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

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Abstract: Visual communication design study mostly puts 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 a 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, a research was conducted to find out the implementation of visual communication design media. The research used a qualitative method through in-depth interviews and field observations with related clients. There are internal and external aspects that influence the decision to implement visual communication design media. It turns out that certain media can help to boost the promotion and have social and economic influences. The research findings can give information on how visual communication design media can function effectively after conducting a Service-Learning program.

Keywords: Visual Communication Design, Destination Branding, Service-Learning

INTRODUCTION

Visual Communication Design (VCD) class tries to improve the quality of learning by conducting Service-Learning (S-L) program in the class project. S-L gives students a chance to understand the theories in class and apply them to field practice. The real problems in societies can 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 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 help private owners and the local government in need to promote their cultural, historical, and other potential places. The reasons of offering those three categories of places are 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 can 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).

This is our first S-L program in VCD class that involves a large number of students and visits wider areas. The previous S-L was held in the elective class such as packaging design and poster design class that consist of 30 students. I really hope that by implementing S-L program, a large number of S-L participants such as societies, students, and educators can get benefit from it. After about a year, I did a research to evaluate the implementation of VCD media after conducting S-L program. The discussion of this paper consists of two parts. First, I will discuss about the process of implementing the S-L program in destination branding project and second, about the research of VCD media implementation 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 can function effectively after conducting S-L program. For VCD department, this research can be the guidance to improve the quality of design learned theoretically and practically.

Service-Learning Program in Destination Branding Project

Service-Learning Program

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) defines 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 provides 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 to contribute to human experience (Buchanan 1995).

Destination Branding Project

In our VCD curriculum, students in the third year should study about branding. 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). Among those varieties of branding project such as personal branding, product branding, service branding, corporate branding, destination branding, I notice that S-L program is suitable to be implemented in destination branding project. Comparing with other projects, this destination branding project is more urgent because there are some unknown places in our province that need to be promoted. Destination branding is a relatively recent

phenomenon (Blain, Levy and Ritchie 2005; Hosany, Ekinci and Uysal 2006); and academic investigation in the area is just beginning to emerge (Hsu and Cai, 2009).

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 is collaborated 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 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.

Class and Studio Learning Method

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 in a week in a studio. Inside a studio, the students' knowledge and their developmental design aspects are being developed by doing some trainings and interaction among students, tutors and lecturers (Istanto 2001, 5). VCD department gives the responsibility for the arrangement of the class and studio learning to the head of VCD. 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 (Figure 1).

These class learning and studio learning are suitable for a big class. As a place to do many kinds of activities, studio 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)

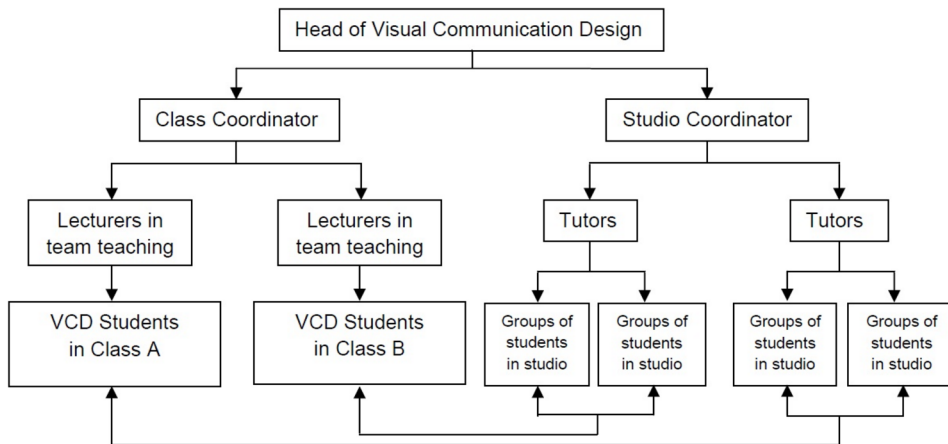


Figure 1: Visual Communication Design Class and Studio Learning Method

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 actions are written as a guideline in doing the project and S-L program. This guideline is provided 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. They should get the data through interaction, interview and observation. Second, the students should have service, learn from the society, and write in their reflection report. Besides getting the data, the students are suggested to help their client, such as teach them how to use computer, give a short course about graphic design, and give some explanation about how to use visual communication design media for promotion. Third, the students should contribute their final projects 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 Eyler, J and 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, reflective practice, critical thinking, perspective transformation, and citizenship.

