life.'

Ambon as a city whose people are very fond of music, especially the world of singing, is certainly inseparable from the presence of musical art performances which is also a promotional event for local bands in Ambon even outside Ambon (Maluku). Music art is inseparable from performing arts, although we can enjoy the art of music through recording both sound and audio visual. Times have brought many changes in how to introduce a music group, especially with the development of information technology.

The plan to submit Ambon to a world music city whose launch was supported by BEKRAF, was held at Merdeka Ambon Field on October 29, 2016. Through the "25 Action Plan" program which included the factors divided into 5 pillars of music city development, namely Infrastructure, musicians and Communities, Learning,

\*Corresponding Author

Development Industrial and Socio-Cultural Values, then planned three years since the declaration by BEKRAF, is expected to be filed into a city of music to UNESCO.

Ambon city government is currently making branding for the city of Ambon as a city of music ([Solsolay, 2016](#)), Branding being carried out by the Ambon city government has broad implications for the efforts made by the Ambon city government to achieve the image which are desired. One of the efforts being carried out is creating a music ecosystem through musical art stages in Ambon City ([Ginting, 2018](#)). This is a good promotional effort and will create a strong musical ecosystem in the city of Ambon. But how exactly the City Government's efforts to position Ambon city as a world music city need to be explored as well as the challenges faced by Ambon city in an effort to reach the world music city.

The purpose of this study is to find out what efforts have been made in Ambon city regarding its efforts to gain recognition from UNESCO as a world music city and to know the challenges faced to achieve it. Research on the efforts that have been done is related to the undertaking to position Ambon city in the midst of global competition. In addition, The author studied the suggestions provided by various stakeholders in Ambon.

## 2. Literature Review

Marketing is a term given to activities that arise at meetings between organizations and their customers ([Blythe, 2005](#)). This meeting results in meeting the needs of each party. When the Ambon city government tried to get the title of World Music City from UNESCO and made efforts to form a music ecosystem by setting up musical stages, then mutually beneficial cooperation between the local government and music artists in Ambon needed to be held. Mutually beneficial collaboration will bring a continuous musical ecosystem in Ambon city and not a seasonal ecosystem. This phenomenon is in line with the statement that one of the shortest good definitions of marketing is "the fulfillment of needs profitably" ([Kotler and Keller, 2012](#)).

Marketing is also a way of thinking for all organizations, whether in the nonprofit sector or business ([Bernstein, 2007](#)), in this case including the Ambon City Government. According to Bernstein, a marketing director of an organization needs to change its outlook to a mind-set that ensures the organization works with customers to create, deliver and share values. Based on the statement above, it appears that the opinion of [Bernstein \(2007\)](#) is in line with the opinion of [Hooley et al. \(2008\)](#), that successful organizations in the future will focus on customers, and not on products or technology, supported by market information competencies that connect the customer's voice with all processes for delivering value belong to the company. The research conducted by [Situmorang \(2015\)](#) in wayang theater proves that the focus on customers despite against the wayang pakem (wayang guidelines show), turns out to be a success in bringing the audience segment which is arguably difficult to be audiences in wayang shows. Successful marketing organizations will have the skills needed to manage many strategic marketing processes Webster, in [Hyland \(2008\)](#). In managing the achievement efforts of Ambon World City of Music, it is necessary to understand market information in this case the music market in the city of Ambon and think about the strategy of forming ecosystems as planned.

The same thing with the above opinion related to the marketing situation today is also expressed by Byrnes, namely that art organizations that do not have a MySpace or Facebook website page or video clips displayed on YouTube run the risk of being far from the public eye, although that does not mean that the website the most up-to-date certainly attracts someone to always watch a concert ([Byrnes, 2011](#)). This Byrnes opinion needs attention from the Ambon City Government, that the effort to achieve the brand 'music city' requires continuity in promotion. Efforts to embed music on Ambon city must achieve closeness with the public's mind.

The efforts of the Ambon city government to shape the image of a city of music, of course, require ideas in marketing it, especially if it is related to the proposal to UNESCO which is loaded with competition with other cities that also want the designation as the World City of Music. According to [Parsons and MacLaran \(2009\)](#), an art marketer must be a situation expert, in the sense that he takes into account the wide range of factors of segmenting, targeting and positioning when formulating an art marketing strategy. Parsons & MacLaren states that art marketers need to take into account the wide range of factors when formulating an art marketing strategy. This includes the role of the organization or artist in the relevant value chain; historically valid artistic and ideological conventions; the level, nature and level of artistic innovation; available funding sources and the requirements and priorities they bring with them; the location of the marketer in the structure of the art project and the strength of the marketer or lack thereof; acceptance of consumers, fans and critics; types of decent business models in the relevant arts sector; tension between art and trade; and the influence of government policies, technological developments, media and economics, and so on [Parsons and MacLaran \(2009\)](#).

