

# **The Implementation of Visual Communication Design Media after Conducting Service-Learning Program**

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## **Abstract**

Visual communication design study mostly gives emphasis on the implementation of media such as print and digital media. The development of media is rapid; however, the use of media is still related to the current need. In a visual communication design class that implements Service-Learning program, students are assigned to do a destination branding project which helps private owners and the local government in need to promote cultural, historical and other potential places. Students come up with various media, and based on agreement, some are donated to the client. After a year, I conducted the research to find the implementation of visual communication design media. The research used a qualitative method through deep interviews and field observations with related clients. There are internal and external aspects that influence the decision to implement visual communication design media. It turned out that certain media could help to boost the promotion and have social and economic influences. The research findings could give information on how visual communication design media could function effectively after conducting Service-Learning program.

## **Introduction**

Visual Communication Design (VCD) class tries to improve the quality of learning by conducting Service-Learning (S-L) program as the class project. S-L gives a students a change to understand the theories in class and apply them to field practice. The real problems in societies could enhance students' learning process. I believe that by conducting S-L program, the students could serve and learn from the society and vice versa. Jane C Kendal (1990) defines that S-L is the combination of "Service & Learning", and S-L goes beyond charity or volunteerism. It encourages those involved in service ministry to ask the hard questions and search for real solutions. S-L programs explicitly include features which foster participants to learn about the larger social issues behind the human needs to which they are responding.

In a VCD class that implements S-L program, students in the fifth semester are assigned to do a destination branding project which helps private owners and the local government in need to promote their cultural, historical, and other potential places. The reason of offering those three categories of places is because they are unknown but potential to be developed and marketed, and urgently need help to be promoted. Students can choose one of those three places as their destination branding project. This is a good

chance to develop our tourism especially in East Java that has many beautiful places to visit, but unfortunately not so many people know about them because there are no adequate promotions. Every location could be branded by creating and communicating their identity. City, province and country have been actively campaigned by advertising, sending direct mail and other communication tools (Keller, 2003:30). I really hope that this project that implements S-L program will benefit to all S-L participants such as: societies, students and educators. After a year, I did research to evaluate the implementation of VCD media after conducting S-L program. In detail, this research aims to know internal and external aspects that influence the decision to implement VCD media, to find out the social and economic influences after implementing the VCD media and to know whether VCD media could function effectively after conducting S-L program. For VCD department, this research could be the guidance to improve the quality of design learned theoretically and practically.

### **Service-Learning Program in Destination Branding Project**

S-L means different things to different people. According to Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform (1993) "S-L is a method by which young people learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully-organized service experiences that meet actual community needs, coordinated in collaboration with the school and community, integrated into each young person's academic curriculum, provide the structured time for a young person to think, talk, and write about what he/she did and saw during the actual service activity, provide young people with opportunities to use newly acquired academic skills and knowledge in real life situations in their own communities, enhance what is taught in the school by extending student learning beyond the classroom, and help to foster the development of a sense of caring for others". Betty Cernol (2007) define S-L as a teaching tool that ties academic curriculum to service project that both reinforces and expands students' learning, aims at creating experiential education for young people so that they can connect their learning to their own lives and provide a benefit to the local or global community, a teaching methodology that combines community service with explicit academic learning objectives, preparation and reflection. J Herman Blake, as quoted by Betty (2009) explains that "S-L is reciprocal learning. I serve in order that I may learn from you, and you accept my service so that you may teach me". Based on my experience, design is not enough to be learned only in the classroom. No school could attempt to deal with all design requirements in every area of professional practice. Design studies are emerging today for the same reason that is the design profession is experiencing a resurgence: immediate problems of integrating design into industry and long term cultural questions about the role of design in the modern world and its potential for contributing to human experience

(Buchanan, 1995). I notice that S-L program is suitable to be implemented in destination branding project.

