

Empowering Visual Communication Design Students to Support Tourism Village through Entrepreneurship Education

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Abstract: This study investigates the effectiveness of integrating Entrepreneurship Education into Visual Communication Design (VCD) curricula to enhance students' empathy and their capacity to support community development. By embedding entrepreneurial principles, the program aims to cultivate social responsibility and practical skills, empowering students to contribute to the economic and cultural sustainability of local communities. The research involved two student cohorts from Universitas Negeri Malang and Universitas Ma Chung, who collaborated with Kampung Warna-Warni, a renowned tourism village in Malang, Indonesia. Over a one semester workshop, students designed souvenirs to boost creativity and income for village residents while fostering their own empathy. Result show a the potential of combining academic learning with practical application to achieve both educational and community development objectives.

Keywords: Visual Communication Design, Entrepreneurship Education, higher-education students, tourism village

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has become a keystone of economic development in Indonesia. As the fourth most populous country in the world, Indonesia holds significant potential for fostering new entrepreneurs who can contribute to national economic growth. However, this potential is often hindered by the low entrepreneurial mindset among the population, which remains predominantly oriented toward seeking employment rather than creating job opportunities. Recognizing this challenge, the government has emphasized Entrepreneurship Education as a strategic initiative to increase the number of entrepreneurs in the country. Entrepreneurship Education also plays a critical role in

supporting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 8, which promotes decent work and economic growth. Entrepreneurship can advance Goal 9, which emphasizes building resilient infrastructure and fostering innovation, by equipping young generations with the tools to develop technologies and systems that improve community well-being (Nations, 2015). These efforts underscore the importance of entrepreneurship as a transformative force for achieving sustainable development and reducing inequality.

Through national education policies, Entrepreneurship has been integrated into curricula across various educational levels, including higher education. Entrepreneurship courses have now become mandatory or elective subjects in many universities, both in undergraduate and diploma programs. This aligns with the government's vision to cultivate a generation of creative, innovative, and self-reliant youth. In Indonesia, integrating entrepreneurship into educational curricula aligns with this global agenda, empowering students not only to pursue self-employment but also to address local challenges through innovative solutions (Rauf et al., 2021; Usman & Hamid, 2022).

In the Visual Communication Design (VCD) programs at Universitas Negeri Malang (UM) and Universitas Ma Chung (UMC), Indonesia, a three-credit Entrepreneurship course is offered. The learning outcomes of this course include acquiring knowledge of human resource management and fostering an optimistic approach. The course spans 14 meetings, followed by two examination sessions. Both universities share a common vision of producing graduates who are not only capable of self-employment but also equipped to become entrepreneurs who create job opportunities for others.

This approach aligns with theories of entrepreneurship that emphasize both individual capability and broader societal impact. According to (Schumpeter & Backhaus, 2003), the entrepreneur is the individual which innovates when he introduces something new in the market, either a product, a service or a method. While the VCD programs are expected to develop comprehensive knowledge of the design process as a means of addressing various problems (Creativani, 2023), culminating in solutions delivered through visual communication design works. Through this approach, VCD students are trained to be creative problem-solvers capable of understanding community or client needs and producing design solutions with tangible impact. These principles position designers as agents of change who can influence societal mindsets through work that educate, empower, and create positive impacts (Buchanan, 1992). On the other hand, (Manzini, 2015) highlights that design can act as a catalyst for social innovation, fostering stronger connections between individuals, communities, and available resources. Thus, the integration of an entrepreneurial mission focused on innovation through the creation of new products aligns closely with the mission of the VCD program, which aims to develop its students into problem-solvers through a visual design-driven approach.

Studies have shown that community-based projects in higher education can significantly contribute to both student development and community empowerment, emphasizing the importance of integrating academic learning with societal engagement (Haugh & Talwar, 2016). In the prior Entrepreneurship course, VCD students have traditionally been tasked with developing business

concepts aimed at personal profit. However, there has not been an approach that encourages them to directly assist communities by applying their knowledge to foster economic improvement within society. This highlights a gap in the curriculum where social entrepreneurship could be integrated, aligning students' creative expertise with community needs to achieve broader socio-economic benefits (Vega & Kidwell, 2007).

In this study, VCD students tried to directly engage with communities in economically challenged areas, such as KWW (Colorful Village) in Malang City, and offered their support to residents. KWW has experienced a drastic decline in visitors since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Once an iconic destination in Malang and a popular attraction for both local and international tourists, the area has lost much of its fame. This decline has significantly impacted KWW's community income. Our observation revealed that KWW needs more appealing souvenir designs to attract tourists, highlighting a demand for expertise in design and creativity. In this study, the role of the students is as designers who assist in branding KWW to facilitate its revitalization, making the souvenirs more attractive and, eventually, increasing the income generated by the village. By applying their entrepreneurial and design skills in real-world contexts, students can contribute to community development while gaining practical experience that bridges academic learning with social impact.

