

A Utilization of Visual Communication Media to Enhance Community Participation in the Back to School Movement in Brebes Regency



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ABSTRACT: Brebes Regency still has a relatively low HDI compared to other regencies in Central Java. One of the causes of the low HDI in Brebes Regency is the low level of education. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Brebes Regency in 2020, the gross enrollment rate (APK) of children aged 7-12 years in Brebes Regency was 93.86%. This means that out of 100 children aged 7-12 years in Brebes Regency, only around 94 children attend school. Responding to these conditions, the Brebes Regency Government launched the Back to School Movement (GKB) to provide opportunities for children who have dropped out of school to continue their education. In implementing the GKB there are still obstacles, including limited infrastructure and human resources. Based on directions from the Brebes Regency DINDIKPORA, the service team was directed to provide training and assistance to the Education Care Community Forum (FMPP) in Sigambir Village, Brebes District, Brebes Regency in developing visual communication media, which can later be used to support the outreach activities of the Back to School Movement to various levels of society. The method for implementing service activities is designed using 4 activity stages, namely preliminary studies to identify needs, training in developing visual communication media, assistance with media implementation and evaluation. Visual communication media can increase effectiveness and efficiency in conveying socialization messages to a wider audience, make it easier to understand the message, and increase the audience's attractiveness and interaction with the message conveyed. Through this service activity, it is hoped that the Education Care Community Forum (FMPP) in Sigambir Village, Brebes District, can maximize its potential as an extension of the Brebes Regency Government in increasing community participation in the Back to School Movement in Brebes Regency.

KEYWORDS: media, visual communication, socialization, Back to School Movement, Brebes.

INTRODUCTION

Brebes Subdistrict is one of the subdistricts in Brebes Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. This subdistrict is located in the southwest of Brebes Regency and borders Cirebon Regency to the west. Brebes Subdistrict has an area of approximately 13.71 km², and in 2020, the population of this subdistrict was around 45,000 people. Brebes Subdistrict is known as a center for shallot production. The majority of the population in Brebes Subdistrict works as farmers, traders, or factory workers in the surrounding cities of Brebes (Agustina and Nurhidayati, 2019; Komalasari, 2020; Kuswanto, 2018; Murtiningsih, 2021). There are several schools in this subdistrict, ranging from elementary schools to high schools. In recent years, the local government has made various efforts to develop the tourism sector in this subdistrict through improving infrastructure and enhancing the quality of Human Resources (HR) (Suprihatin, 2017; Yudhistira, 2019).

Unfortunately, Brebes Regency still maintains a relatively low Human Development Index (HDI) compared to other regencies in Central Java. The Human Development Index (HDI) is an important indicator for measuring the progress of a region in meeting the basic needs of humans, including health, education, and economy (Adianti, 2019; Fitriani, 2020; Kurniawan, 2018; Mulyadi, 2021). One of the reasons for the low HDI in Brebes Regency is the low level of education (Mursamsi, 2017; Riyanto, 2019). Despite the presence of several schools in the regency, many children still cannot access proper education. According to the latest available

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statistical data, the participation rate of school-aged children in Brebes Regency is still low (Azizah, 2018). According to the data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Brebes Regency in 2020, the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of children aged 7-12 years in Brebes Regency is 93.86%. This means that out of 100 children aged 7-12 years in Brebes Regency, only approximately 94 children attend school (Hidayat, 2020; Istiqomah, 2019).

The issue faced by the Brebes Regency Government is the low level of children's participation in the education sector due to a lack of information, motivation, and parental attention to the quality of education. The continued low economic status of the community in Brebes Regency is another contributing factor to the low HDI. The majority of the population in this regency works as farmers or laborers, thus the lack of job opportunities and limited access to resources make it difficult for their economy to develop (Kurniawan, 2018; Mulyana, 2017).

The Back to School Movement is a program initiated by the government of Brebes Regency aimed at providing opportunities for school dropouts to resume their education. This program encompasses formal education, including primary and secondary education, as well as equivalency programs for completing primary and secondary education levels (known as "Paket A" and "Paket B" education). Through this program, the government of Brebes Regency aims to reduce the dropout rate and increase educational participation in the region. The Back to School Program is provided free of charge and is intended for school dropouts from financially disadvantaged families (Sutrisno, 2021).



