

Research Article

Evaluation of an Art History Online Learning Model through Alih Wahana (Art Transformation) during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Support of Sustainable Learning

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Abstract.

This study was an attempt of using the Alih Wahana method to gain insight into design students’ understanding of art history through online learning and to what extent the concept of artifact transformation could bridge the gap between student outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic and onsite learning. The result shows that the Alih Wahana has helped students deliver historical content to the present generation without abolishing the former meaning. Moreover, there was a significant improvement in students’ critical abilities.

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1. Introduction

The 21st century, has brought the young generation, which is better called as Generation Z (born between 1995 and 2012)¹, to its greatest period to work more freely and widely. Clearly, Gen-Z are strongly supported by the development of technology and media to publish all ideas as outlined in the form of writing, illustrations, moving images, symphonies, or any other creative products. On the other hand, this technological developments, in some way, have kept these digital natives away from their history². Meanwhile, every tangible and visible aspects that Gen-Z discover or get inspired everyday are the modern form of historical interpretation. In addition to the enthusiasm of Generation Z in exploring their creativity, a basic question arises “do young people aware of the meaning and value behind the art form?”, and it leads to a deeper question “to what extent did young people explore history through digital platforms?”.

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Understandably, it has never been easy to attract young people to learn art history through digital platform based only. Moreover, art history is likely to be excluded from the other subjects. In contrast, learning history is not merely acknowledge the past, but it encourage the importance of critical and analytical thinking. Through art history, students will be more aware of uniqueness, morals or values that are upheld in a group, language and culture, and ideology; Basically history teaches the concept of understanding what it means to be human^{3,4}. This understanding and analytical skill will then be transformed to an artwork concept, followed by the art execution. Thus, creative practitioner with a historical knowledge will be more aware of the meaning or values behind all the chosen forms in their work. For instance, the reason why the selected materials or colors have been chosen, or any specific language or culture that illustrates the work. This analytical system thinking is relatively in line with the theory of semiotics or the study of signs, where every aspect that can be observed is a reflection of a certain meaning⁵. This semiotic concept learning have been shared and practiced during the class through museum artefacts analysis; but how about the online learning (where the historical artefacts can only be analyzed through digital platforms)?. The challenge is to find learning patterns, the communication process, and the evaluation project, in digital format, that can achieve the learning outcomes, as well as the sustainable learning framework⁶. Consequently, the gap between the student outcomes during the pandemic period and the face-to-face lecturers could be minimized.

Therefore, through this case-study research, researchers discover, analyze, and evaluate the effectiveness one of the teaching methods, Alih Wahana, to explain historical concepts to Indonesian Visual Communication Design students in particular. It is hoped that Indonesian design students will not only take history as an object, but also the stages of mindset, on how to review the past in the present era to realize the future works.

2. Methodology and Research Design

This research applied the qualitative method, particularly case study method. There were two aspects that became the major issues, class effectiveness and history understanding evaluation; this study refers to the five disciplines of sustainable learning which are purposeful pedagogy, system thinking, looped learning, democratic engagement, and digital geographies. In regards to the class effectiveness, the study was carried by taking a sample of 70 Visual Communication Design students during the Art Review

course. Firstly, the course was conducted with a lecturer session through zoom application to provide critical and analytical concepts in the application of history with a number of artefact examples during 5 to 7 initial meetings. Then, as for the assessment, students were asked to choose one historical box office movie (not a documentary movie) in the selected eras; the brief were explained during the lecturer session. The first step was to discover all signs of the movie (using the Zeitgeist analysis ⁷). This process was carried with one-by-one assistance with the faculty supervisor through Google Classroom application. All adapted language and cultural elements in the movie should be analyzed comprehensively due to the fact that it will affects the new design form which using Alih Wahana method. After the meanings were determined, the students started to explore the a new art concept through a mind mapping model. The selected idea then was transformed into a new form (not merely a movie). Students were given a full authority to choose the form, as long as it can convey the meaning or value. The last step was an open evaluation presentation (with Zoom application), where the lecturer team were able to give the feedback as well as the peer feedback. In addition, students satisfaction throughout this online learning based was also evaluated through an observation and in-depth interviews with a number of students.