A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors (Kotler, 2000: 404). Destination branding is about combining all things associated with the 'place' (i.e. its products and services from various industries -- agriculture; tourism; sports; arts; investment; technology; education, etc.) that collaborates under one brand. Its aim is to capture the essence of the destination in a unified manner so that it can be consumed simultaneously at a symbolic and experiential level. It is then used to market those unique added values to consumer's needs and sustain its success in the face of competition (Tourism WA, 2007). Destination branding means creating a place to fulfill the need of target market (Keller, 2003: 138). More importantly, destination branding is about how consumers feel about one place in their mind. The strength of brand lies in its ability to build awareness of a location and connect the site with the desired association (Vogt, 2003). As one manifestation of the brand, destination branding has anatomy similar to other brands in general. In general, the brand name used is the actual name of the site. Destination branding is used to achieve multiple goals. In general, the purposes are: building a positive brand image of a location, improving quality of life of a location, attracting the target market, such as visitors, residents and officials, business and industry, and finding the export market or in this case investor (Kotler, 1999: 138). The overall strategy and process are known as destination branding. The concept "to sell location" develops into "destination branding", the cutting edge of glory through economical aspect.

To achieve the goal of destination branding project by conducting S-L program, theoretically our VCD class combines two learning methods namely class-learning and studio-learning. Class learning is where students have to attend the lectures in the classroom and studio-learning means students have a discussion process with their tutor for about nine hours a week in a studio. Inside the studio, the students' knowledge and their developmental design aspects are being developed by doing some trainings or students/tutors/lecturers' interaction (Istanto, 2001: 5). VCD department gives the responsibility for the execution of the class and studio-learning to the head of VCD. Totally the class consists of 236 students. In doing the project, students are divided into small groups, each of which is assisted by one tutor. The structure of the studio consists of one head of VCD, two coordinators who help the head of VCD to coordinate the class and studio, seven lecturers in team teaching and twenty three tutors. The project is done by one group of students consisting of three to four students. Totally there are 69 groups which means there will be 69 East Java destination branding design projects. These class learning and studio learning are suitable for a big class. As a place to do many kinds of activities, studio

will become a place for the students to learn and practice the visualization and representation as well as to learn the new material and the way a designer thinks. This process will involve the intensive relationship among the lecturer, tutor and student himself (Istanto, 2002: 5).

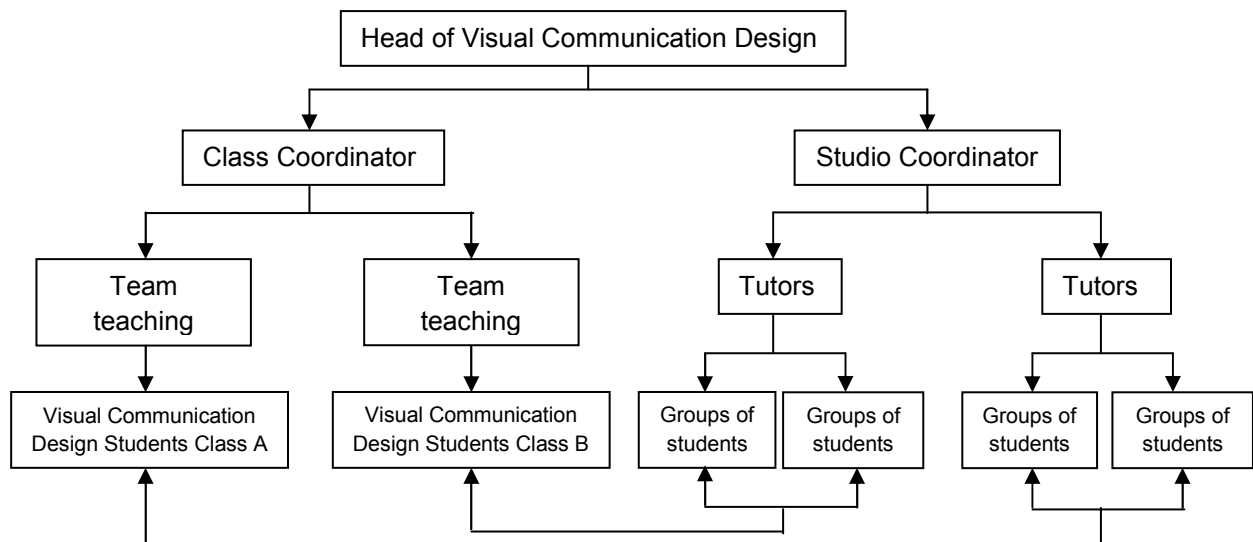


Figure 1. Visual Communication Design Class and Studio Learning Method

By implementing S-L program, the class and studio preparations are more complex than in the regular class, so we conduct an intensive meeting among the head of studio, lecturers and tutors. Step by step action is written as a guidance in doing the project and S-L program, by providing implementation guideline to make sure the entire participants do the same procedure. An intensive monitoring is conducted during the process through attendance form and submission form. The attendance form has to be signed by tutor and client whenever they have appointment. Submission form is used as a proof when students give their project as agreement to client. All forms have to be submitted with a reflection report at the end of semester. A “good” service assignment is a “manageable confrontation with novel responsibility”. “Manageable” may not mean “successful” and “novel responsibility” requires a change in roles and depends on the match between the student and the assignment (Graham, 1974).