The process of segmentation consists of three main elements, namely: segmentation, targeting and positioning ([Kotler and Keller, 1988](#)) in [Dibb and Simkin \(1991\)](#). Figure 1 provides an overview of these elements. This segmentation process by [Khan \(2013\)](#) is described in five phases, namely: the situation analysis phase, the market segmentation phase, the market shooting phase, the product positioning phase and the marketing mix phase.

Market segmentation always functions as a basis for customer orientation and differentiation ([Bose, 2012](#)). Segmentation helps organizations to determine customer groups and help shape specific groups of products or services. In this way it helps a lot in building certain value chain activities for certain groups and therefore creates beautiful synchronization in maintaining the value chain in the organization for each target segment ([Hunt and Arnett, 2004](#)) in [Bose \(2012\)](#). Making music stages by the Ambon City Government can be the beginning of this good market segmentation process.

The division of markets into smaller segments occurs for example due to differences in needs, characteristics, or behaviors that may require separate marketing strategies or mixtures ([Kotler and Keller, 2012](#)). The purpose of

segmentation is to concentrate on energy and marketing power on grouping to gain competitive advantage in the segment. This concentration is the core of all marketing strategies and market segmentation is a conceptual tool to help marketers to achieve this focus ([Goyat, 2011](#)) found in his literature study that a). The basic selection of market segmentation is very dependent on the industry and the type of product itself and b). Critically it can be stated that the demographics may prove to be a good basis for segmentation but it all depends on the consumer psyche. In contrast to Goyat, ([Barry and Weinstein, 2009](#)) in their literature study mentioned that marketers have realized that geodemography rarely provides an adequate perspective on today's complex markets. Conversely, psychographic segmentation has revealed a stronger insight into the target market while providing marketers with stepping stones to adapt to the sales proposition and marketing mix.

Marketing strategy instruments such as segmenting and targeting can benefit art performing institutions and make their offer more competitive ([Zuzana et al., 2012](#)). Whereas positioning is the act of designing company image and offerings so that they occupy meaningful and different competitive positions in the target customer's mind of [Hyland \(2008\)](#). This is what needs serious attention from the Ambon City Government regarding all their efforts to place Ambon as the World City of Music. The above opinion about positioning is illustrated by [Kotler and Keller \(2012\)](#) as follows: products are made in factories (in this case the process of making shows), but the brand is in the minds of consumers (in this case the audience). While the meaning of differentiation is a strategy of creating something that is seen as unique in the market. With this strategy, the company's strengths and skills are used to differentiate company offerings from its competitors following several criteria that are valued by consumers of [Hyland \(2008\)](#).

Positioning is also related to the position of marketers among similar competitors. In the view of [Hyland \(2008\)](#) this relates to how customers perceive alternative offers on the market, compared to others. In line with this opinion, ([Blythe, 2005](#)) defines positioning as: the position of products in the market seen through the eyes of a group of customers where the customer group is known as the target segment of the market. Positioning shows the existence of a product or shows a product to be marketed, placed in the market by customers. Positioning is the development of a product image directly to competing products and other products carried out by the company concerned. The aim is to give management attention by the recipient to a particular product and to distinguish those products that are supported by the company, compared to similar products ([Karadeniz, 2009](#)). The ability to attach products in the public's eye is at the core of the business of marketing products that are being promoted by the Ambon City Government, the Ambon City of Music.

### **3. Methodology**

The research method used in this study is a qualitative research method and uses a single instrument type case study approach. Data sources in this study are primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from observations from September 2017 to May 2018. Secondary data were obtained from various literatures in text books, scientific journals, proceedings, as well as data on recorded art shows in Ambon City.

Research informants were selected based on the results of early observations of the study. Based on the early observations on the music stage performed by music groups in Ambon City, researchers found that there were several musical genres developed. Based on the data obtained in the field, the researchers considered that it was necessary to carry out follow-up interviews with the following sources of informants: 2 local artists (musicians), BEKRAF, Event Organizers, Ambon Music Office (AMO), and local art observers as well as academics in Ambon so as to be able to explore and analyze more information about the submission of Ambon City of Music.

Data collection techniques used in this research are observation, interview, direct observation, participant observation and web documents (to find out information about Ambon City of Music), text books, proceedings and journals (as secondary data in analyzing research data with theory) and audio-visual recording. Observations are made after reading and reviewing the writings and phenomena that occur about the marketing strategy of the art organization group, namely Ambon City, specifically related to the positioning of the city of Ambon.