Next, regarding the art history understanding, three selected students artwork were evaluated through in-depth analysis by the researchers with the semiotic method⁵. The entire research data will then be developed into a new teaching method.

3. Results

3.1. Art History Offline Learning Model

Generally, the Art Review course was started with thirty minutes seminars followed by semiotic analysis of historical artefacts in each period (i.e. Ancient Egypt, the classical Greece, roman, etc.). This analysis practice was conducted through a class open discussion and also supported by Koentjaraningrat's seven cultural elements ⁸. In order to enhance the experience, museum visit project is also managed by the lecturer. According to the observation study by researchers, this method is effectively gaining students understanding of art history, that is likely because the experience of three learning styles: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic ⁹. Students are able to see the artefacts directly, listening museum guide explanation and actively contributed on the prepared quiz, games, or merely artefact sketch activities. However, researchers found that this

method is somewhat diminish student's ability on critical thinking due to the ease of obtaining information from museum facilities..

In terms of the schedule, students showed more discipline habits during the onsite learning rather than online. The duration of lecturer assistance, deadline submission, moreover group discussions are more organized. As a result, the effectiveness of all teaching activities can be easily evaluated and the number of late submission cases are extremely low.

3.2. Gen-Z Behavior during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Started from April 2020, the Indonesian government has created a strict protocols in order to alleviate the number of Covid-19 cases, which requested work, spiritual, and learning activities are held online¹⁰, and the rules are remain running until this study was conducted. Understandably, there is a dramatically changes of human behavior due to the limited spaces. According to the former research, this Covid-19 pandemic lead to the increasing of stress level and anxieties¹¹, as well as college students who are a part of Generation-Z. It was dominated by diminished self-esteem, lack of motivation and losing significance¹². Moreover, a number of Indonesian respondent claimed to be extremely bored during the second wave of covid-19 lockdown and accessing social media such as YouTube, Instagram and Facebook in order to overcome the boredom situation¹³. Additionally, the consumption of movie streaming has increased significantly as well as social media during the pandemic. Interestingly, Gen-Z (who are 20-24 years-old) is the age group that accesses the most movie streaming¹⁴. It can be clearly seen that digital use between Gen-Z is tremendously high for entertaining although all learning processes are also running digitally (the digital use for learning between Gen-Z is merely for video-conference during the lecturer; lack of digital research activities).

Referring to student's behavior during the Covid-19 pandemic, the biggest challenge is to improve student's motivation to learn. Moreover, research shows that the numbers of Indonesian students who experience fatigue due to online learning are exceedingly high¹⁵. This circumstance has inspired the researchers to choose learning method that relevant to student's leisure habits, watching movies.

3.3. Alih Wahana as a learning method

This research is an initial attempt to introduce and apply Alih Wahana concept to visual communication design students through digital media, to what extent design students

are able to create an artwork that is inspired by the past (history); where students have become the research subject and student’s works as the research objects. This practice also a clear illustration when a culture is transformed without a comprehensive analysis; the meaning and context will be dramatically changed. A great design concept, understandably, has a good connection with the past, so that it will not miss out the main purpose of making the work.

In regards to this study, the challenge is to transform a former movie into a current form, which will be delivered to Gen-Z, without eliminating the original meaning. In order to guide the students into a comprehensive analysis, the zeitgeist analytical table has been given by the lecturers as the attached below.

TABLE 1: Zeitgeist analytical table.