METHOD

The methodology employed in this study is adapted from the workshop method used by (Phan Hoang & Kato, 2020) to explore the impact of a six-month solid waste management workshop in elementary schools. In their study, an activity guideline consisting of 10 lessons was developed, with two schools compared: a treatment school and a control school. In this study, we have modified this approach by collaborating with two classes from two different universities, both of which offer an Entrepreneurship course. The activities were a blend of lecture sessions conducted by professors at each university and hands-on practical sessions in the field, where students actively engaged in supporting the community. This combination of theoretical learning and practical involvement aims to enrich students' understanding of entrepreneurship while contributing to community development.

The participants from KWW are residents selected by the head of Pokdarwis (*Kelompok Sadar Wisata* or in English Tourism Awareness Group). The team requested that at least 10 people attend each activity, as the head of Pokdarwis explained at the beginning of the program that some residents might have scheduling conflicts due to their work hours. All the tools and materials for the activities were provided by the researchers, who received grant funding in 2024. These materials, whether used for training or workshops, will be handed over to KWW, as the long-term goal of this initiative is to ensure sustainability. Table 1 illustrates the activities for this study.

Table 1 The activities in the Entrepreneurship subject

Meeting	Place	Stakeholder/s	Treatment	Activities
1-4	University (UM and UMC)	Lecturer and students	Lecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification of the visual communication needs of the village, such as branding, promotion, and digital materials. - Create a simple business plan for students projects
5-12	KWW	Lecturer, students, community	Field work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Souvenir-making workshops with KWW community. - Teach the community to use design software. - Create online market-place account for products from workshop.
13-14	University (UM and UMC)	Lecturer and students	Student's work presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Progress check and evaluation

RESULTS

The results are presented and discussed in three phases: Lecture, Field Work, and Student Presentations.

1. Lecture Phase

Before the start of the semester, teachers from both universities met to discuss and brainstorm plans for the upcoming activities. Together, they visited KWW to engage in discussions with the head of the community and better understand the community needs. During the first meeting in the lecture phase, the teachers provided an overview of the Semester Course Plan outlining the entire project planned for the semester. This preparatory phase laid the foundation for the project by identifying the visual communication needs of KWW. Students from UM and UMC, under the guidance of their teachers, prepared for the workshops. The preparation was carefully planned to align with the specific requirements of KWW. To ensure that students from the two universities did not overlap in tasks, which could reduce efficiency, it was decided that UM students would focus on creating graphic designs for souvenirs, while UMC students would concentrate on branding initiatives to strengthen the village's identity. Thus, in the second to fourth course meeting, students also continue developing simple business plans, integrating theoretical knowledge of design and entrepreneurship. These plans included steps to improve the visual identity of the village, design prototypes, and prepare for practical implementation.

The lecture phase was created to prepare students with the skills required to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. Through structured discussions and feedback sessions, students refined their ideas and gained insights into the socio-economic and cultural

dynamics of the village. This phase also fostered a sense of ownership and empathy among students, encouraging them to see their role as both designers and contributors to community development.

The outcomes of this phase include several graphic design and branding concepts that were developed through multiple iterative processes. These designs reflect collaborative efforts and refinement to meet the project's goals. Figure 1 showcases examples of the designs created by students from UM and UMC, which will subsequently be implemented and further tested during the fieldwork phase.



Figure 1 Some design example from UM students (above) and from UMC students (below)

2. Field-Work Phase

The second phase involved field work in KWW. Students engaged directly with the community, conducting workshops and collaborating with village residents. This real-world approach allowed students to apply their skills in a practical context while simultaneously benefiting the local community.

In this phase, the students were tasked with dividing the activities into several stages to ensure each visit to KWW could be optimized. Based on their discussions, the fieldwork phase was categorized into three stages: souvenir-making workshop, software introduction, and online marketplace training. Given that this phase spanned 8 weeks, the students allocated 5 weeks for the souvenir-making workshop, 1 week for software introduction, and 2 weeks for online marketplace training. In the

souvenir-making workshop, the team prioritized creativity and functionality, ensuring that the products were not only visually appealing but also marketable to a wide audience. Figure 2 shows the souvenir-making workshop.



Figure 2. Students and teachers trained the people in KWW on souvenir creation

The workshop introduced several types of souvenirs, including mugs, pins, keychains, t-shirts, and tote bags. These materials were selected based on their affordability, ease of production, and potential for resale, aligning with principles of sustainable design and community-driven entrepreneurship. By focusing on accessible materials and straightforward production processes, the workshop aimed to empower the local community to independently sustain and scale their efforts beyond the program's duration.

Moreover, after completing the souvenir production process, participants were introduced to design software such as Canva and Adobe Photoshop. This training aimed at equipping them with the skills necessary to independently create custom designs for future souvenir products, fostering both creativity and self-sufficiency. By developing their design capabilities, the program sought to inspire participants to explore their creative potential and nurture an entrepreneurial mindset. This aligns with the findings of (Lackéus, 2020), which highlight the critical role of creative skill development in fostering entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviors.