Figure 1. Visual Identity of the Back to School Movement initiated by the Government of Brebes Regency (documentation by the Community Service team, 2023).

Based on the interview conducted by the community service team with Carita, M.Pd, the Head of the Department of Education, Youth, and Sports (DINDIKPORA) of Brebes Regency, it is found that various challenges are still encountered in implementing the Back to School Program. The limitations in resources such as budget, infrastructure, and available human resources pose challenges in the implementation of the Back to School Movement. Such limitations are feared to hinder the program from achieving its desired targets and may affect the quality of the education provided. The Brebes Regency Government through DINDIKPORA feels the need to coordinate with various parties, including educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, and local communities, to create a conducive environment for students who want to return to school.

In response to the challenges faced by DINDIKPORA, the community service team participated in increasing public awareness about the importance of education by utilizing effective and engaging socialization media. Based on the guidance from DINDIKPORA of Brebes Regency, the community service team was directed to provide training and assistance to the Education Concern Community Forum (FMPP) of Sigambir Village, Brebes Subdistrict, Brebes Regency, in developing visual communication media. These media are utilized to support the socialization activities of the Back to School Movement to various layers of society. Visual communication media has many benefits in socializing the Back to School Movement in Brebes Subdistrict, Brebes Regency. The advantages of visual communication media include :

1. Enhancing message appeal. Visual communication media such as posters, infographics, or videos can enhance the appeal of the message being conveyed. Messages presented with images, simple animations, or videos are more attention-grabbing and easier to remember than those conveyed solely through written or spoken words.
2. Facilitating message comprehension. Images, diagrams, or graphics can visually depict complex information, making it easier for the audience to understand
3. Reinforcing the message. Messages conveyed through images or videos can help the audience visualize and experience the message, making it easier to understand and remember
4. Enhancing interaction. Engaging videos, animations, or presentations can motivate the audience to participate in discussions or other socialization activities
5. Improving the effectiveness of socialization. Messages conveyed through visual communication media can reach a wider audience and be more effective compared to other socialization methods

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Figure 2. Example of visual communication media utilized as an infographic Socialization Activity for Face-to-Face Learning Preparation (Source: www.detik.com, published September 22, 2021)

Overall, visual communication media can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of conveying socialization messages to a wider audience, facilitate message comprehension, and increase the appeal and interaction of the audience with the conveyed messages.

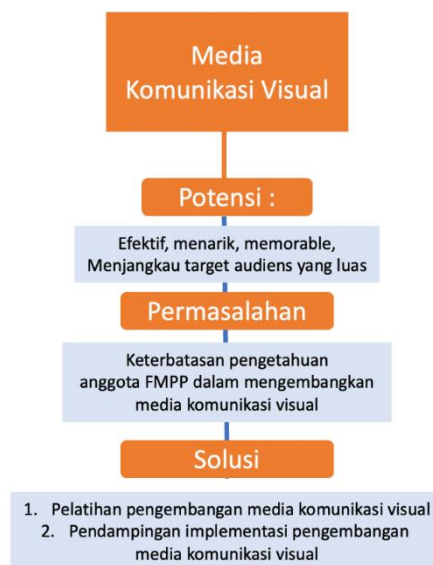


Figure 3. Solutions to the presented problems offered by the community service team (Source: Documentation by the community service team, 2023).

METHOD This community service activity is a continuation initiative of the research conducted by the UNNES research team, led by Hidayah et al. (2019), regarding the role of the Brebes Regency government in addressing School Dropout Children in Parereja Village, Banjarharjo Subdistrict, Brebes Regency. Through the research activities, it was found that the Community Forum for Education Concern (FMPP) in villages, including Parereja Village, plays a crucial role in assisting the Brebes Regency government in successfully implementing the Back to School Movement (GKB). The success of the Parereja Village FMPP in increasing community participation in the GKB serves as a reference for the community service team to conduct their activities in Sigambir Village (Hidayah, 2019).

In carrying out this community service activity, the community service team formulated several important points to consider before determining concrete steps that can be accepted and implemented by the target group, namely the Community Forum for Education Concern (FMPP) of Sigambir Village, Brebes Regency.