There are three conditions that students should have in this program First, the students should experience the real condition of society and solve their problem. Second, students should have service, learn from the society, and write in their reflection report. Third, the final project should be contributed to society in need to help them promote their places. Higher education not only develops knowledge and trains young minds, but also disseminates and applies such knowledge as well (Rao, 2003). In the study of Eyer, J &

Giles, D. E. Jr. (1999), it is explained that S-L gives a lot of positive impacts to the students' personality which are personal and interpersonal development; understanding and applying knowledge; engagement, curiosity, and reflective practice, critical thinking, perspective transformation, and citizenship.

As colleges and universities seek to link community service to their educational mission, they realize that they must design those links to be compatible with their national and institutional cultural context. To be successful, they cannot merely replicate the models in use at other institutions (Berry, 1999). The implementation of S-L program in destination branding project is divided into three parts. The first is the initial designs which consist of informal survey, approval of the place, formal visit and data collection from client. The second is the design process including the discussion process with tutor and client, making destination branding design and finishing. The third is the final design, which consists of evaluation, design exhibition, submission of work and reflection. The additional benefit of S-L program for the educator is the possibility to examine the result and improve the quality of learning by collecting data from students' reflection and interview with their client. Nowadays, S-L is an effective learning method, because it becomes a bridge to connect service and learning through the reflection process (Arifin, 2009). Based on students' reflection, they have implemented the media and some of them are donated to the clients. Students' reflection then becomes my entering point to conduct a reseach to find about the implementation of VCD media.

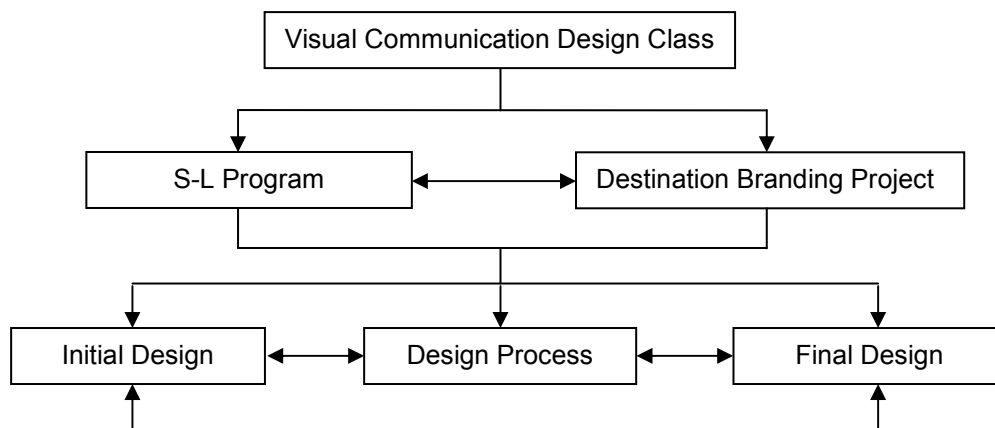


Figure 2. S-L Program in Destination Branding Project

### Research Methodology

This reseach examines the final design part, focusing on the implementation of VCD media from the client side. After S-L program, lecturers and tutors evaluate students' design, make a selection and hold an exhibition. Among 69 design outcomes, there were only 27

designs which were exhibited in VCD exhibition, but through the administrative examination there were only 23 research samples. The research uses a qualitative method through deep interviews with related clients. To strengthen the data interview, I also conducted the field observation and documentation. Because of some field problems, totally there were only 20 clients involved in this research. The clients who became respondents in this destination project consist of: local Government staffs from Department of Tourism and Culture and Department of Industry and Trade, owner, manager, marketing, head of the village and head of association.

In the field, there were some problems in collecting the data through interview, such as (1) uncomplete data about the client in students' reflection, some expired data like the invalid phone number of client, (2) respondent who could not be contacted by phone or refused to be interviewed because they were busy or had a family problem. Some of respondents refused to be documented by video or tape recorder. One of them did not want to be photographed but willing his voice to be recorded, (3) time and budget aspects. In this survey and interview, I found that the outcome was so variant, so the data were classified and then analyzed.

