

# Mutualiti Wisdom of Design Triangulation

## Early awareness of design impact for design academics

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### ABSTRACT

The campaign could go wrong when it's trespassing the red line of business ethics. A message sent in the form of a campaign advertisement intentionally aims at a particular audience segmentation. Actually, as long as the campaign can be seen in public, there are no boundaries to whom the message is sent and accepted. The audience actually has a right which is mostly neglected due to the lack of power. Audiences commonly are acceptors of any message sent by a designer through design. Unfortunately, not all the designer are aware of the impact of their design on the public. In some cases, designers tend to make controversial advertisements in order to make them viral and have high exposure. In fact, there is no one understands the mechanism of visual manipulation except the designer himself, by understanding the mutuality of the product owner (designer client), audience, or potential customer (designer target segmentation), and designer this paper attempts to picture the mutuality around them and recommend the wisdom interaction between them in order to take part keeping the society from the false and manipulative design message..

**Keywords:** *mutuality, design triangulation, campaign, communication design.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

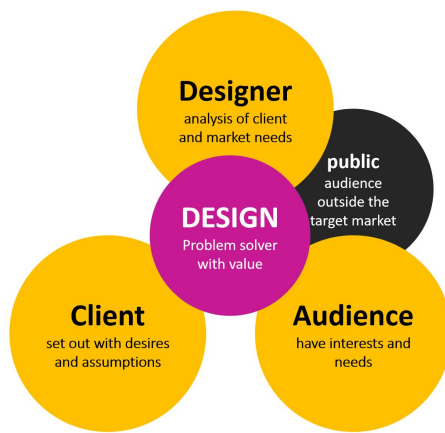
David Berman in his book “Do Good Design conveys his view that design is not about decoration but a strategy for sustainability”. In response to this, in academic field practice, quite a few design students only focus on technical skills and are content with tutorial learning. Moreover, many laypeople's opinions and confusion regarding the definition of design mean that the design profession in certain segments is seen as an activity related to technical visual production only. Meredith Davis also stated that the greatest skepticism in design research lies with the designers themselves.

In the learning context especially the visual communication design department, for example, quite a few people see that this department is not far from just visual production or a place to be a visualizer. On the one hand, this opinion is not totally wrong because visualization is part of a designer's work process. However, many people forget that the visual communication design major has at least three keywords that can be elaborated on, not just visual. The first keyword, design, has big consequences. In simple terms, several design associations in Indonesia such as ADGI, ADPII, AIDIA, HDII, and HDMII define design is the creation of value from a problem-solving process

(design services guidelines). From this definition we can see that visuals are a medium and method, the emphasis of a design is that it must be able to solve problems. What's unique is that it doesn't stop there, because if it stops at solving problems alone, then design will tend to side with capital holders, becoming a tool for solving sales and marketing problems, without paying attention to existing values and norms. For this reason, several associations added that in the problem-solving process, there must be value creation, which means that the problem-solving process must produce positive values or impacts, not destructive ones which are very closely related to manipulative things in order to sell products.

In the second keyword, namely communication, it is crucial to argue that design is about decoration and aesthetic visual production. Communication itself has a basic concept as the process of sending a message and there are several aspects to it. The sender of the message, the message itself, and the recipient of the message. Meanwhile, in the process of sending the message, there is an element of noise which usually causes bias in the message conveyed. In the context of design, we know that the designer plays a role in packaging the message, the design itself is a medium for conveying the message, while the target segmentation is the audience or party who will receive the message. If we look more carefully,

there are essentially two elements that will be an important discussion issue in this paper, namely clients and the public. The client in this context is actually the party who triggers the designer to create design work in such a way as to solve the problems faced by the client. At first glance, we can understand that the design that is designed connects the designer, client, and target audience, but in fact, the design that has been designed can be easily accessed by the public with various interpretations. The public is the general audience which may not be the target segmentation of the message you want to convey, but because of the massive media used and the wide coverage of the media, the public is an audience that, even though it is not the target audience, also receives the message.



**Figure 1** Triangulation of design client, designer, and audience which involve the public.

### 1.1. The Design Power

From the academic views of visual communication design learning, referring to SKKNI 2023 (acronym of Indonesian National Work Competency Standards), there are 3 main keywords which are the fundamental competencies expected of designers, namely the ability to package information, identify problems, and offer relevant solutions, and the ability to persuade. The keywords information and identification are two of the three existing competencies that can be studied as basic competencies for students. It needs to be recognized that persuasion requires broader knowledge than just identifying problems and packaging information. However, if this persuasive ability is not based on awareness, the impact will be biased information that will give rise to misinterpretations in the minds of the public.