Process

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 (Figure 2). First, the initial design which consist of informal survey, approval of the place, formal visit, and data collection from client. Second, the design process

including the discussion process with tutor and client, making destination branding design, and finishing. Third, the final design which consists of evaluation, design exhibition, submission of work, and reflection (Figure 3). 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 interviewing 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 the media have been donated to their clients. Students' reflection then become my entering point to conduct a reseach in order to find out the implementation of VCD media.

By implementing the S-L program in destination branding project, students are not allowed to get the data only from internet or literature; they have to visit the place, get the data from client, and know the real problem. VCD class had a destination branding project before, but there was no S-L program implementation, so some of the data was invalid and there was no benefit to client because they did not receive the final design.

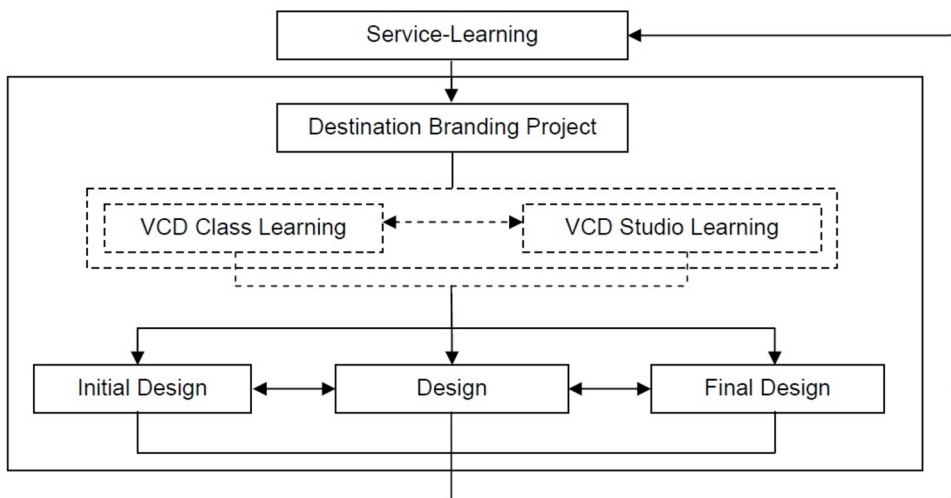


Figure 2: Service-Learning Implementation in Destination Branding Project



Figure 3: Final Design: Evaluation, Design Exhibition, Submission of Work and Reflection

Research Methods

About a year, a research has been conducted to find out the implementation of VCD media. This research examines the final design part, focusing on the implementation of VCD media from the client side.

Participants

The VCD class consisted of 236 students. There were 69 groups in total which mean there were 69 East Java destination branding design projects. Lecturers and tutors evaluated students' design, made a selection, and held 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. Because of some field problems, totally there were only 20 clients involved in this research. The clients who became respondents in this destination project are 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. The locations were in Surabaya, Malang, Pandaan, Pasuruan, Pacitan, Tulungagung, Mojokerto and Banyuwangi.

Procedures

The survey was conducted by visiting each of clients. In this research the primary data was directly collected from clients through in-depth interview and used a questionnaire as guidance. While interviewing the clients, it was possible for me as the interviewer to ask more questions that were not stated in the questionnaire to get more data. In-depth interviewing is a type of interview which researchers use to elicit information in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the interviewee's point of view or situation; it can also be used to explore interesting areas for further investigation. This type of interview involves asking informants open-ended questions and probing wherever necessary to obtain data deemed useful by the researcher (Patton 1987). To strengthen the data interview, I implemented other techniques to strengthen the analysis:

1. Observation.
This technique was used to support the primary data and sharpen the analysis by observing directly the client activities and collecting some design samples.
2. Documentation.
In this research, the methods of data collection: writing notes and recording the interviewing process through video, sound recorder, and photograph.

Questions

The research questions were as follow.

1. Students activity
 - a. Frequency of visiting
 - b. Students' behavior (discipline, integrity and honesty)
2. The implementation
 - a. Types of VCD media
 - b. Reasons of implementation (internal and external aspect)
 - c. Obstacles
3. The impact
 - a. Quality and quantity impacts (social and economic)
 - b. Suggestions

Conceptual Plan

The collection of in-depth interviews was analyzed with qualitative method. Based on the data, there was a certain characteristic in implementing the students’ design among clients from cultural, historical and potential places, so the data was classified based on clients’ categories and then analyzed. Qualitative research is, therefore, not based upon a fixed set of rigid procedures, but nevertheless the researcher does need to develop a set of strategies and tactics in order to organize, manage, and evaluate. Such strategies involve the researcher in considering how to plan, organize, collect, and analyze data (Burgess 1985).

This research discovered whether students’ design had been used by clients, including the reasons, obstacles, and impacts.

