Illustration of "*Semangat Pelanusa*" on Pelanusa Community Merchandise as a Promotional Media

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Article Information

Abstract

Pelanusa is a community in Malang that focuses on crafts and community empowerment. However, from the many activities carried out by this community, there are still many people who do not know about the Pelanusa community and also ineffective promotional media. This research aims to design illustrations on Pelanusa community merchandise as a promotional medium to introduce the values and identity of the community to the wider community. The research methodology uses a qualitative approach with data collection through interviews and observations and the use of the Design Thinking method which consists of the Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test stages. The results showed that the merchandise successfully attracted the attention of the community, as evidenced by the positive response during the community exhibition at Kebun Winih, Singosari. Visitors were interested in buying merchandise because of its creative design and relevance to the identity of Pelanusa Community. In addition to being a product, this merchandise serves as an effective visual promotional medium, because its use by the community indirectly introduces the community to a wider audience. This research concludes that designing merchandise illustrations can be an effective promotional strategy, while strengthening the image and values of the community.

1. Introduction

A community is a place for individuals with similar interests to share ideas and views. Joining a community has many benefits, such as meeting new people, expanding your network, and opening up new opportunities. Currently in Indonesia, there are many communities ranging from hobbies, education, health, animal protection to empowerment. In Malang City, communities are also very diverse, including art, cultural, and social communities. Of the various communities in this city, one of the communities active in the craft sector in Malang is Pelanusa.

Pelanusa (*Komunitas pelangi nusantara*) is an empowerment community for mothers that was established in Malang City in 2012. Currently, the Pelanusa community itself focuses on textile crafts such as embroidery

and sewing. Pelanusa's main goal is to help women learn and develop their skills without having to leave their villages and families (Agung, 2024).

With the many activities carried out by the Pelunusa community, it would be a shame if it was not introduced to a wider audience and there are still many people in Malang who do not know about this community. Then, from the results of interviews conducted also with Mrs. Yanti as the founder of the Pelanusa community said that currently Pelanusa really needs more exposure to be able to introduce Pelanusa and open up new opportunities.

Therefore, it is necessary to create a media that is able to introduce the pelanusa community at large. One effective approach is the use of merchandise. Merchandise is one of the media that is often used for promotion and dissemination of information on various occasions. Merchandise also aims to promote and attract consumer interest in the advertised object (Syahnina & Patria, 2021) . The merchandise created will also be in the form of t-shirts and goodie bags with the illustration "*Semangat Pelanusa*" and is expected to reflect the existing values of this community, namely creativity, independence, and collaboration.

Thus, the use of illustrations of the Pelanusa spirit on merchandise is expected to help attract attention and trigger public curiosity to find out more about this community.

1.1 Literature Review
As a guide and reference in compiling the design, the designer refers to several journals and previous studies to obtain a theoretical basis. Some of the research that became a literature review on visual branding design is as follows.

1. Pahira's research shows that merchandise products are one of the strategies to attract consumer attention, promote brands, and differentiate products from competitors in the market. The research testing was carried out by voting method on social media which from the voting results of 100 pengikit obtained the results of merchandise design as a promotional medium can convince consumers of the products to be marketed Pahira et al. (2022).
2. The application of illustrations on merchandise was also carried out in Affifuffin's research as a promotion of Gersik Regency's culture of Damar. The design process refers to the Design Thinking method developed by Kelley and Brown, including the empathize, define, ideate, and prototype stages. This method is applied to various merchandise media such as t-shirts, notebooks, tote bags, and tumblers. (Affifuddin, 2021).
3. In the research conducted by Santosa to increase knowledge and information about Cibuaya Beach, illustrations are designed that highlight the potential and unique character of the beach in an interesting and informative visual form. This illustration is then applied to various promotional media. The promotional design process uses the Design Thinking method, which includes stages ranging from empathy to user testing (Santosa & Wahyu, 2024).

2. Research Methods
The method used in this research is qualitative, which is an approach used to examine objects in natural conditions and in this method, data collection is not based on certain theories, but on facts found during the research process in the field (Abdussamad, 2021). From the definition of qualitative methods above, it can be concluded that the research method is research that focuses on a particular source or object to obtain data in the form of writing, speech, and other aspects observed from the object. In the process of designing illustrations "Pelanusa Spirit" on merchandise as promotional media requires complete data so that in the design of illustrations "Pelanusa Spirit" on merchandise can provide visualization that is not only attractive but also in accordance with the image of the Pelanusa Community. Data collection techniques will also use unstructured interview techniques and direct observation.

Then after the data has been collected, the illustration of "Semangat Pelanusa" on merchandise is made based on the reference of "Design Thinking" method. This method is a thought process that begins with building

empathy for specific human-oriented needs (human centered) and is directed at a sustainable innovation that suits the needs of its users (Tri Aldi Laksono & Ariffudin Islam, 2020).