In the design learning process, it cannot be denied that our society, especially in, Indonesia, sees that someone who has been able to master design software will be considered worthy of the title of designer. We all know just because they are able to master the equipment does not mean they have good design sense. It takes a

separate field of learning to be able to have the ability to create beautiful works. Meanwhile, above these two levels, there are the levels at which designers are able to convey information or communicate well and effectively. This is where the emphasis of this paper is on communication, although there are still two levels after that, which discuss the ability to monetize design skill or making a business of the communicative ability of the design, and the highest level is being able to create work, both commercial and non-commercial, which is influential. These five stages are the ideal journey of a designer. Because with the ability to package information, identify relevant problems and strategies, plus the ability to persuade target segmentation and even the public, design is a superpower that can influence the public through relevant communication strategies. For this reason, design students, prospective designers, and even designers should not stop at the stage of creating aesthetic visual works and business transactions. There is a big responsibility behind all these abilities.



**Figure 2** Five stages of design attribute.

In the book DKV 01, Cultivating a Sense of Concluding Forms, it is explained that there are two types of designers, designers with a lowercase "d" who only focus on mastering tools, and executors, whose role is only to comply with the brief without being able to provide different offers. look at it from a technical point of view, not a strategic one. Meanwhile, designers with an uppercase "D" are described as designers who have a more holistic point of view by considering various aspects. In short, these two types of designers can be analogous to pharmacists and doctors. If pharmacists can only provide what drug buyers ask for, doctors have more ability to diagnose the patient who comes in to recommend the best solution for them.

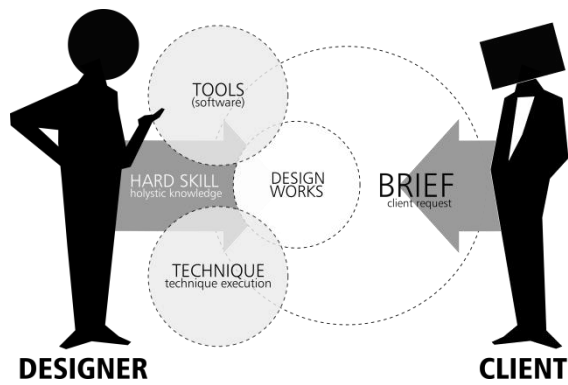


Figure 3 designer with a lowercase d.

If the design work is essentially a brief that the designer cannot bid on or has no intention of bidding on the brief, then they fall into this category. The inability to negotiate a brief is not only because they don't want to, but it could be that there is an organizational stratum that doesn't allow them to do so, or in other cases, designers only interact with clients through design competition platforms where determining whether a design is accepted or not is determined by superiors or judges in the competition.

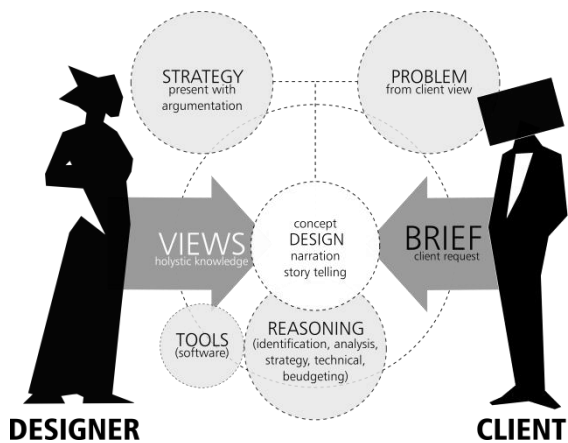


Figure 4 Designer with an uppercase D

the designer with the uppercase "D" acts like a doctor who first diagnoses the patient's complaint as a basis for providing recommendations for solutions. he does not rely on the ability to operate tools, but he has the ability to negotiate, convey arguments, and even correct and educate clients to be able to distinguish that what they want is not necessarily what they need.

### 1.2. Design and Industrial Dilemmas

Public communication campaigns can be defined as purposive attempts to inform or influence behaviors in large audiences within a specified time period using an organized set of communication activities and featuring an array of mediated messages in multiple channels generally to produce noncommercial benefits to individuals and society (Rice & Atkin, 2009; Rogers & Storey, 1987).