### **4. Results and Findings**

As a city that is preparing itself to be a world music city, the ecosystem is being prepared. This was confirmed by Deputy V Bekraf, Ari Julianto Gema during a discussion on the Ambon City of Music program at the Swiss Bell hotel, Ambon, on March 17, 2018 ([Ginting, 2018](#)). The forming of this ecosystem has begun to be carried out in the city of Ambon with the making of a stage that began at Jalan AY Patty, as revealed by the Head of General Affairs and Equipment of Ambon City, Chres Waas to info.Ambon.com (info.Ambon.com, 2018).

When the Ambon city government tried to get the title of World Music City from UNESCO and made an effort to form a music ecosystem by setting up music stages, mutual cooperation between local governments and music artists in Ambon must be done properly and correctly. Ecosystem that is created will make the economic potential to be great as well.

The times have brought many changes in the way of introducing and create a brand image of a city, especially with the development of information technology today. As a city that is building an image as a city of music, it is necessary to evaluate in every program that has been implemented whether effective or efficient. The strategy to get a position in the minds of consumers requires differentiation efforts by creating something that is seen as unique in the market. With this strategy, the company's strengths and skills are used to differentiate the company's offer from its competitors following several criteria that are valued by consumers [Hyland \(2008\)](#).

Positioning is the position of a product in the mind of a consumer (Blythe, 2005; Kotler and Keller, 2012). The image of a product with a certain brand influence how consumers make decisions on these products (Hooley *et al.*, 2008).

. In this case, Ambon city needs action to design the offer and image of the city so that it occupies a meaningful and different competitive position in the minds of the music lovers.

Programs that are run by AMO are diverse, but are focused on recording programs. This is supported by the creation of an international-class Recording Studio at Pattimura University. Other infrastructure that has been built is the Ethnic Music Performance Building at Ambon Islamic Institute (IAIN) (Himawan and Rosmala, 2018).

The international-class recording studio at Pattimura University is currently unable to be used even though it has been inaugurated, due to the lack of funds for equipment purchases. As a result, this studio is still used only as a training ground. This will certainly be at risk of damage if the supervision is lacking, and this is something that often happens.

Various workshops were held by AMO in collaboration with various parties, such as BEKRAF, AMI (Indonesian Music Academy), and others. The workshop that was held was about band instrument playing skills, arrangement skills, music marketing and so on. These workshops, the ultimate goal is to improve the recording of music in the city of Ambon. This is certainly a very good thing because it will trigger and revive the recording industry. But if we look back on how the process of a music group or singer gets to the recording stage, the usual process is a stage where musicians grow both in skill and in song making - which they later entered the recording industry. A band can even be a filler for certain stages for years until they get a recording contract.

Teaching musicians in Ambon various things related to the recording industry on the one hand is very good, such as teaching band instrument skills, introducing to recording industry entrepreneurs or marketing music. On the other hand, the recording industry has declined due to the hijacking of downloads via the internet, so that the current live shows are more lively (Leenders *et al.* (2010)). Today many musicians record indi. A music group no longer depends on record companies to record or market their work. Current live shows are more promising because in addition to being able to benefit from tickets and sponsors, they can sell recordings and even souvenirs at the performance day. Music festivals have developed in recent years, from just as "hippi meetings" to a megaevent (Leenders *et al.* (2010)). Live concerts and festivals are also an interesting way to continue to be able to make money in music, both through ticket sales and other income such as merchandise and agreements with sponsors (Leenders *et al.* (2010)).

Various performances were also held involving both musicians from Maluku and international musicians. But when asked about the making of a music festival (not just a single performance), the AMO stated that the actual music performance activities were not the main ones, but that all music programs were more focused on music-making. International musicians who play in the city of Ambon are basically invitations or cooperation visits, which means it is not organized specifically by AMO. When referring to Baker (2017), ignoring musical performances, in this case will eliminate important points that define a city of music, namely: audience participation, live music venus, local music events and international music events. A music festival, can synergize various arts (eg dance, theater etc.) and economic activities (souvenirs, handcrafts, culinary etc.), so that it will be at the same time in line with the program of Bekraf RI, Ambon as a city of music and culinary.

The stage show is done routinely in Jl AY Patty (planned to be made in other streets in the city of Ambon), an effort of the Department of Tourism and Culture of the city of Ambon, and not of AMO. The stage is located on a side street crowded with shops along the way which are separated by a divider. Performances are held at night around 7 pm until around midnight, but are less desirable due to the lack of space to sit and watch. This show is watched more by people passing by in a car.

The establishment of the Conservatory of Music was also planned by the Ambon City Government. This plan is very good only if the education level below (High School) has been strengthened and developed. This was revealed by several interviewees from musicians and academics, related to graduates who were ready to be educated at the top level (Conservatory and University). If the lower level is not ready, then at the top level cannot get ready human resources in terms of quality and quantity. In other words, it is considered as an inverse action in terms of priority.

