

The Role of a Graphic Designer in the Visual Marketing Team to Accelerate Awareness of Premium Content KumparanPLUS †

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Abstract: Graphic designers play an important role in producing various types of designs to meet the promotional needs of a business, especially in today's digital media industry. This is closely related to marketing at Kumparan which requires design execution through the visual marketing team. Kumparan is an Indonesia's leading digital news media platform, leveraging data and innovation to deliver fresh content to millions of readers daily through world-class storytelling and journalism. This paper shows the role of a graphic designer carrying out creative execution on the Kumparan visual marketing team in meeting the needs of KumparanPLUS premium content that tries to keep up with the times and the transformation of the new media industry with an interactive communication approach. The focus of KumparanPLUS is the provision of premium content to meet the information needs of the various types of Indonesian people with attractive visual presentations in the form of cover collections, cover stories, social media content, and infographics. This research is observational research conducted at Kumparan. The data were obtained from interviews, observations, assessments, and applications of graphic design practices. The contribution of a graphic designer will be seen through the results of creative execution to produce content with high engagement and achievements on the social media platform Instagram which has experienced a drastic increase from the number of followers of 11,000 within 4 months, as well as the interaction of each audience from each post. With the activities of the visual marketing team itself, it is expected to be able to achieve the main goal of premium content, namely brand loyalty.

Keywords: Kumparan; graphic designer; new media; visual marketing; social media marketing; premium content



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1. Introduction

In the early part of the 21st century, the media landscape has been dramatically affected by the introduction of new, largely digital media [1]. Communication is expected to make a change or progress if it can be conveyed properly and correctly. Along with the development of information technology, the media is also undergoing a transformation in the form of new media through digital platforms to reach a wider and appropriate audience coverage. This began in the 1990s with the use of the Internet as an advertising medium. Web pages became the “new” medium with banners and other types of similar ads (e.g., buttons, rectangles, etc.) seeking customers to click on them and be sent to the advertiser's website [1].

As visual social media marketing (VSMM) content continues to increase in popularity, it is imperative for marketers to understand the elements of such marketing efforts that capture consumers' attention [2]. On the other hand, the VSMM is a form of interactive communication and it has aspects that are closely related to the graphic design process, which in its stages contains a creative process that can form a visual element such as writing, shapes, and images that contain the perception of a message to be conveyed. The

production phase of a graphic design process occurs after the message and audience are identified and a form for a design is conceptualized and sketched [3].

The modern media industry based on new media has graphic design needs. The form of message delivery, which has now evolved into a digital form, is a challenge for every media in order to maintain its existence. Kumparan is a leading digital media portal that was first established in 2017 by professional media pioneers with more than 15 years of experience. Kumparan conducts innovation and data research aimed at presenting new content to millions of readers every day through the concept of world-class storytelling and journalism. Kumparan as a digital publisher has a new business unit called KumparanPLUS where the content in that unit is dominated by the majority of visual elements, thus distinguishing it from content in Kumparan in general.

Kumparan carries the concept of a news site combined with a timeline as in other forms of social media, so that readers have the follow feature and can determine for themselves according to their respective interests. Kumparan realized that the KumparanPLUS business unit had a different target audience from Kumparan, so it was decided to form a special team called the visual marketing team, which is a unit in the organizational structure of Kumparan. This team is very closely related to produce best quality content that is interesting, informative, and aesthetically pleasing to the audience such as images, videos, and other visual media. This paper has significant research in the field of graphic design particularly in order to accelerate the growth of awareness of a new brand, in this case is KumparanPLUS which is the first platform in Indonesia that presents exclusive multimedia content from the best experts and creators in their fields.

2. Literature Review

New media may be characterized using a variety of different approaches. In large part, the confusion—such as it is—among various definitions of the new media is due to an inherent confusion of the object of study—the message, the medium, the technology, the time period, the social context. In fact, today, the term media itself may sometimes refer to the technology, i.e., the medium of communication, but increasingly to the message itself [4]. There are at least two characteristics of new media, the first one is interactivity, and the second one is digital [1].