Berman in his book raises real case studies about this information bias. He took an illustration of a cigarette advertisement which showed a picture of several people taking part in a sports activity that stimulates adrenaline. The designer may want to convey that users of this product (cigarettes) are synonymous with people who are successful, macho, brave, and even cool with their achievements and freedom of choice. However, in the eyes of the public, this message can be biased, where it seems as if this product gives a healthy, cool image, and users can continue to excel without worrying about health problems.



Figure 5 Cigarette campaigns which already banned in Canada.

From this case, we can now understand that the information relationship in the field is not just communication between designers (who represent clients/product owners) to certain segmentation targets but rather there is a public involved in it, this could be part of the reason why the advertisement above has been banned in Canada. However, even though placing such advertisements is prohibited, tobacco companies do not stop there, again with creative marketing strategies, marketing strategies are increasingly militant by attaching the tobacco product brand logo to several products and even making chocolates packaged like cigarette butts.



Figure 6 Cigarette campaign in rack, lighter, and even a chocolate pack in cigarette shape.

The case above shows that without a red line, creativity in the context of specific advertising design can be disruptive and subversive, where these two things have the potential to cause commotion in public perception.

The design description provided by the association in Indonesia has at least been the right approach in an applicable context. This idea can also indirectly answer some people's questions regarding whether corruptors are creative. Several of these associations have explained concisely and well that design is indeed a problem-solving process, but it must be based on creativity that creates value. So from this description, we can get a conclusion that everything that creates value in the problem-solving process can be categorized as design. At the same time, this description provides a rule that design should not only be subject to the needs of industrialism and capitalism which focus on profit or in certain contexts sales, but must also give birth to a value, which of course is a positive value.

This statement was also confirmed by Mr. Indonesian Graphic Designer, the founding father of graphic design, A.D. Pirous stated that the science of visual communication design is not only a science used to meet industrial needs but can change a sluggish city into a shining one. This is what should be the narrative echoed throughout design learning considering the broad impact of design on the public.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

To understand how promotional dilemmas in advertising have a biased impact on the public, we must conduct a comparative study by knowing the stakeholders of the reciprocal relationship between these elements. examine correlations and relationships with each other to be able to see the boundaries of rights and obligations in order to sort out rules, tastes, and morals which will become clear red lines in the following discussion.

### ***2.1. Triangulation Approach***

Referring to the case study of cigarette advertisements presented by Bermen and any advertisements that give the wrong message to the public. If we look back, we will find a mutualism that occurs behind it, where the client in this context can become the owner of the product, actually needs the public or consumers to be able to buy the product so that the company continues to run, where in the process the company hires the services of a designer to package the product. This is to suit the expected segmentation targets, in other words, design services are hired to help increase product sales. From this it can be seen that this company actually needs a good relationship between the company as the client, the designer as the message

transmitter, and the audience as potential consumers. From the consumer's point of view, there are various layers from the educated who have choices in determining the products they will consume, to the upper middle class who tend not to have the ability to choose. Meanwhile, the designer must be a bridge between these two elements, the client as the product owner and the consumer as the product user.

### ***2.1.1. Client***

In simple terms, we can see that clients come to designers or hire design services with the assumption that they hope the designer can solve the problems they face by completing the design. There are several rules that you can pay attention to when interacting with clients. Chris Do, a professional graphic designer, on his YouTube channel The Futur, provides an illustration of how if our client's tastes are not better than ours, and we know that what they ask for if we do it, then it will be a portfolio that does not match the design style us all this time. This case study becomes interesting in the context of this discussion. There is an interesting sentence from Chris Do when he puts himself in the client's perspective. While there are designers who tend to see that some client taste is responsible for the ugliness of their design. Chris Do asks what is good for the designer he mentions to remember that the client is willing to pay the designer several tens of millions for a design of their "thing". in short, designers should understand the connection if the business fails what is good for the designer. He mentioned that we cannot be egocentric because it is very dangerous. that's why as the designer it is important to put ourselves in the client's shoes.

### ***2.1.2. Audience (Potential Market)***

On the other side to balance this idea of empathy, as the designer we cannot forget that the audience, whether it's the consumer or the potential consumer, also has a right to get the truth about the product. In the extreme perspective, some companies ignore the morale in order to sell the product. Like the cigarette advertisement in the first section of this paper.

In the context of design, design normally targets a group of people called target segmentation. Target segmentation allows designers to identify the habit tendencies and interest of particular groups of people. This is part of the communication strategy which helps designers to decide what kind of approach to take in order to send the message more efficiently by understanding the segment's views, perspective, and cultural background. From the view of marketing, this is the way to minimize failure.

