Digital Platform Usage Among Young Graphic Designer as A Shortcut To The Fame:
A Case Study on Visual Communication Design Students in Yogyakarta

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Abstract

The Internet technology has triggered many transformations, including the emergence of digital platforms for graphic design. The rise of digital platforms is hailed as a driver of economic processes and technological innovation. Everyone can benefit greatly from this transformation as it empowers them to build a business online without relying on "offline" intermediaries, whether state or an established corporate without complicated regulations and unnecessary costs. As newcomers to the graphic design business, young graphic designers benefit greatly from this digital platform. They have a great opportunity to independently exhibit and sell their work to clients around the world, something that never happened in the days before the advent of Internet technology. This research aims to show that technological determination can have a very positive impact on those who master it. As a study material, this research uses José van Dijck's platform society theory. This research was conducted in early 2021 on several subjects consisting of Visual Communication Design students in Yogyakarta who run an online graphic design business. The conclusion of this research is that young graphic designers who utilize digital platforms become more visible, high exposure on their work, and zero dependence on intermediaries. This remote working method has now also proven effective as a solution in the midst of difficult circumstances due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: *digital platform, young graphic designer, shortcut, visual communication design student*

Penggunaan Platform Digital di Antara Perancang Grafis Muda sebagai Jalan Pintas Menuju Populer: Studi Kasus pada Mahasiswa Desain Komunikasi Visual di Yogyakarta

Abstrak

Teknologi internet memicu banyak transformasi, termasuk memunculkan platform digital untuk desain grafis. Kemunculan platform digital digadang-gadang sebagai pendorong proses perekonomian dan inovasi teknologi. Setiap orang bisa mendapatkan keuntungan besar dari transformasi ini karena memberdayakan mereka untuk membangun bisnis secara daring tanpa bergantung pada perantara "offline", baik itu negara atau perusahaan yang mapan tanpa regulasi yang rumit dan biaya yang tidak perlu. Desainer grafis muda sebagai pendatang baru di dunia bisnis desain grafis mendapatkan keuntungan yang luar biasa dengan adanya platform digital ini. Mereka mempunyai kesempatan besar untuk memamerkan dan menjual karya mereka kepada klien di seluruh dunia secara mandiri, sebuah hal yang tidak pernah terjadi pada masa sebelum kehadiran

teknologi internet. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menunjukkan bahwa determinasi teknologi dapat berdampak sangat positif bagi mereka yang mampu menguasainya. Sebagai bahan kajian, penelitian ini memakai teori dari José van Dijck tentang masyarakat platform. Penelitian ini dilakukan pada awal tahun 2021 terhadap beberapa subjek yang terdiri dari para mahasiswa Desain Komunikasi Visual di Yogyakarta yang menjalankan bisnis desain grafis secara daring. Kesimpulan penelitian ini adalah bahwa desainer grafis muda yang memanfaatkan platform digital menjadi lebih terlihat karyanya, tingkat eksposur terhadap karya yang tinggi, dan ketergantungan pada pihak lain nol (zero dependence on intermediaries). Cara kerja jarak jauh tersebut kini juga terbukti efektif sebagai salah satu solusi di tengah sulitnya keadaan akibat pandemik covid-19.

Kata kunci: *platform digital, perancang grafis muda, jalan pintas, mahasiswa desain komunikasi visual*

INTRODUCTION

This paper wants to show that using digital platforms can bring student's work to fame in an easier and faster way than without using it or like in the pre-digital era. The presence of internet technology brings many opportunities, conveniences, and changes in all fields, including graphic design. The internet also opens up opportunities for a kind of perfect meritocracy that removes boundaries such as origin, race, gender, age, and qualifications leaving only the quality of the work itself (Howe, 2006). This happens to students who are undergoing a formal education process and have not yet passed the stages of the hierarchy of authority. However, digital platformization has led to the death of expertise (Nichols, 2017); anyone who masters digital technology can become an expert. Nichols (2017:170) says that it doesn't take an expert to be an expert; it doesn't take a long road to become famous. The emergence of this digital platform is predicted to be a driver of economic growth by providing equal opportunities for everyone.

METHOD AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This research was conducted in the mid-2021 period in Yogyakarta. The subjects of this research are visual communication design students who display their work on *Instagram* accounts. Social media is a form of digital platform. *Instagram* is the social media chosen because its high popularity among students. *Instagram* can be categorized as a type of portfolio platform.

The research sample was selected by the snowball sampling method. This method was chosen because students use pseudonyms on social media, so they can only be identified by tracing from people who know them. Then the samples found are sorted based on the reputation they already have, for example clients

who have ordered their work. From the sample sorting, three accounts were determined, namely: @astro.ruby, @mariaadnda, and @theo.fredika. This study does not include other media that are also used by the owner of the account to support the publication of his work.