The marketing and advertising academic literature has started to examine various aspects of social media marketing. People process information in three ways: (1) representational (i.e., verbal and nonverbal information is processed separately), (2) referential (i.e., the verbal system is activated by visual communication and vice versa), and (3) associative (i.e., text and image can influence a mental trigger) [2]. Brands may utilize social media marketing as an integrated component in a marketing communications campaign, as an ongoing corporate communications channel, and/or as a series of micro campaigns specifically designed for digital exposure [5]. The use of social media and visual design provides brands with numerous touchpoints for engaging consumers. In other words, good content may trigger the audience to engage in every touchpoint.

Both practice and academic research indicate the value of visual content in driving consumer engagement. As the old saying goes, “a picture is worth a thousand words”, visual content dominates social media platforms, and more importantly, the way we communicate [6]. To make dominant visual content requires good graphic design skills. Graphic designers try to illuminate or explain things using graphic language, which may be verbal, pictorial, or schematic, and presented on paper or on screen. Graphic designers work with illustrators, photographers, coders, editors, writers, and others involved in the graphic presentation of language. Additionally, as with all designing, it is a planning and problem-solving discipline, concerned with purpose, process, visual judgement, engagement with users, and circumstances of use [7].

3. Methods

This research is observational research within education studies of the framework work-integrated learning (WIL). Observational research enables the researcher to journey inside workplace or community sites where actions and conversations unfold, to unpack the complexities of work, learning, and practice [8]. The lecturer together with the student and their mentor collaborate in terms of WIL in the internship place of Kumparan for 6 months from January to July 2021. The research field of WIL is growing, with new insights into a range of WIL factors, issues, perceptions, and programs shaping collective knowledge and practice in the WIL workplace or community [8]. In this paper, the workplace is introduced as a rich space for WIL research, specifically through observational methodologies that place the researcher alongside actions to witness and make explicit the significance and meanings of placement practice. By utilizing observational methodologies, researchers could learn of the social, cultural and material factors that enable, constrain, and shape what is possible [8]. WIL has a lot of benefits, such as providing insights to help inform fundamental issues in the WIL domain to effectively design WIL assessments, examining the transfer of learning, or relating with partners through richer understandings of the embodied and situated practices of supervisors. The observational research is design to analyze real-world situations, and to understand and evaluate past problems and solutions. It is useful to test how an idea applies to real life, and this research design is especially popular in marketing, advertising, and social sciences. An interview with the mentor is also conducted to enrich the observational method. The methodology of the WIL format starts from the problem of KumparanPLUS, the solution to offer from the perspective of graphic design, and the results.

4. Results

Based on the statement of the visual manager of Kumparan, Kiagoos Aulianshah (2021), the visual marketing unit of Kumparan functions to fulfill all visual needs in Kumparan with good quality, on time, and on target with one of its targets being to produce graphic content with a high level of engagement. The level of engagement is very important as a way of knowing the success of the content. The level of engagement can also be measured by the percentage of people who provide feedback or an interaction in the form of comments and likes on the content [9].

In a way to achieve this, the visual marketing team carried out a strategy by conducting a FGD (forum group discussion), which is a discussion activity which in the process itself is guided by a moderator with a focus on a particular problem. The purpose of this FGD itself is to be able to explore and identify various kinds of opinions and different views on a specific topic in a relaxed and informal atmosphere so that everyone who participates in the FGD does not feel pressured, and so that under these circumstances, they can easily express their opinion. After the discussion, the moderator will analyze each opinion inductively. After that, the next strategy is to create a strong brand guideline that includes the logo, the use of fonts, and the color palette. This is a key to consistency in Kumparan's identity so as to increase the credibility of Kumparan as one of the largest online media in Indonesia. The Kumparan visual marketing team also always develops the quality of each creative execution by always following the actual design style trends through research and input from the social media team or from other related teams (product and search engine optimization).

