CHARACTER DESIGN TO SUPPORT SOCIALIZATION
OF THE URBAN FOREST EXISTENCE IN JAKARTA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to help the campaign of related messages and invites the public to participate in caring for the existence of the urban forest in Jakarta. Method design of this study was through the stages of observation in the form of search data by observation, literature reference, and then elaboration of mapping problem analysis, synthesis in the form of search and define the character core visual as the main idea. It was also supported by the theories related to the visual character animation, communication, semiotics, and gestalt. The result is character design with a variety of functions such mascot, campaign logo, and public service advertising. In conclusion, through this character design is expected to communicate messages easier about the existence of urban forest in Jakarta.

Keywords: character design, animation, urban forest, social campaign

INTRODUCTION

Character design is closely related to the animated film. The existed characters become the cast in the part of storytelling. Animation function as a movie, therein certainly conveys a particular message. Those messages are often brought by the characters in it. As a messenger, a character must be designed with both form and soul that are special. He would later be considered as spoke person that representing a portion or all of the contents of the message or the content of the story. In relation to social campaigns about the existence of the Jakarta urban forest, the design of these characters will help the process of delivering relevant messages. Its function later would be expanded anywhere that depends on the needs of the visual communication campaign.

In the animation, the process of designing a character starts before stepping into the animate (move) process. The animate process, which brings animated characters appear to be more real, mostly determined by the character design. The role of an animator could be analogous to a movie or a stage actor. Animator and character designer become an actor through the manual and digital scratching.

Character design development is inseparable from the development of the animation. In addition, the history of comics and development of the communications industry including advertising use it as part of the branding efforts towards a particular brand or message. The author, in this case, is more inclined to the history of animation as a reference because the industry and its development have a very strong influence. Here are some examples of the strong animated characters; Gertie the Dinosaur animation, 1914, created by Winsor McCay, is often considered as the first example of true character animation. Later, Otto Messmer has imbued Felix the Cat with a personality that is instantly recognizable during 1920. In 1930, Walt Disney made the animated character with the special focus of its animation studio. The best production was exhibited, such as the Three Little Pigs, Snow White and

the Seven Dwarfs, Pinocchio, and Dumbo. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs was the first long animated movie with a dazzling musical.

In this research, the character design should be a representative of the problem discussion in the scope of design. Before the stage of designing the characters, the reader needs to know the urban forest in Jakarta. It is necessary to further clarify the foundation of the creation of the related works. Previously, authors have conducted research that resulted in the design of public service ads to care about the existence of the urban forest. In the development, to further reinforce these messages, in this study in accordance to Visual Communication Design and Animation science, the character design direction or a sort of urban forest mascot is needed to further strengthen the process of social campaigns. Data on the forest condition is needed to support the campaign and related creative design process.

The forest is one of the very important ecosystems on earth. Indonesia, as a tropical country, is one of the countries that has the third largest forest area in the world after Brazil and the Democratic Republic of Congo. With an area of 1,860,359.67 km2 of land, 5.8 million km2 water area, and 81,000 km of coastline, Indonesia is placed on second after Brazil in terms of biodiversity (Ministry of Environment in Sumargo, 2011). In this situation, it is clear that the existence of forests in Indonesia gives a big contribution to the survival of human life on this earth.

Functions and also benefits which are wider and thorough from the urban forest according to several sources compiled by Kurniastuti (2013), which states that the urban forest basically has the function of ecological, social, psychological, economic, architectural and aesthetic. Ecologically, the urban forest can improve the climate, prevent soil erosion and conserve groundwater, reduce noise, absorb air pollutants, reduce flood, absorb CO2 and produce O2, prevent acid rain, reduce carbon emissions, neutralizing the dirty water, and become a habitat of flora and fauna. Socially and psychologically, the urban forest has functioned as a place of recreation, a place to relax, a place to learn and study, and give a positive effect on physical health, mental and society psychology. Economically, the urban forest can reduce the cost of handling pollution and cooling the room, increases the value of the surrounding land, and open up the job opportunity for the society. While architecturally and aesthetically, the existence of urban forests is enhancing the beauty of the city and making the city more liveable.

Then how is the forest condition in big cities like Jakarta? In general, the existence of the urban forest in the area of Jakarta is a must. It because of all this time Jakarta almost every year experiences flooding which claimed an average loss of more than Rp 1 trillion per year as a result of poor drainage and also the green open space is relatively low, which is about 9,3% of the area (Subarudi, 2012). Become imperative because of the existence of urban forests provide many benefits. According to Irwan in Subarudi (2012), the urban forests can lower the surrounding temperature by 3,46%, raise the humidity of 0,81%, lower noise levels around 18,94%, and reduce levels of dust around 46,13% at noon at the beginning of rainy season. Jakarta itself until now still has 14 urban forests.