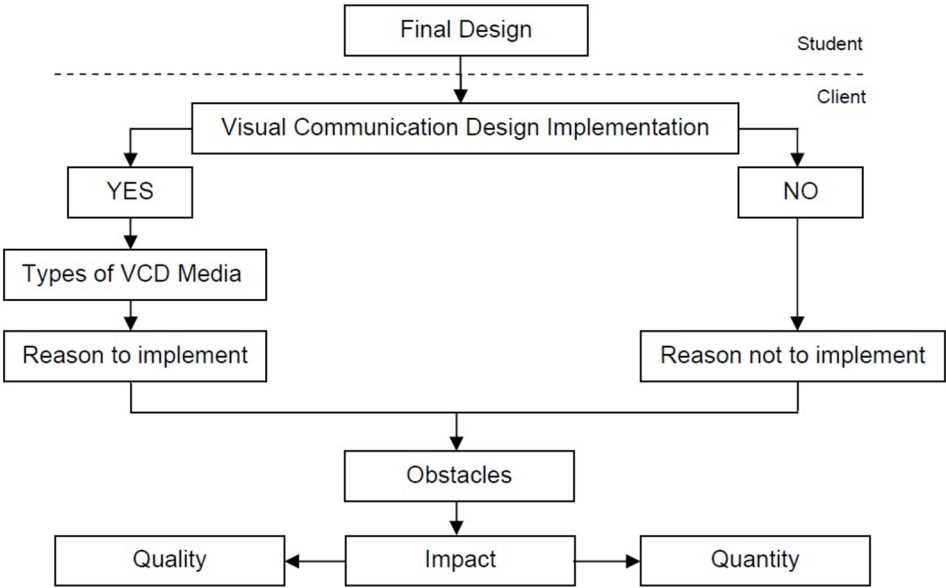


Figure 4: Research Conceptual Plan

The Implementation of Visual Communication Design Media

There were varieties of media that was made by VCD students: brochure, flyer, catalog, Graphic Standard Manual (GSM) book, concept book, map, banner, billboard, name board, x-banner, mini banner, and some merchandises: cellphone hanger, key chain, t-shirt, wall clock, etc. For digital media, students made: 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.

Outcomes

At the end of the project, students came up with various media, and based on agreement, some were donated to their clients. In the process of giving their design, students had to write in a submission form what kind of design items were given to their clients then clients had to sign the submission form. I found that there were some wrong procedures in giving the media:

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.
3. Students gave the media to another person. Clients said that students were not consistent in meeting them. In the previous appointment, students met and asked for information to the staff in department of industry and trade, but at the end they gave the final result to the 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 needed. Consequently, there were useless media because they contained wrong information. Some students decided to make another media different from their client wanted, for example, one of clients from Wisata Desa wanted the students to make TV Commercial, but they made an interactive CD. When the media was handed to the client, he felt disappointed because he did not have computer and did not know how to use the interactive CD.

Types of VCD Media

Among those three places: cultural, historical and potential places, the cultural places were the places that needed promotion the most. It was all because many of cultural places were unknown and only had a limited or no budget for promotion. Besides, there were only a few people who willing to see the cultural performance. The effective media according to clients in cultural places was banner. Some clients like Ludruk Irama Budaya put the banner in front of their performance building and Potehi puppet show brought the banner everywhere they hold the show. They were proud of their banner and sure that through the banner people would know more about their performance and puppet show. In historical places, there were no clients who implemented the media. It was because some historical places had some documents that were secret and some clients had to go through bureaucracy to implement the VCD media. The places that mostly implement the VCD media were potential places, especially recreational places in rural area. Clients who were the private owner had authority and budget to implement the media. Brochure was the effective printing media used by clients and website was the most favorite media to promote their places. There was one client that gave a funding support for students to print one thousand brochures. Another client reprinted the brochures to be distributed at the travel festival. They liked students' design because the theme in the brochure could attract children to visit their place.

Each places had their need of VCD media. In general, banner was suitable media to promote cultural places. Banner was printed by the students; client could use it without spending more money. Brochure and website were needed by client in potential places. Brochure was suitable for clients who wanted to have promotion in a wider area and have some budget to reprint the media. Website was 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 was the need to be updated especially for the event schedule because most of clients did not have computer and human resources to update the data.

Internal and External Aspect

Clients implemented the media because they liked students' design and they had budget to reproduce them. In some places, some clients did not implement the students' design because of internal factors: financial problem, lack of human resources, bureaucracy problem, internal organization conflict, and personal problem. Many clients were afraid to violate the intellectual

property right. The external problems were because the students' design could not accommodate the client's vision and mission, students' design could not solve the problem, and clients did not accept the VCD media.