1. Needs identification.

The success of visual communication media in supporting socialization activities heavily relies on accurately identifying the needs of the target group. When selecting a training method, it's important to consider the goals of the socialization activities and the target audience. For example, if the target audience is children or teenagers, the visual communication media created should be engaging, easy to understand, and relevant to their needs. Moreover, the training should also be tailored to the participants' abilities and the available time.

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Therefore, the community service team needs to conduct an assessment regarding the competence and knowledge of the members of the FMPP in Sigambir Village regarding the Back to School Movement, and identify the relevant visual communication media they use. This will help in designing training that is suitable for the participants' level of understanding and abilities.

2. Selecting tools that are easy to use by the participants of the community service activities

As we know, graphic design is a field that requires skills in crafting a message to make it both aesthetically pleasing and informative [20]. To acquire such competence, a long-term process of skill and knowledge enhancement is required to produce works that are well-received by the public. Members of the FMPP in Sigambir Village lack competence and experience in the field of graphic design.

Considering this, the community service team plans to utilize graphic software that can be run in a browser and operated via smartphones with the Android operating system.

In detail, the steps taken by the community service team to train the Community Forum for Education Concern (FMPP) of Sigambir Village, Brebes Subdistrict, Brebes Regency in conducting the socialization of the Back to School Movement are as follows :



Figure 4. Stages of community service implementation (Source: Documentation by the community service team)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On August 6, 2023, a community service activity titled "Utilization of Visual Communication Media to Increase Community Participation in the Back to School Movement in Brebes Regency" was conducted. This activity took place at the Bina Sejahtera PKMB, Brebes Regency, and was attended by 16 participants consisting of teachers, education activists in Sigambir Village, and members of the Community Forum for Education Concern.

This activity consisted of several stages aimed at providing participants with an understanding of the use of visual communication media, particularly utilizing the Canva application as a tool to create visually appealing and informative materials.

The first stage involved providing basic materials covering fundamental principles, layout elements, and basic layout concepts. This material was delivered interactively and participatively to ensure that participants thoroughly understood the concepts.

In the first stage of the community service activity titled "Utilization of Visual Communication Media to Increase Community Participation in the Back to School Movement in Brebes Regency," participants were provided with basic materials covering fundamental principles, layout elements, and basic layout concepts. This material was delivered interactively and participatively to ensure that participants thoroughly understood the concepts.

The material was delivered using an interactive and participatory method. Participants were encouraged to engage in discussions, ask questions, and share their views regarding the concepts presented. Additionally, relevant practical examples related to the case of the Back to School Movement in Brebes Regency were provided to enhance participants' understanding. There was also a hands-on training session where participants were given the opportunity to apply the principles, elements, and layout concepts they had learned in a simple exercise. The community service team also provided constructive feedback to help participants better understand the application of the concepts.

Through this interactive and participatory approach, participants were able to gain a deep understanding of the fundamental principles, layout elements, and basic layout concepts in the context of using visual communication media. With a strong understanding of these concepts, participants are expected to be able to create more effective and engaging visual materials to support the back-to-school movement in Brebes Regency.

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Figure 5. Provision of material on Basic Principles in Layout (Source: Documentation by the community service team, 2023).

In the second stage of the community service activity, participants were introduced to various features available in the Canva application, a popular graphic design platform. The community service team aimed to provide participants with a thorough understanding of using Canva as a tool to create visually appealing and effective materials. Additionally, participants were given guidance on using Canva Pro, the paid version of Canva, and explained the benefits of premium features that can support the creation of more engaging and professional visual materials.

Through this second stage, participants were expected to gain a deep understanding of using Canva as a tool to create visual materials, as well as the benefits of Canva Pro in enhancing the quality and effectiveness of designs. With this knowledge, participants are expected to be able to maximize Canva's potential in supporting the back-to-school movement in Brebes Regency by creating engaging, professional, and effective visual materials.



Figure 6. Introduction to the features of the Canva application (Source: Documentation by the community service team, 2023).

In the third stage of the community service activity, participants were invited to practice directly in creating visual materials using the Canva application. The goal of this stage was to provide participants with practical experience in creating engaging and effective visual materials using the Canva platform. The practice began with creating an attractive and informative book cover. Next, participants were given further tasks, namely creating illustrative posters that support the objectives of the back-to-school movement in Brebes Regency.

This practical activity aimed to provide participants with real-life experience in creating visual materials that have value and impact in supporting the back-to-school movement in Brebes Regency. Through this practice, participants could apply the concepts they had learned earlier in real-life situations. They could directly see how layout elements, color usage, and illustrations could impact the message being conveyed.