KumparanPLUS was launched in 2021 and is committed to presenting quality content with in-depth research with a subscription-based concept. KumparanPLUS is made to be relevant to the readers to answer their daily information needs. KumparanPLUS itself has several types of categories that can meet the information needs of each individual which is certainly diverse. This is supported by the presence of more than a thousand credible creators to share quality content which is divided into eight categories, namely entertainment, opinion of the characters, financial issues, careers, lifestyle, special coverage,

fiction stories, along with family, and romance, all packaged in a way that is relevant to today's life.

The KumparanPLUS project itself is carried out by the KumparanPLUS team whose all kinds of marketing needs are carried out by the marketing team. Then, visual marketing is tasked with carrying out all kinds of outputs that support the marketing activities of the KumparanPLUS project in accordance with the brief given by the marketing team. While in the KumparanPLUS project, the author got the task of working on visual needs in the form of cover collections and cover stories for content needs in KumparanPLUS and designs for social media such as social media headers, Instagram stories, and Instagram posts. In addition, the author also had time to work on some infographic content.

In the design execution, the author used the Adobe Photoshop software to perform image processing through image manipulation techniques or digital imaging on a Bitmap or pixel basis, where the resulting files tend to be large. In addition, the author also used the Adobe Illustrator software to process the needs of vector-based illustrations with smaller file sizes. The difference between the two software is very dependent on usage.

To adjust the design to suit the needs of the KumparanPLUS creators, the author coordinated several times directly with the visual manager as a mentor on the team as well as with the art director. This coordination included a discussion of design references that must be made along with a preview of the design so that the authors get feedback regarding the resulting visual output. The author also helped other graphic designers to execute cover collection derivatives into various sizes, especially for banner sizes on websites and social media. Another step that must be considered when making a design execution is the copyright of an image that you want to design. Therefore, the marketing team has provided subscription access for graphic designers to the Shutterstock website, where the website provides a number of stock images and vectors that can be processed under the terms of a commercial license, thus facilitating the process of making each KumparanPLUS visual work. Here are the portfolios of the KumparanPLUS graphic designs:

1. Cover Collection

The author is trusted to create a cover collection design in order to meet the needs of one of the premium content entitled "Composing Outstanding CV" as depicted in Figure 1. The creator himself is named Inge S. Purnama who is a growth manager at the GDP Venture company. She shares tips and tricks so that the application can be glimpsed by the dream company through the preparation of a CV along with tips for successful online interviews.



Figure 1. Cover Collection "Composing Outstanding CV".

2. Cover Story

Cover story is a design result that is used for cover stories on content in the KumparanPLUS project. For this cover story, the author was involved in designing for about three premium content titles and executing around fourteen cover stories. In these three content titles, the author will display several results starting from titles that fall into the category of fiction and a horror story content entitled “Brii Horror Stories”. All of this author’s works can be visited directly through the Kumparan website in the KumparanPLUS section as depicted in Figure 2.

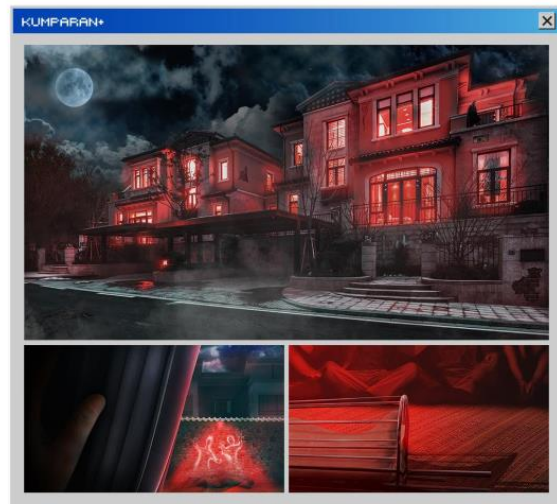


Figure 2. Cover Story “Brii Horror Stories”.