### **The Implementation of Visual Communication Design Media**

There are varieties of media that can be created by students like: brochure, flyer, catalog, Graphic Standard Manual (GSM) book, concept book, map, banner, billboard, name board, x-banner, mini banner and some merchandises like: handphone hanger, key chain, t-shirt, wall clock, etc. For digital media, students can make: website, TV commercial, CD interactive, slide show, etc. Student should make seven printed media including GSM book and two digital media based on clients' need.

At the end of the project, students come up with various media, and based on agreement, some are donated to the client. In the process of giving the design, students have to write in a submission form what kind of design item is given to their clients and clients have to sign it. I am surprised that some clients told me that they did not receive the media. I found that there were some wrong procedures in giving the media, like (1) client did not know the function of the form and did not ask the students about it, so they just signed it even though they did not receive the media, (2) client signed the form because students promised that they would give the media in the following day, but students never showed up to fulfill their promise, or (3) students gave the media to another person. Clients said that students were not consistent in meeting them like: they met the person in department of industry and trade in the first appointment, asked for the information and gave the final result to head of association. Later on it was revealed that some students did not examine their clients' need; they only had consultation with their tutor and made prediction about what kind

of media their clients need. Consequently, there were some media that were useless because they contained some wrong information. Some students decided to make other media other than what their client wanted, for example one of the clients from Wisata Desa wanted them to make TV Commercial, but students made an interactive CD. When the media was handed to client, they felt disappointed, because they did not have any computer and did not know how to use the interactive CD.

Among those three places which are cultural, historical and potential places, the cultural places are the places that need promotion the most. It is all because many of cultural places were unknown, not many people are willing to see the cultural performance, the cultural places only have a limited budget for operation not promotion. The effective media according to clients in cultural places is banner. Some clients like Ludruk Irama Budaya put the banner in front of their performance building and Potehi puppet show brings the banner everywhere they hold the show. They are proud of their banner and sure that through the banner people know more about their performance and puppet show. In historical places, there are no clients who implement the media. It is because some historical places have some documents that are secret and some clients have to go through bureaucracy to implement the VCD media. The places that mostly implement the VCD media are potential places, especially recreational places in rural area. Clients who are the private owner have authority and budget to implement the media. Brochure is the favorite printing media used by clients and website is the most helping media to promote their places. There is one place that gave a funding support for students to print one thousand brochures. Another client re-print the brochures to be distributed at the travel festival. Clients like students' design because the theme in the brochure could attract children market to visit their place.

Each place has their need of VCD media. In general, I could say that banner is suitable to promote cultural places. Banner is printed by students, client could use it without spending money anymore. Brochure and website are needed by client in potential places. Brochure is suitable for the clients who want to have promotion in wide area, and have some budget to re-print the media. Website is the most favorite media, because it could be widely distributed and clients could get it for free. The weakness of using the website for cultural place is it needs to be updated especially for the event schedule, but they did not have computer and human resources to update the data. Clients implement the media because they like students' design and they have budget to reproduce the media.

In some places, some clients did not implement the students' design because of internal factors like: financial problem, lack of human resources, bureaucracy problem, internal organization conflict, or personal problem. Many clients told me that they were afraid to violate the intellectual property right. The external problems arose because the students' design could not accommodate the client's vision and mission, students' design could not

solve the problem, and client did not accept the VCD media. In this research, I also met some clients who felt disappointed with students' design. The negative impacts occur because of the incorrect information and inaccurate design. Incorrect tagline could cause a false perception of the place. For example, in the Pura Jagat Karana students made the tagline "There's Bali in Surabaya" which was strongly opposed by the manager, since there is no Bali in Surabaya but only Banjar. The tagline would change the visitors' image to the area. Meanwhile, the inaccurate design was because the students forgot to state the address in the information. I found that a "good design" sometimes was not followed by a good manner of students especially in the initial process when they collected the data. In the opposite condition, I found by chance that the "bad design" was used by a client.