From its development, there are 5 stages in the design thinking method which results in a more detailed mechanism according to Setiawan in (Tri Aldi Laksono & Ariffudin Islam, 2020). Here is the explanation.

The initial stage is Emphatize which is considered the core of the human-centered design process. This method aims to understand the user in the context of the product being designed through observation, interviews, and a combination of both, which begins with providing a scenario. In this stage, the author looks deeper to get data about the Pelanusa Community as the basis of the design by conducting interviews and direct observation at the Pelanusa Community site.

The second stage is Define which is a process of analyzing and understanding the various insights obtained through the empathy stage, with the aim of formulating a problem statement which is the main point of view or focus of the research. From this stage the author collects all the data obtained, and then the data is further analyzed.

The third stage is Ideate, which is the process of transitioning from problem formulation to solution finding. At this stage, the focus is on developing ideas that will become the basis for prototyping. In this stage, the author acts as a problem solver, exploring ideas based on the insights that have been obtained, and poured into the form of work.

The fourth stage is Prototype, to detect errors early on and explore new possibilities. In its implementation, the initial design will be tested on users to get relevant responses and feedback to improve the design. At this stage, the author makes revisions based on input from Pelanusa so that the work made is right on target and in accordance with the target to be achieved.

The fifth stage is the Test stage, which aims to collect feedback from users based on the final design that has been made in the previous prototype process. In this stage, the testing stage is carried out by exhibiting the products that have been made at an exhibition held by the Pelanusa Community and also user feedback conducted to Ms. Endahing Noor Suryanti as the founder of the Pelanusa Community.

Each stage in the design process, from empathy, problem definition, ideation, prototyping, to testing, is expected to produce a design that is not only attractive, but also relevant and in line with the community's identity.

Emphatize → Define → Ideate → Prototype → Test
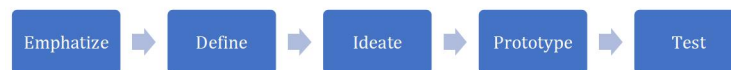
Fig. 1 Design Thinking Diagram

3. Result and Discussion

Based on the design thinking method, the author tries to explain the creative process which consists of five main stages, namely Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test. Each stage in Design Thinking is

designed to help find innovative solutions by understanding user needs and creating more effective products or services.

A. Emphatize

At this stage the author conducted observations and interviews to obtain data that became the focus of the research. Observations and interviews were conducted with Mrs. Endahing Noor Suryanti at the Pelanusa Community premises on Jalan Raden Wijaya No.84, Pangetan, Singosari Sub-District, Malang Regency, East Java, which was conducted for 1 week. From the results of the interviews conducted, there are several problems faced by the Pelanusa Community ranging from limited promotional media, lack of public understanding of the values and objectives of the Pelanusa Community, lack of public awareness of the Pelanusa Community, and also facing challenges in attracting the younger generation to be involved in community activities, as well as public interest in the craft field.

Fig. 2 Observation & Interview (Source: Personal Document)

B. Define

ased on the define process, the core of the problem that can be concluded is the lack of effectiveness in promotional media and the delivery of community values to the community. So, it is necessary to create an effective promotional media. In research by Pahira et al. (2022) shows that merchandise products are one of the strategies to attract consumer attention, promote brands, and differentiate products from competitors in the market.

C. Ideate

The idea that will be made from the problems of the previous stage is to design the Illustration "Semangat Pelanusa" on Pelanusa community merchandise as an effective promotional media so that it can introduce Pelanusa to a wider audience.

The concept used in the author's thinking is that the illustrations applied to Pelanusa Community merchandise will use a flat design style combined with an isometric style and will be applied to 3 products that will be designed, namely 2 t-shirt designs and 1 goodie bag design. The flat design style was chosen because it has a simple and minimalist impression and is easy to recognize, for the isometric style will provide an interesting and dimensional visual depth. The combination of the two styles is also considered suitable for displaying information that is not only clear but also interesting.

The merchandise design will use isometric pattern as the dominant object combined with flat design style but made varied. The use of isometric pattern as the dominant object is used so that the pattern can be developed in the future to other media and products. The pattern itself will be illustrated in the form of 12 isometric cubes arranged so that it can become a pattern, for each cube the main objects will be depicted which are placed on the top of the cube and on the side are given supporting ornaments that are still related to the Pelanusa Community.

Pelanusa Community merchandise will also be given the tagline (slogan) "*Semangat Pelanusa*". This tagline aims to create a message of the main values of the Pelanusa Community. By using the slogan, it is also expected to stick in the minds of the target audience. That way, when the target audience uses or sees merchandise, they can immediately remember the Pelanusa Community.