The story “Housing of the Dead” itself consists of three parts, starting with chapters one to three (see Figure 3). Here the author executes the design by reading the script of the whole story from the creator, Kak Brii. The next stage is to execute the design with direct direction from the visual manager and art director in the team. The design is made with the final form with a landscape size of 1920 × 1080 pixels. Then, after that, it is lowered into various forms as needed, for example, being a portrait. “Housing of the Dead” tells the story of a large family who has just moved to a new place of residence. However, unfortunately, the complex and the new residence they live in provide an unforgettable experience.

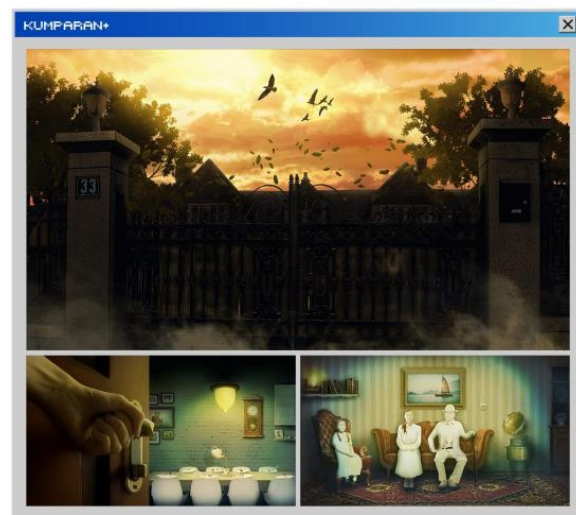


Figure 3. Cover Story “Housing of the Dead”.

In addition to being featured in two premium content titles for KumparanPLUS, the author also had time to execute cover stories for other fictional content with the title “Occurrence on the Body” whose story was presented by Faisal Oddang (see Figure 4). In this content, the author helps with visual needs for chapter nine and chapter ten of the story “Events on the Body”. The story itself tells of a guerrilla soldier who suffered defeat and then came out of his hiding forest with news of a tattoo that would change a person’s life. The author himself does the treatment that has been done for the cover story in the previous story with elements of tattoos and fire that are incorporated in each illustration.



Figure 4. Cover Story “Occurrence on the Body”.

3. Social Media Content

Several illustrations produced by the author became one of the initial contents uploaded onto the KumparanPLUS Instagram page. The content was created with the aim of describing some of the content in KumparanPLUS regarding strategies for managing finances and investments, as well as mental health and careers. The whole design is executed with the use of striking colors and the composition of the images is made imaginatively as depicted in Figure 5.

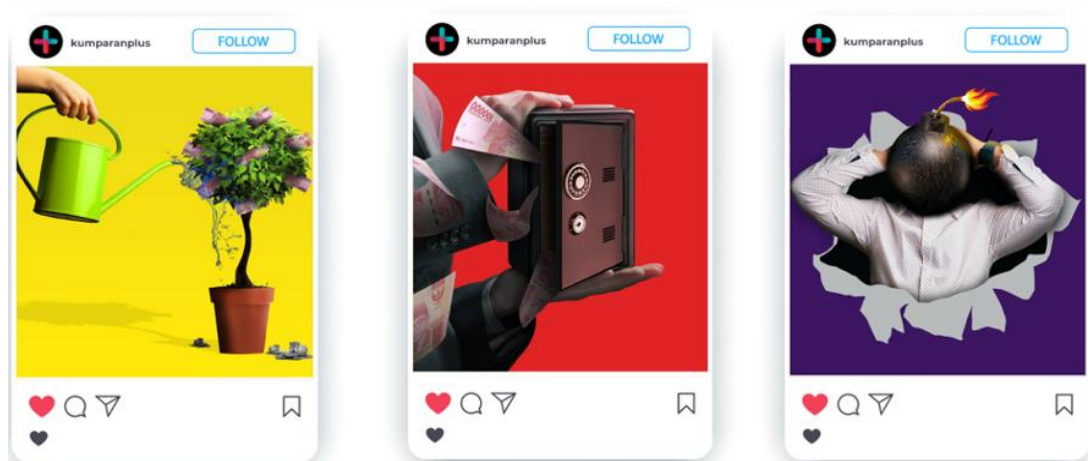


Figure 5. Social Media Content.