Priorities for the development of music education at the elementary and secondary levels get recommendations from all informants interviewed. They argue that music education in Maluku is still lacking, even though Maluku people are musically very good. If the establishment of a university level music education school is added while education at the lower level does not get attention, it is feared that this will cause the level of readiness when entering university is low.

Music life, especially pop music is very lively in Ambon. This city is arguably not lacking the next generation of musicians in the genre of pop and jazz music. This music genre is the most developed in the city of Ambon. The music from Maluku has many fans in Eastern Indonesia. Efforts to prosper Ambon musicians have not been clearly seen as planned. This is related to regulations that do not yet exist so that the minimum wage for musicians playing in the city of Ambon cannot yet be felt.

The intention to prosper musicians in Ambon is good, considering that many musicians in Ambon had to go to big cities to play music such as Jakarta Bandung, Surabaya and Bali. The program of the Department of Tourism and Culture requires that cafe owners make music shows, at least one singer and one accompanist can be the initial solution for musicians in Ambon who are looking for music playing venues that can support them. But seeing the number of cafes is still too little to be said to turn on the musical atmosphere of Ambon city. This is very different from the city of Bali which is full of musical entertainment in cafes in the city. The city of Bali has many cafe

visitors because there are many tourists who come to this city, something that should have happened in Maluku because of its beautiful nature on the islands.

Ethnic music also received support from the Ambon City Government with the establishment of an Ethnic Performance Building at the IAIN Ambon. Although this is one of the programs in an effort to reach the world music city, most of the interviewees considered it to be inappropriate as one part of the effort. This is considering that, in the city of Ambon ethnic musical instruments are rarely played and popular compared to choir and band music which they think is considered more feasible to support because it characterizes music life in Ambon city, in the sense that not because ethnic music is not feasible to develop but more to the priority scale at this time.

Currently, the city of Ambon, which is represented by AMO, as the executor in the field, indeed has made and carried out various activities which all aim to get recognition as the World City of Music from UNESCO. As an effort to achieve this, Ambon city must be able to differentiate so that it has the characteristics that can position itself as a city that deserves to be recognized as the World City of Music in the midst of global competition.

Singers from Ambon or from all over Maluku are formed naturally through appearances in the church every Sunday service. They are naturally formed because there is always a place to practice in front of the audience on a regular basis, which is in worship every Sunday. Singing solo or choir is a common thing in church, family worship, or events like parties. Even so, efforts to develop this are still lacking if we compare it with the city of Manado, which routinely always has choir competition activities, even has a choir village. This should be a strong capital as an effort to differentiate.

A city is called a city of music if the city has a vibrant music economy, which is able to provide real economic, work, cultural and social benefits ([Terrill et al., 2014](#)). In the report entitled The Mastering of a Music City, the key elements of a city of music were presented, namely art and musicians, a thriving music scene, access to spaces and places, a receptive and engaged audience and record labels and other music-related businesses. Meanwhile, ([Baker, 2017](#)) proposed an Algorithm benchmark based on the report above, to review and analyze music activity in an urban context. Both are good ways to review and analyze the activities of a music city.

The very important thing regarding all of the activities of the AMO, is related to the public information is still lacking. Relationships with various stakeholders still need to get the attention and require persuasion to invite the involvement of various parties so that each AMO activity can be wider in the range of information dissemination. The AMO website (<https://amboncityofmusic.id>) is quite interesting with the many news activities that have been carried out, but there is no data on the activities to be held in the future. This is according to AMO related to the funding bureaucracy, which of course needs to be considered by the city government for good performance.

## 5. Conclusion

Prioritizing the program is very important at this time for the city of Ambon. This concerns the effectiveness of the use of available funds. Collaboration with BEKRAF greatly helped businesses make Ambon a world music city with the help of funds provided. This seconded fund, of course, has limits, so the program that is done must be on target. In view of this, cooperation with BEKRAF must be in line with this goal. AMO as an extension of the Ambon city government must be observant about this. Some points as mentioned by Terril et. al. and Baker regarding the achievement of a city of music should be seriously studied. A real example is the reluctance of the AMO to turn on musical performances, for example through festivals due to Ambon being a city of performances, where the city of performances was given by BEKRAF to the city of Bali - something that was reversed by points related to the city of music as suggested by Terril et. al. or by Baker.

This paper concludes that, what AMO has done (representing Ambon city government in carrying out its responsibilities to achieve Ambon city goals into a world music city) in collaboration with BEKRAF, is good. But it needs to be reviewed if referring to the points that can be seen in the report of The Mastering of a Music City and Baker, A. J. which can be studied further as a reference and benchmark defining a city of music.

## Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the Research and Community Service Foundation (LPPM) of Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Ambon for their financial support.

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