D. Prototype

In the prototyping process, the first step was to create a thumbnail sketch. The sketch for the pattern was made manually using a pencil, with an isometric style that illustrates the values of Pelanusa Community, things related to the community, activities carried out, and products. Thumbnail creation was done both manually on paper using a pencil and digitally using Adobe Photoshop software. There are three thumbnail sketches outlined in the design concept. The thumbnail for the Pelanusa Community merchandise t-shirt incorporates a flat design style with the "Pelanusa Spirit" pattern and Pelanusa Community logo. Meanwhile, the goodie bag design was designed with three sketch concepts, consisting of the pattern and slogan "*Semangat Pelanusa*", using a jumble layout and decorative illustrations.
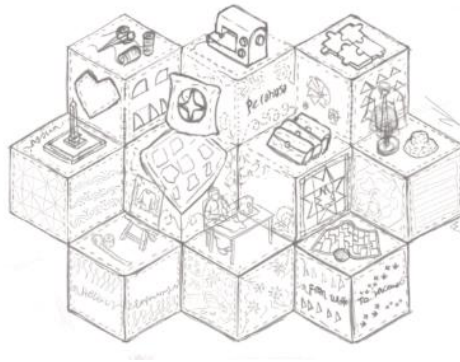

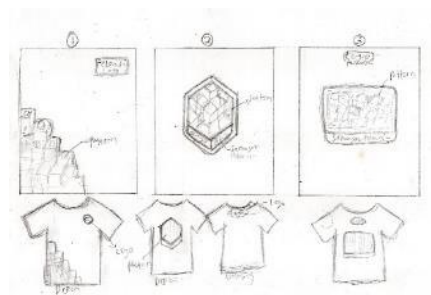*Fig. 3 Thumbnail Pattern (Source: Personal Document)*

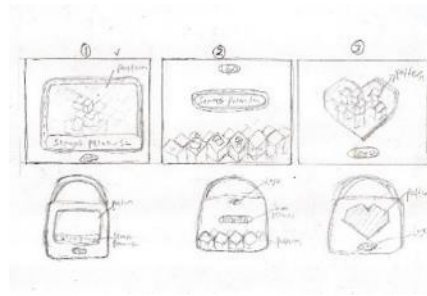*Fig. 4 Thumbnail T-shirt (Source: Personal Document)*

Fig. 5 Thumbnail Goodie bag (Source: Personal Document)

The second stage is designing rough layouts for patterns and merchandise digitally using Adobe Illustrator software. At this stage, the rough layout sketches are still in rough form, do not fully resemble the final form, and have not been given color. The rough layout sketches for merchandise are made in more detail compared to the previous thumbnail sketches. For the t-shirt merchandise design, two designs were selected from thumbnail numbers 1 and 2 in figure 3, in accordance with the planned number of final designs. Meanwhile, for the goodie bag design, thumbnail number 1 was selected with some changes, such as adjusting the tagline layout and adding quilting ornaments to enrich the design.
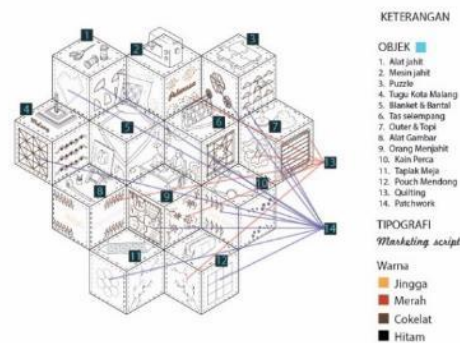

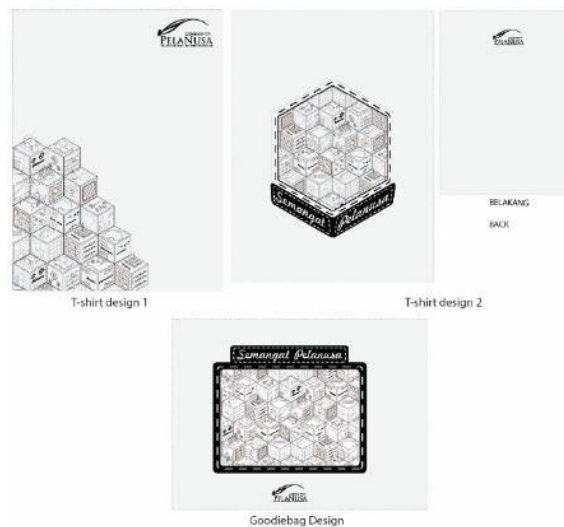*Fig. 6 Rough Layout Pattern (Source: Personal Document)*

Fig. 7 Rough Layout Merchandise (Source: Personal Document)

197

The next stage is the creation of a comprehensive layout which is the creation of a design that has been digitized, coloring and design elements have been made well and are ready to be printed. Making a comprehensive layout is made using Adobe Illustrator software.