4. Infographic

In addition to the cover collection and cover story, the author also works on some visual infographic needs for the needs of creators at KumparanPLUS. The author created an infographic for the content title “Fall Up Against Stunting” for a creator named Sofie Wasiat as depicted in Figure 6. The author uses bright colors with a modern tone manner but keeps it simple so that it is easy for KumparanPLUS readers to understand. The process of making an infographic design itself is not much different from making a cover collection and cover story, both starting with a brief process written by the creator directly.

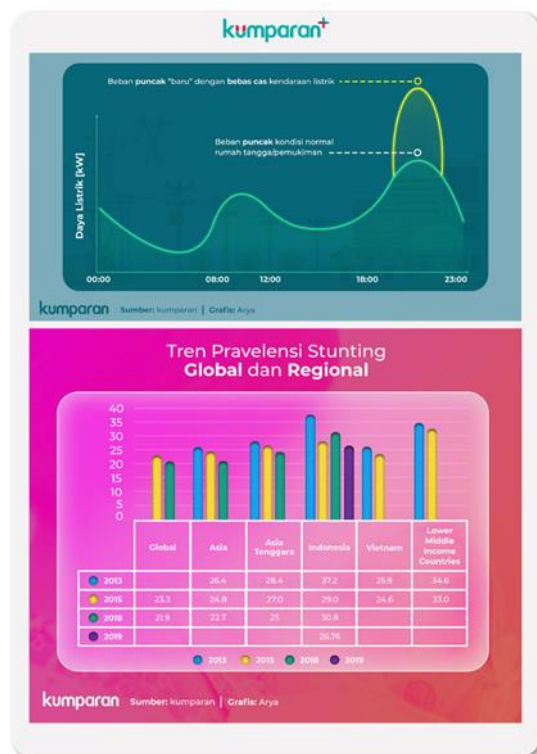


Figure 6. Infographic “Fall Up Against Stunting”.

5. Discussion

Kumparan emerged with its innovation along with premium content KumparanPLUS which can be a guide for the audience in carrying out their daily activities, which are full of uncertainty about information. The KumparanPLUS premium content project can be an indicator for Kumparan itself to be better at meeting the needs of every customer for valid information that comes from legitimate sources, namely experts. The graphic designer itself is very important for the running of the KumparanPLUS project by producing creative visual designs to increase the experience of KumparanPLUS customers in enjoying content. All kinds of visual needs are produced in the form of cover collections, cover stories, along with infographics, to become the visual work of the visual marketing team in meeting the needs of the KumparanPLUS project. Of course, in producing a visual work, it must be in accordance with the brief presentation of the Kumparan marketing team and the discussion of determining the concept and feedback with the visual manager and art director.

The writer’s creative process in making the cover includes the execution of the illustration through the layouting stage along with the placement of the right object composition using digital imaging techniques so that it can describe every event and the information brought by each creator at KumparanPLUS. Determining the font and implementing it into the design is also an important element in the creative process, especially for cover collections and infographics. The work produced by the author can also meet the criteria needed by the marketing team and has been approved by the visual manager and the art

director to be published. In addition, the significant increase in the number of followers on KumparanPLUS's Instagram, with as many as 11,000 new followers within 4 months, is another indicator of the author's success in producing visual content because it is supported by the team's digital marketing activities through the new media approach and using the VSMM method. It is proved that visual material could help marketing phases and accelerate the awareness of a new brand such as KumparanPLUS.

Based on the author's observations after being involved in the KumparanPLUS premium content project, it would be nice for KumparanPLUS to offer a promotional model in the form of free trials for audiences who are interested in KumparanPLUS content. Therefore, the audience can feel the benefits of some content first before deciding to subscribe. For example, by registering through the Kumparan website, potential customers will get free trials for a week for premium content with the condition that only one story can be accessed in one content title. For the visual aspect itself, the author can provide input that it would be more interesting if the KumparanPLUS section was made in such a way that it was different in terms of layout design and website background in order to give a new and exclusive impression from the usual daily news segment and in accordance with the VSMM concept.

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