The negative impacts occurred 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 a tagline "There's Bali in Surabaya" which was strongly opposed by the manager, since there was no Bali in Surabaya but only Banjar. A tagline could change the visitors' image to the area. The example of an inaccurate design was because students forget to state the address in the information. I found that a "good design" was not always 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.

The Impacts

Social Impacts

Some good things happened at the time of submission of design: 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 the manager invited the students to stay in his place. Because of the implementation of VCD media, those places were more well-known.

VCD Department at Petra Christian University had recognition by the societies. Most clients told me that they had special pride to cooperate with Petra Christian University, because they said that Petra had a good reputation. All clients approved to put VCD logo in every media, but unfortunately not all of the students' design had VCD logo because they felt awkward to put it in their design. However, clients said that it would be great and valuable to have Petra's logo in their media promotion. Clients became closer to Petra Christian University and they were willing to invite and inform Petra whenever they had events. Clients from cultural places were glad that students mostly from Chinese ethnic cared about culture. Overall, there were positive images to Petra students that they could assimilate with the society.

Economic Impacts

In terms of economic impact, I divided them into quantity and quality. In quantity, there were economic positive impacts that were felt by the clients:

1. Increment of visitors. There was a client stating that these days they were swamped with visitors. He was so surprised, though very sure that the brochures made by the students boost the market of his place. There was a client in one of potential place informing that there were increasing numbers of visitors up to 70–80%. Many of clients said that there were increasing numbers of visitors but they did not calculate the percentage.
2. Improvement standard of living. There was an increasing income of rural residents in Kemiren from the sales of souvenirs.
3. Expansion of visitors. Visitors were not only from the surrounding area, but also from out of town and cities such as Surabaya, Bali and Yogyakarta.
4. Attendance of investor. There were some investors who came from other cities and abroad who were interested in investing in their place, such as the Wisata Desa at which investors from Singapore, Korea, Hongkong and Japan started to notice.

The economic positive impacts in quality that aroused:

1. Wider promotion. Promotions in a wider region made the places more widely known than before.
2. Self improvement. Clients felt more confident in managing the place.
3. Improvement quality of media. The brochures that were distributed in the exhibition could attract visitors, as experienced by Coban Rondo and Village Tourism when they joined Majapahit Travel Festival.
4. Improvement quality of place. With the increasing numbers of visitors, clients also tried to improve the quality of their places: Wisata Desa added some facilities and planned to open a camping ground, Coban Rondo tried to make an outbound area, Agro Blimbing planned to build a karaoke and swimming pool for children and Kemiren village tried to open souvenirs shop.

Conclusion and Recommendation

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 were six categories of client:

1. Client who like students' design and eager to implement their design by giving a funding support to print and having initiative to reprint the brochure.
2. Client who like students' design and uses the media given by the students for promotion without spending more money like using the banner, sharing the brochures and merchandises, putting the photos in front of their building, and informing the website. This second clients' category is the most often found in this research.
3. Client who like students' design and plans to use it.
4. Client who say they like students' design but just keep them as souvenir.
5. Client who does not really like students' design but uses them because of the need.
6. Client who does not like students' design and does not use their design.

Mostly the reasons why clients implement the media are because they like the design and have budget to reproduce them. The internal factors that client does not implement the media are mostly because they having no idea about S-L program and having financial and human resources problems. They are afraid to violate the intellectual property right and to deal with bureaucracy. The external problem of media implementation is because of unsuitable design.

The implementation of S-L is important to supports the evaluation of design process, to find the compatibility between theory and practice, to understand the implementation of media, to know the satisfication 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 can find out the design process, especially how students relate with their clients, which can not be seen in the their design.

Through this research, I find 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 can learn from each other. They even can learn about themselves, especially about their need and desire. S-L can help the educators to evaluate and to know what happens in the overall design process. Moreover, it can be a bridge between educators, students, and societies. I believe that those findings can not 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 am able to know the process of initial design, design, and final design. It gives me the description that students mostly assume the trivial initial design process and final design, for examples they did a short cut to get the data or did not give their design as agreement to clients. In the future, the finding of this research can help the head of VCD, lecturers, and tutors to emphasize on the overall process of design project. Moreover, VCD media can be functioned effectively by conducting S-L program if educators, students, and clients have common understanding about S-L program and have intensive communication throughout initial design, design, and final design.

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As well as papers of a traditional scholarly type, this journal invites presentations of practice—including documentation of visual designs accompanied by exegeses analyzing visual design purposes, processes and effects.

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