The target audience is a group of people who are suited to the specific product or service market we might be suited to sell. Companies also use "target

audience” to define their buyer personas or ideal customers. However, an ideal customer profile or target audience profile is even more specific than the target audience. ( Naveh 2022).

Designers should realize there is the responsibility of professional and moral, professional responsibility is to serve the client what they deserve in order to solve their design problem, in other way, the moral responsibility is to give the potential customer the right and truthful information in the right ways.

Right ways could be interpreted with wisdom. Some products advertise their product by exploring consumer insecurity by focusing on their uncomfortable mind. Exploring consumer insecurity is an efficient way to convince them how the product can easily tackle their problem, but to make people feel uncomfortable by mentioning something that they don't really exist or already exists but emphasizing making others feel uncomfortable is not the right way. Rather than focusing on the consumer's lack, we as designers can focus on the good of the product.



**Figure 7** Campaign that exploit insecurity.

Marketing can be used for good things, such as reducing stigma, bringing communities together, and discussing important issues while providing solutions. The beauty industry has been selling 'hope in a jar' and that has to stop. There's no need to prey on people's insecurities and perpetuate stereotypes or set unrealistic expectations.

### 2.1.3. Designer

Campaign designers perform a situational analysis and set objectives leading to the development of a coherent set of strategies and implementing the campaign by creating informational and persuasive messages that are disseminated via traditional mass media, new technologies, and interpersonal networks ((Atkin, Rice 2013). The designer's hardest task is to ensure that what the client wants is not what they

actually need. In his book, Berman says that We are trained to recognize lies. However, because we are not yet very visually literate, it is not clear to us when an image is designed to create lies. Lies in words are controlled by twisted laws of falsehood, while disguised visual lies often are not. Thus, many creative lies can continue to operate and go unpunished.

As the designer who is responsible for the communication bride, they are burdened with two conditions, a decision they can make and a decision they cannot bargain. Not all of the companies comply with the company's moral values and code of ethics, it cannot be denied that some companies only focus on increasing sales without caring about the impact on society. In this case, designers can become a barrier, a shield to protect the public from incorrect information and prevent public uproar.

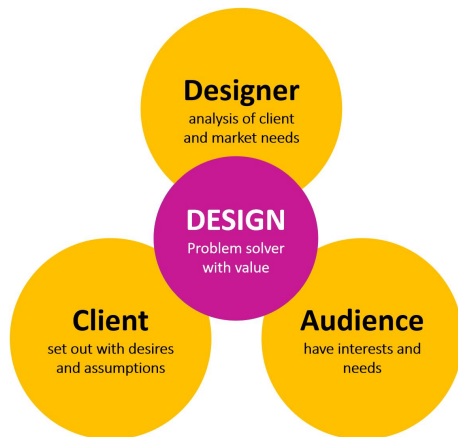
However, ironically, when designers have full control over what they will produce, and what kind of communication strategy they will use, not all designers understand communication ethics or at least care about the impact on the public. We know that some companies leave all their strategy to designers as long as they meet their company's KPIs.

In the academic world as a learner and teacher, this is important to emphasize, that not only are the most effective and efficient strategies in inviting or persuading an audience, but also strategies that educate, have a positive impact, and can be morally and spiritually accountable are important things to learn. . Teachers should not only focus on communication strategies but also build awareness of the great impact and power of design for the public.

## 2.2. Triangulation Impact to Public Audience

The three parties, including designers, audiences, and clients, are in the same sphere of mutuality and can influence each other in order to build a healthy industrial ecosystem. At a glance, it can be seen that the client or in this context, the owner of the company who wants to sell his product, is the most powerful person, however, if we can agree that the designer is not just a visualizer, but a discussion partner who formulates the best solution for design needs, then the designer has a role. in conducting negotiations, and discussions, and educating clients to take effective steps without having to break through value and moral boundaries or other approaches that have a negative impact on the public. because essentially no one understands how visual manipulation in advertising works other than the designer, which is why he can be at the forefront of preventing this. Meanwhile, the audience as the segmentation target is expected to be more critical, educated, and active in responding to irregularities in advertising and other public media. through this

awareness, it is important to build channels, discussions, and agreements.