Fig. 8 final Pattern Illustration (Source: Personal Document)
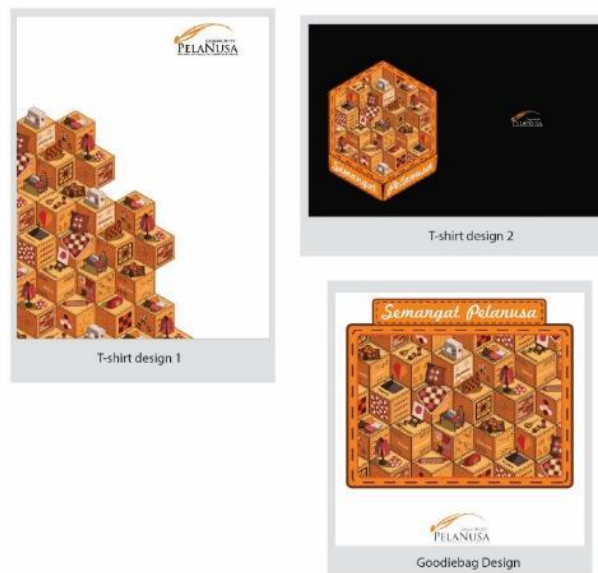
Fig. 9 Comprehensive Layout Merchandise (Source: Personal Document)

The final stage is creating digital three-dimensional mockups to visualize the design before printing. The mockup creation process utilizes Adobe Photoshop, with the first design applied to a white t-shirt and the second design to a black t-shirt. Additionally, the goodie bag design also uses black as the base color.
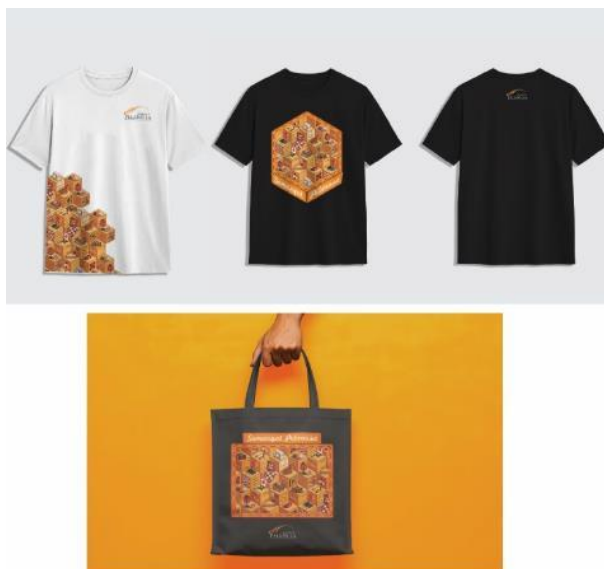
Fig. 10 Mock up Merchandise (Source: Personal Document)

E. Testing

In the testing phase, the author conducted a two-stage trial. The first stage was direct assistance from Mrs. Endahing Noor Suryanti, the founder of Pelanusa, and the second stage involved showcasing the products at an exhibition held by the Pelanusa Community on Wednesday, October 2, 2024, at Kebun Winih, Singosari, Malang Regency. According to Mrs. Yanti, the merchandise created is very appealing, modern, and represents the values and aspects related to the Pelanusa Community. Furthermore, the exhibition received positive feedback from visitors. Many were interested in purchasing the merchandise because it was considered unique, creative, and effectively represented the identity of the Pelanusa Community. Some visitors even purchased the merchandise as a form of support for the community. Additionally, the merchandise was also seen as an effective promotional tool because when visitors wore or carried items such as t-shirts and goodie bags, they indirectly helped promote the Pelanusa Community to those around them.

Fig. 11 Testing Stage with Mrs. Yanti (Source: Personal Document)

Fig. 12 Testing Stage at the exhibition (Source: Personal Document)

4. Conclusions

Based on the discussion conducted in the creation of the Pelanusa Community merchandise, it can be concluded that the designed merchandise not only serves as a physical product but also as an effective visual communication medium to strengthen the image and values of the Pelanusa Community. The illustration concept used has a theme of values and elements related to the community, with a design that combines flat design style and isometric pattern. The use of illustrations that can be shaped into patterns provides flexibility in their application as well as variation in each merchandise product. The design process begins with the creation of pattern illustrations, followed by manual thumbnail sketches, then digitizing the rough sketches, and creating mock-ups using Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop. Overall, the design of the merchandise illustration as a promotional media for the Pelanusa Community went well and successfully created products that are not only visually appealing but also effective in introducing and promoting the community's values and identity to a wider audience.

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