Through this practical stage, participants gained practical skills in using Canva to create effective and engaging visual materials. The visual materials produced in this stage are also expected to serve as useful tools in promoting and supporting the back-to-school movement in Brebes Regency, with strong visual appeal and clear messages.

During this training, participants successfully produced visual works including posters with creative illustrations that are relevant to the theme of the Back to School Movement. The visual works produced by participants demonstrate the potential to enhance the attractiveness and interest of the community in supporting the movement. With the application of the principles of visual communication media they have learned, participants find it easier to translate their ideas into media.

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However, during the training process, the community service team encountered several common challenges faced by participants. One of them is the participants' lack of understanding of the features available in Canva. Most participants were not familiar with this graphic design software, and this posed a major challenge in producing quality visual works. To address this issue, the community service team provided more in-depth guidance on using Canva and explained in detail how to access and utilize various available features.

In addition to the challenges in using the software, participants also faced limitations in manipulating visual elements. Some of them had creative ideas but struggled to apply these ideas into attractive visual designs. To address this issue, the community service team provided practical guidance on the ATM (Observe, Imitate, and Modify) technique. Participants were taught to observe existing designs, imitate their basic concepts, and then modify them according to their needs. This technique helped participants gain inspiration and clearer guidance in producing appealing visual works.

In an effort to enhance the final visual works of the participants, the community service team also advised them to seek references on Pinterest. Pinterest is a platform rich with visual inspiration, and participants can search for ideas and design concepts that align with the theme of the Back to School Movement. By exploring inspiration from various sources, participants can develop their own creative ideas and produce more diverse and engaging works.

Overall, this training provided valuable insights to the participants in developing graphic design skills and understanding the principles of visual communication media. Despite encountering challenges throughout the process, the collaborative efforts between the community service team and the participants helped overcome these obstacles, enabling the participants to produce visual works that can effectively and engagingly support the Back to School Movement. This training has helped participants transform their ideas and concepts into works that have the potential to influence and motivate the community in supporting the goals of the Back to School Movement.

After attending this training, participants successfully produced visual works including book covers and books with creative illustrations that are relevant to the theme of the Back to School Movement. The visual works produced by the participants demonstrate the potential to enhance the attractiveness and interest of the community in supporting the movement. By applying the principles of visual communication media they have learned, these works are able to convey messages in a more engaging and effective manner.

Here are some works that have been produced by the participants :



Figure 7. Works produced by the participants



Figure 8. Works produced by the participants

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Figure 9. Works produced by the participants

In addition to the produced visual communication works, this training also provided benefits in terms of enhancing participants' understanding of the importance of visual communication media in conveying messages. Participants became more aware of the impact of color selection, layout, and other visual elements on the message intended for the community. Consequently, they now have a strong foundation for creating visual materials that can influence community participation and support in the back-to-school movement.

Overall, the training on utilizing visual communication media through the Canva application successfully provided knowledge and skills to the participants. The visual works produced by the participants show potential to positively contribute to the back-to-school movement in Kabupaten Brebes. It is hoped that participants will apply the knowledge gained during this training to enhance community participation and awareness of the importance of education.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the community service activities conducted by the team, participants successfully overcame various technical challenges in using graphic design software, particularly Canva. With in-depth guidance and assistance, participants who were initially unfamiliar with this tool were able to comprehend and master its features. As a result, the visual works produced by the participants became of higher quality and more appealing, aligning well with the theme of the Back to School Movement. Furthermore, with the application of the principles of visual communication media they had learned, these works were able to convey messages more effectively. This training not only addressed technical challenges but also helped participants feel more confident in dealing with technology, as well as providing strong motivation to actively participate in supporting the Back to School Movement. Thus, this training program has proven its benefits in enhancing participants' graphic design skills and supporting the objectives of the Back to School Movement.

To ensure the sustainability of the training outcomes, it is recommended to conduct follow-up training involving a larger number of participants. This training could be expanded to include more individuals engaged in the Back to School Movement. Additionally, the project team should carry out monitoring and evaluation of the utilization of visual communication media created by the participants. This will help measure the actual impact of these visual works on community participation and support for the movement, as well as identify areas for further improvement and development.

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