Contexts	Paleolitikum	Mesolitikum	Neolitikum
Nature	The earth’s temperature changes from warm to hot, the soil becomes fertile	The temperature rises, new organisms appear	More plants
Social	Hominins, nomads, early languages	Men live steadily, women live sedentary, divided into tribes	It is no longer nomadic, there is already a village with houses
Economy	Hunting, collecting plants	Barter and division of labor	Farming and raising livestock
Technology	Materials - stones, clothes, shelter	Increased materials and tools, land management	A stone tool that is made smooth and shiny
Politics	Fighting beasts, conquering territory	Social status, boundaries/territories	There is a village leader
Spiritual	Funerals, arts + rituals	Rituals, mass funerals	Funerals
Artwork	Paintings in caves, statues of female figures	Stone tools such as knives and axes, tribal marker statues	Stone architecture – stonehenge
Zeitgeist (spirit of time)	Survive from nature (weather/wild animals)	Group life	Build and manage territory for life
	Survive		

3.4. Art History Online Learning Model

Researchers found that students expressed great interest in watching historical movie by the time the project was announced. However, the difficulties raised due to students critical and analytical thinking. Several students expressed uncertainty on finding the meaning from the selected movies. For example, scenes or objects which illustrate

politic or economic situation. Consequently, a number of students required more lecturers assistance than usual. This is likely because movies have more complex aspects to see than a single museum artefact, for instance its story, sounds, ambience, characters, costumes, and many more. Thus, this project has increased students' ability in critical thinking through digital platforms.

On the other hand, while the online learning was conducted, the percentage of miscommunication issue has significantly increased, particularly between groups of students. It was dominated by project and time management matter. The most likely reason is schedule differences. Each student set their time to watch the movie, write down the analysis and finished another college tasks differently. There was no face-to-face meeting held during the project due to Covid-19 pandemic; there was no moment of sitting all together between students to discuss the movie and disagreement, which is likely happen after the museum visit. As a result, three students were expelled from each group due to lack of participation and have to finish the project individually. Additionally, half of the project submissions were submitted very close to the deadline due to lack of time management.

4. Discussion

As the student's work have been collected, the researchers then selected three artworks in particular. The chosen artworks have matched, at least, these criteria: represents the selected era, has a comprehensive zeitgeist analysis, and designing a current art form that illustrates Gen-Z.

4.1. Student's work from *The Hunchback of Notherdame* movie (1996)

The Hunchback of Notre Dame is an Academy Award-nominated animated film, released in 1996 and produced by Walt Disney Feature Animation ¹⁶. This movie shows that gypsies have had a massive rejection due to the trusted beliefs which contrary to God, while the character Esmeralda, who is a gypsy, has great courage to break the stigma (that gypsies have the right to be treated fairly like other groups). This protest and determination have inspired the students to represent the history in a new form, a necklace. A necklace itself is a strong symbol of the gypsies. The evaluation of the form is not only assessed in terms of the body design of the pendant with purple nuances and glass mosaic that illustrates the church stained glass art (the major belief was Christian),

but also the material selection. The students designed the necklace using gold material due to the fact that medieval Paris, which is the set of the movie, was also famous for its gold mining and production. While the fire symbol depicts Esmeralda's passion and upheaval in upholding social justice for all people. Chains, emblems, and necklace ornaments are made by casting and soldering, both of which were known in the Middle Ages.

Interestingly, although the necklace form is closely related to the meaning of the film produced in 1996, the contextual necklace as a bold accessory (emphasizing the material and colors that shine, majestic) is considered relevant to women empowerment in 2021. Through Alih Wahana method, students are able to understand the history and take it into the present era.



Figure 1: Student's work using Alih Wahana method – *a bold necklace.*

4.2. Student's work from Miss Hokusai movie (2015)

Miss Hokusai tells about a well-known painting that remains famous nowadays, which is The Great Wave of Kanagawa¹⁷. Through deeper analysis, students have discovered this movie illustrates Hokusai's persistence in pursuing his profession as a painter and an expectation to be passed on to the next generation, his daughter. Ambitious and perfectionist nature was clearly seen throughout the storyline, and that is what the students would like to emphasize in the new form through the Alih Wahana method.