### **Social and Economic Impact.**

Some good things happened at the time of submission of design like: villagers of Desa Kemiren held a cultural performance and ceremony for the students at the end of their visit, Candra Wilwatikta owner complimented the students by providing budget to print brochures and then the manager invited the students to stay in his place. Because of the implementation of VCD media, those places are more well-known. VCD Department at Petra Christian University is having recognition by the societies. Most clients told me that they had special pride to cooperate with Petra Christian University, because they said that Petra is a big university and has a good reputation. All clients approved to put VCD logo in their design, but not all of the students put the VCD logo because they felt awkward. However, the client said that it would be great and valuable to have Petra's logo in their media promotion. The clients become closer to Petra Christian University and they are willing to invite and inform Petra whenever they have events. Clients from cultural places are glad that students mostly from Chinese ethnic care about culture. Overall, there are positive images to Petra students that they can assimilate with the society.

In terms of economic impact, I divide between the quantity and quality. In quantity, there are economic positive impacts that are felt by the clients, like: (1) an increasing number of visitors. There is a client stating that these days they were swamped with visitors. The client is so surprised, but he is very sure that the brochures made by the students boost the market of their place. There is a potential place informing that there was an increasing number of visitors up to 70-80%. Many of them said that there was an increasingly number of visitors but they did not calculate how many percent, (2) improved standard of living. There is an increasing income of rural residents Kemiren from the sales of souvenirs, (3) expansion of visitors. Visitors not only come from the surrounding area, but also from out of town and cities such as Surabaya, Bali and Yogyakarta, (4) the presence of investor. There are some investors who come from other cities and abroad who are interested in investing in



their place, such as the Wisata Desa which began noticed by investors from Singapore, Korea, Hongkong and Japan. The economic positive impacts in quality that arise are: (1) wider promotion. Promotions in a wider region make the places more widely known than ever before, (2) improving the quality of media. The brochures design distributed in the exhibition can attract the visitor, as experienced by Coban Rondo and Village Tourism in following the Majapahit Travel Festival, (3) more confidence. Clients feel more confident in managing the place, (4) improving the quality of places. With the increasing of visitors, they also tried to improve the quality of their places, like adding some of the facilities conducted by the Wisata Desa with camping ground, Coban Rondo with his outbound, Agro Blimbing that plans to make a swimming pool for children and karaoke, and Kemiren village tries to develop souvenirs shop.

## **Conclusion**

Among those varieties of media, the implementations of VCD media that become clients' current need are mostly on banner, brochure and website. Based on this research, there are six categories of clients. First, there are clients who like students' design and are eager to implement their design by giving a funding support to print and having initiative to reprint the brochure. The second category is clients who like students' design and use the media given by the students for promotion without spending money anymore like using the banner, sharing the brochures and merchandises, putting the photos in front of their building and informing the website. This second category is the most often found clients in this research. The third category is the clients who like students' design and say that they plan to use it. The fourth is the clients who say they like students' design but just keep it as souvenir. The fifth is there is one client who does not really like students' design but he uses the design because he needs it. The last category is the clients who do not like students' design and do not use their design. Mostly the reasons why clients implement the media are because they like the design and have budget to reproduce. The internal factors that client does not implement the media are mostly because they do not have any idea about S-L program and are afraid of broke the intellectual property right, and they have financial problem, human resources problem and bureaucracy. The external problem of media implementation is because of unsuitable design.

The implementation of S-L helps to evaluate the process of design such as the compatibility between theory and practice, to understand the implementation of media, to know the satisfaction level of clients, to have database for the future cooperation and to determine the next learning strategy. Besides knowing the implementation of media, this research could find out the process of design, for example, how students had relations with their clients, which couldn't be found in the students' design. Through this research, I found

out that students not only required for being smart intellectually and in personality but also emotionally, especially discipline, integrity and honesty. A good design does not always determine a good process. Through S-L, students and clients could learn from each other. They even could learn about themselves, especially about their need and desire. S-L could help the educators to evaluate and to know what happens in the process. Moreover, it can be a bridge between educators, students and societies. I believe that those all findings couldn't be possible without the implementation of S-L program and the entering point to do this research is through students' reflection. Without examining the implementation of S-L, lecturer could be deceived by the beauty of students' design without knowing the quality of the whole process. By examining the implementation of VCD media, I could also know the process of the initial design, design process and final design. It gave me the description that students mostly assume the trivial initial design process and final design, like they had a short cut to get the data or did not give their design as agreement to clients. In the future, the finding in this research could help the head of VCD, lecturers and tutors to emphasize on the overall process of design project. Moreover, VCD media could function effectively by conducting S-L program if educators, students and clients have common understanding about S-L program and have intensive communication through initial design, design process and final design.

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