Secondary data is collected from various documents, from books, other previous relevant research results, journals, printed and electronic articles, as well as other documents, both printed and audio-visual.

Research on the use of digital platforms as a shortcut to fame for students has not been done much. Another similar study, only examines the factors of the study program providing visual communication design education, such as the research conducted by Agus Setiawan and Akhmad Akrom entitled "The Achievement of Digital Media in Cultivating the Character of a Leading Study Program (Case Study of the Visual Communication Study Program at Dian Nuswantoro University)."

The discussion on the use of digital platforms has also been studied by Sinfield D. with the title "Graphic Design in Digital World: Enhancing Digital Teaching Through Digital Technologies". This research focuses more on the issue of using digital technology as a graphic design educational tool. Meanwhile, research that discusses the use of digital platforms as a medium to show off student work was carried out by Noor Hasyim and Abi Senoprabowo with the title "Designing Digital Showrooms in Virtual Reality Media as an Effort to Provide an Interactive Showroom."

THE RISE OF DIGITAL PLATFORM AMONG THE STUDENTS

Digital platforms promise services that can be personalized and contribute to innovation and economic growth, and have shortcut capabilities without relying on powerful organizations, complicated regulations, and unnecessary costs (Van Dijck, 2018:1). The existence of digital platforms allows individual communities or consumers to self-manage through online networks, so that they are no longer dependent on existing institutions or companies. Van Dijck (2018) says that this Internet-based market allows individuals to offer their products or services "directly" without going through intermediaries as in "offline" transactions, be it companies or countries. The advantage of this online social network is that it allows connectivity while taking shortcuts to existing social institutions. If you follow this line of argument, connectivity will naturally lead to collectively and connectedness (Van Dijck, 2018: 2).

The existence of this shortcut provides an opportunity for students who do not yet have a network to expose themselves to a wider level. Students as a digital native generation are easier to adapt to the latest digital technology, so they can easily master this technology. Anyone who is digitally savvy can get involved in

the digital industry. In the case of the subject of this study, the students used the digital platform Instagram as a medium for displaying their work. The 'promise' of the digital platform is deliberately made and according to Rosalind Gill (2011: 249 – 262), becomes one of the hallmarks of the digital industry, that they like their activities and are emotionally attached and involved in it. The freedom to do whatever they want, anytime, and anywhere encourages them to work freely (Gill, 2011) because the boundaries of workspace and time are very fluid. A relaxed and light work atmosphere makes this kind of digital work have a playful ethos (Gill, 2011) adding to this encouragement.

DIGITAL PLATFORM AS A SHORTCUT TO FAME

From the sample of selected accounts, it will be shown how the use of digital platforms can bring fame to students who use them. The first is the @astro.ruby account, which has more than 35 thousand followers and displays several works ordered from several large clients, such as Google, Koran Tempo, and Tempo Magazine, as well as sorting works into seven highlights. The @astro.ruby account states that it accepts work orders as listed in the Instagram bio.

Next up is the @mariaadnda account with 1,100 followers and displaying some of the works for the competition. The @mariaadnda account also states that it has received work orders in bio. Meanwhile, the @theo.fredika account has 769 followers and does not explicitly include a statement accepting work orders. With a large number of followers, these accounts already have a shortcut opportunity to popularize their work. This large number of followers is inseparable from their strategy to get it by consistently uploading their work. However, popularity is not only due to the number of followers, but the exposure that arises from the media algorithm also allows their works to be seen by more people.

Tabel 1. Each account data

Account	Posts	Follower	Highlight	Clients
@astro.ruby	712	35.3k	7	Google
				Koran Tempo
				Gramedia Pustaka Utama
				Majalah Tempo
@mariaadnda	41	1.100	3	Good Day (kompetisi)
				Mister Potato (kompetisi)
				PT KAI (kompetisi)
@theo.fredika	41	769	1	buku Basic English

Figure 1 and 2. The work of @astro.ruby for the cover of *Koran Tempo* (left)
and *Tempo magazine* (right)

Figure 3. The work of @astro.ruby for the *Google* landing page
for Chrisye's 70th birthday edition September 16, 2019

Figures 4 and 5. The work of @mariaadnda (left) for the Good Day brand competition.
@theo.fredika's work for the book Let's Learn Basic English with Billy (right)

CONCLUSION

Young graphic designers who utilize digital platforms become more visible, high exposure on their work, and zero dependence on intermediaries. Online technology provides equal opportunities for anyone to get involved in the digital industry, including students who do not have much experience. Online technology removes qualification barriers and reliance on powerful organizations, complex regulations, and unnecessary costs. The technology on the digital platform allows anyone to self-manage through an online network, so they are no longer dependent on existing institutions or companies.

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