The selected work is a 'haute couture' dress inspired by one of Hokusai's works, the dragon painting. Haute couture itself refers to the art of designing clothes with the best quality (the concept, special materials, as well as the details of the supporting ornaments). It is significantly relevant to Hokusai's effort to his paintings. The upper part of the dress was developed from the basic concept of a kimono, while the skirt is a representation of the texture of the dragon's skin and body gesture. Students

are considered successfully understand and practicing the Alih Wahana method in delivering historical messages to modern-day audiences, not only in terms of visuals but also moral and cultural messages in the movie.



Figure 2: Student's work using Alih Wahana method - *Haute couture dress inspired by Hokusai's painting.*

4.3. Student's work from *The Current War* movie (2017)

Initially, this movie illustrates when Nikola Tesla and Thomas Alva Edison trying to find the light bulb as a means of lighting, with the theme of science and biography¹⁸. During the journey, Thomas Edison never stops to find something that can bring a huge impact to the environment. Until one time Edison succeeded in inventing the phonograph, a device for recording and producing sound mechanically. This is what inspires students to transform the form from the movie into a product, which is a headphone with the touch of the 1870-1980s era. The classic style of the headphones depicts the movie background as well as the context for the future users of the headphones (wearable

products with a classic style have an impression of prestige, elegance, and luxury in 2021).

In terms of Alih Wahana method, students successfully deliver the message of technological development that began during the industrial revolution and give the same impression in this digital era through different form (films and audio devices).



Figure 3: Student's work using Alih Wahana method – *Phono-phone*.

4.4. Sustainability and its impact

This online based learning, more or less, brings greater impact on the surrounding environment such as healthy learning system. Referring to the sustainable learning framework ⁶, this art history project based, clearly, has given students more space to overcome a problem individually, not fully driven by lecturers or other facilitators. In addition, all data, processes, analysis, and artworks are in the digital storage where easily accessed by both students and lecturers. Consequently, projects feedbacks are easily reachable to improve teaching, tools, or technologies.

On the other hand, excessive use of big devices such as desktop computer, class projector, and TV display at creative classes could be dismissed. Students and lecturers as a facilitators make the most of small devices such as smartphones and laptop, which minimize more energy power.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, both art history onsite and online learning has advantages and disadvantages in particular aspects. In regards to onsite learning, design students are able to experience the history through artefacts in the museum visit, absorb a plenty of information through museum facilities, more spaces to do group discussion and lecturer assistance, and good time management due to scheduled activities. From lecturer perspectives, lecturers are able to develop more learning activities in order to enhance student engagement such as quiz, creative games, and more, which also support student understanding on the history. However, researchers found that onsite learning activities are lack of improving student's critical thinking due to easy way of getting information. Meanwhile, through online learning, students are required to do more research and analysis individually. Students have more opportunities to look for more details from different sources such as articles, videos, movies, and other digital contents; although some students need more practice in improving this critical ability. Thus, Alih Wahana method was being used by the researchers. This study shows that Alih Wahana help design students to understand art history comprehensively, not merely acknowledging the content but to deliver the past to the nowadays generation. Students were able to discover wide perspectives of history through movie analysis (Zeitgeist) and transform into a modern art form. Nevertheless, throughout the journey, students found it difficult to deal with communication and time management issue. Researchers see this phenomenon as a result of student's behavior changes during the Covid-19 pandemic, where gen-Z losing learning motivation and significance.

Taking these pros and cons of art history learning method into consideration, researches identify a range of areas for further studies, including: 1) initial attempt to improve the integration of multichannel learning of art history for design students, 2) the evaluation of historical artefacts transformation using Alih Wahana method in one particular design form, and 3) semiotic analysis of artefact transformation which make use of high technology performance.

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