In addition to design training, participants attended a workshop on utilizing online marketplace platforms. This session focused on teaching them how to manage and promote their products through digital platforms, enabling them to independently monitor sales and expand their market reach. The integration of digital literacy into the program reflects current research emphasizing the transformative role of e-commerce in empowering small-scale entrepreneurs, particularly in rural or underserved areas. By leveraging digital tools, participants gain access to broader markets, increasing their opportunities for economic growth.

3. Student Presentations

The final phase involved student presentations, where they showcased their work and reflected on their experiences. These presentations served as a platform for students to evaluate their progress, share insights, and receive feedback from instructors and peers. A key takeaway from this phase was the realization of the vast opportunities available for students to extend their learning beyond the classroom. By immersing themselves in real-world challenges, students were able to see the tangible impact of their work. This experience reinforced the value of applying academic knowledge in practical settings to address societal needs.

Table 2 The core principles for Entrepreneurship Education in VCD program

Phase	Objective	Key Activities	Core Principle for Entrepreneurship Education in VCD
Lecture Phase (Foundational Preparation)	Equip students with theoretical knowledge and empathy	Needs analysis, development of business plans, workshops on design & entrepreneurship	Empathy Development: Fostering an understanding of socio-economic contexts Practical Application:
Field-work Phase (Applied Engagement)	Implement practical solutions and collaborate with the community	Collaborative workshops, branding efforts, skill training, establishing marketing platforms	Bridging theoretical knowledge with real-world challenges. Sustainability: Ensuring the long-term impact and independence of community initiatives.
Student Presentation Phase (Reflective Assessment)	Evaluate outcomes, share insights, and refine future approaches	Presentations, feedback sessions, identification of future opportunities	Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Leveraging diverse skills to address complex challenges.

From table 2 provided, the value that students gain from the Entrepreneurship education in Visual Communication Design (VCD) includes:

- a. Empathy development, students develop a deeper understanding of socio-economic contexts, which enhances their ability to address real-world challenges. By engaging with communities in the field, students cultivate empathy, helping them design solutions that are relevant and beneficial.
- b. Practical application, where the curriculum emphasizes applying theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios. Students learn to bridge the gap between classroom concepts and practical

challenges through hands-on projects such as branding, creating marketing platforms, and conducting workshops.

- c. Sustainability, from this activity students are taught the importance of creating sustainable business models that continue to impact the community positively, even after the course ends. This fosters the mindset of long-term growth and independence for the initiatives they work on.
- d. Interdisciplinary collaboration, when students work in teams, they are integrating skills from various fields to solve complex problems. This teaches them how to collaborate effectively with others, leveraging different expertise to create comprehensive solutions that address the needs of the community.

DISCUSSIONS

The theoretical foundation of this study approach draws on community-based entrepreneurship frameworks, as discussed in studies such as (Lackéus, 2020), which highlight Value-Creation Pedagogy (VaCP) demonstrated strong effects on developing entrepreneurial competencies, increasing student motivation, and enhancing knowledge and skills acquisition. By engaging participants in hands-on workshops, the program adopted an experiential pedagogy that mirrors the "learning by doing" model, enabling community members to develop practical skills in design and production while simultaneously exploring market dynamics. This aligns with the findings of (Coelen & Smulders, 2023; Willis et al., 2024) how design-oriented entrepreneurship education can engage students in solving socio-economic issues within their communities. By collaborating with community insiders, students develop entrepreneurial solutions, enhancing their creativity and problem-solving skills.

Moreover, the workshop incorporated elements of co-design, where participants were actively involved in the ideation and development process. This collaborative approach ensures that the final products reflect both the cultural identity of Kampung Warna-Warni (KWW) and the preferences of potential customers. Research by (Phan Hoang & Kato, 2020) on participatory workshops demonstrates that involving local stakeholders in the design process increases the relevance and acceptance of the outcomes while fostering a sense of ownership and commitment.

To ensure long-term sustainability, the team emphasized the importance of transferring knowledge and skills to the community. This aligns with the principles of human-centered design, which advocate solutions that are not only user-friendly but also adaptable for ongoing use by the target audience. The workshop concluded with actionable strategies for KWW residents to continue producing and marketing souvenirs independently, thus fulfilling the overarching goal of increasing the community's income. This integration of creativity, education, and sustainability demonstrates how design and entrepreneurship can collaboratively address social and economic challenges in local contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating Entrepreneurship Education into the VCD curriculum as a means to empower students and address real-world challenges faced by local

communities. The collaborative project involving Universitas Negeri Malang, Universitas Ma Chung, and Kampung Warna-Warni highlights the potential of combining academic learning with practical application to achieve both educational and community development objectives. Future research and initiatives could focus on expanding this model to other communities, exploring the scalability of the framework, and further refining strategies for integrating community-based projects into higher education curricula.

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