**Figure 8** Triangulation design.

Even for companies, this will be good, because with a critical audience, companies selling products will get constructive feedback, not just consumers who accept it without caring about what they use. In the end, healthy triangulation will become a strong social alarm in order to maintain and build a good generation. Klaus Schwab Founder of the World Economic Forum mentions that “capitalism that is only concerned with the accumulation of wealth will not last long, exacerbate the situation, and foster inequality”.

### 3. RESULT AND RECOMMENDATION

Berman mentions the essential of good design by defining a Good design as strategic, sustainable, & ethical in answering a business problem, While Atkin and Rice 2013 mention that “Rather than relying predominantly on direct persuasion, campaigners may attain greater impact by investing effort and resources in campaign components affecting indirect or secondary target audiences who can 1) exert interpersonal influence on focal individuals or 2) help reform environmental conditions that shape behavior”.

Both of them are concerned about the impact beyond the advertisement. By evaluating the triangulation of the design process in public responsibility this paper offers a symbiotic mutualism in order to build a healthy society.

Media campaigns have considerable potential for motivating interpersonal influencers in close contact with focal individuals as well as producing effects on institutions and groups at the national and community levels (Atkin & Salmon, 2010). In order to build a strong healthy, and constructive community each of the triangulation element should take part in the process,

this paper suggests some point of action for each of them.

#### 3.1. Company product maker (client)

As a company, it is important to have value and stick to it. Rene Suhardono Author book of Your carrier is not your passion, “Strat up basically starts from one ideal thing that must not be lost. Business may be transacted, but value is not allowed.” Maintaining the commitment of which users and the public are “friendly” helps the company to deal with some social issues.

Furthermore, Cristobal Colon Founder of La Fa Geda one of the biggest three dairy product in Europe who maintains a company with affable people, share his views that profit is important, growth is important, but the most important is how it impacts others, and the meaning for the owner.

However, we cannot be naive and hope that all companies can do this. but at least through this paper or through student designers and prospective designers, we can educate clients through arguments that lead to the two points above.

#### 3.2. Audience (target segemntation)

From the perspective of the audience and the public, we can understand that sometimes designers, even company or product owners, are the target segment of other designs or products. Therefore this suggestion is global for the public, especially those who have been educated so they can do the following things:

- Buy products that tell the truth.
- Don't be manipulated by visual lies.
- Don't hand over your neighborhood to companies that want to put up billboards in your memory.
- Don't get too comfortable. Stay alert.
- Demand the truth. Share that truth. Speak up if you see a visual lie.

#### 3.3. Designer

Finally, we came to the point of this paper, what should the designer do in order to take a part in preventing the misinterpretation of the design? Bermen gives some points designers can consider;

- Designers should realize some products encourage consumers to be consumptive and lead to overconsumption habits, wisely not participate in the problem of excessive consumption.
- No one understands the mechanism behind the manipulation better than designers, so be at the forefront to prevent it.

- have the creativity to drive in a positive direction.
- Need to say “No” to a better “Yes”

#### 4. CONCLUSION

From all of the discussion above simply we can conclude what kind of mutualism is encouraged and fostered in design triangulation. The designer should educate and foster awareness in their client about the value and threshold they cannot trespass. While the client should bound by the moral agreement demanding efficient and truthful strategies. In the other relation between the designer and the audience, the designer should be a deterrent to any manipulation intended by the company to sell the product, while the audience should be critical, demanding good ways, and speak up for something trivial which may lead to a bit misleading. The relationship between the client and the audience is not about which is more powerful, but both of them should foster cooperation when the client delivers the truth while the audience demands and critical response to the product and design they accept.

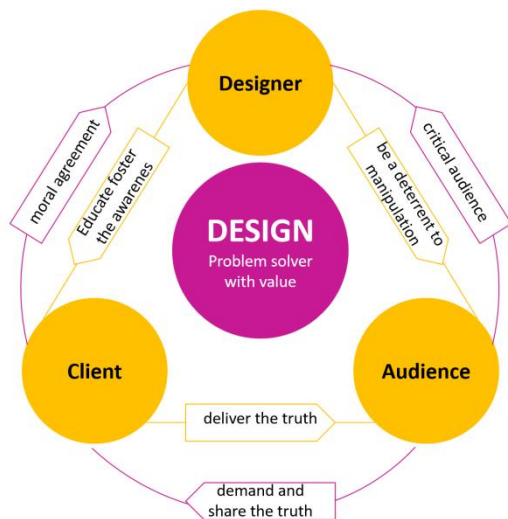


Figure 9 Triangulation in mutuality design wisdom.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper was written in response to the same concerns by David Bermen in his book *Do Good Design*

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