Urban Forest has become an issue and an important movement in a lot of countries, especially in developed countries that have large cities in the world such as USA, UK, and Australia. However, the concept and definition of urban forest in Indonesia are different from the concept of urban forest that exists in the developed countries. The Urban Forest is the science and art of managing trees, forests and natural ecosystems in and around urban communities to maximize the physiological, sociological, economic and aesthetic benefits that trees provide to society (Helms in Urban Forest Strategy; Making a Great City Greener 2012-2032). Thus in that definition, the urban forest does not have a certain minimum area requirement to be called urban forest and does not require the legality to be called the urban forest. The definition is also more on a "movement" rather than a formal. While urban forest in Indonesia, is defined as the set of trees (which is dominated by forest trees), which

grow relatively tight, along with other plants, in a particular area in the city, which can provide a variety of benefits, both for the urban environment and for the urban community. It also should be officially and legally registered by the competent institution (the Indonesian Government Regulation No. 63 Year 2002 on Forest City, in Kurniastuti, 2013).

In the previous study, the authors focus on the design of public service ads about the urban forest that communicates the message about the importance of urban forest as part of the ecosystem in the city. It gives a perspective and trigger through ads as ecological behavior as part of audience act that deals with relations of their life and the forest. This time, to expand the campaign, the authors take another gap by creating a character design or a sort of mascot that can represent or speak the existence of the urban forests in Jakarta. The purpose has some similarities with the previous ad design, namely: (1) Creating a character design as a messenger to socialize the existence of urban forest in Jakarta; (2) Creating an identity of visual design characteristics of urban forest which is warm and friendly that gives a new perception of citizens of Jakarta, as part of efforts to Jakarta city branding that is more environmentally friendly; (3) Inform the existence of an urban forest with a variety of benefits.

There are several points of benefits that can be picked from designing these characters, namely: (1) Strengthen the image of urban forests around Jakarta; (2) Strengthening the function of the forest as a natural means of education; (3) Opportunities for sustainability of campaign program; (4) The possibility of development towards tourism and the creation of products based on IP (intellectual property) that is inspired by the character of this design; (5) Bring up merchandise opportunities for the character designs.

METHODS

To get a clear picture in the creation of this social campaign material, the authors start from brainstorming and mind mapping the problems and solutions. The authors do some observations about this study. The search of visual data related to the process of designing the characters by photographing the various elements of the tree and leaf as the inspiration for the character. After that, elaborating the analysis of mapping visual problems that associated with the visual elements that will be used. Then, finding and determining the visual form based on existing visual data selection. The design character is based on visual data of the forest elements, in this case, the shape of the leaves and trees elements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This theoretical basis is needed as the basis of the design process and for the umbrella of the realm of creative ideas to make it more structured, easily understood and can be scientifically justified, in this case, the scientific of visual communication design. Some theories or terminology is taken and summarized from the books. Mostly is the summary of a variety of sources, not a direct quote for ease of understanding.

In the animated film, it is known as the term character design or the mascot. Among mascot character designs, they have similarities and differences. In form, both are the same but have different functions. The mascot is a character that can take the form of animals, plants or something that represents human nature. It is representative or symbol of activity, organization, or institution. Sports event activity, such as PON or Olympic, often uses mascot as a spokesperson. A social campaign is often utilizing this mascot function.

In the animation film, character design serves as a fiction actor, then as a character, the mascot can also function as the imaginary actor. Generally, the character design process begins with the text of the story, which is split into the details of the depiction of a character in an animated film. In this case, the character design process does not go through the text of the story, but the visual ideas that inspired from the nature of the forest, plant material such as leaves, twigs which can be processed into certain character visualization. Figure 1 shows the mascot of sports activity, World Cup.

Figure 1 World Cup's Mascot Character Design from Time to Time
(Source: http://worldcupstandings.weebly.com/history.html)

While Figure 2 shows the character design that is made by Michael van den Bosch. This character design has various functions that, as seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Character Design by Michael van den Bosch that Have Variety of Functions
Source: https://uk.pinterest.com/pin/475692779362070349/

Before the process begins, the most important thing to look for is the data that support the design. Those data generally are in the form of a variety of visual data as a reference. Visual research and find the root of the visual problem becomes important for the design of characters to have

personal characteristic charm, unique, and easily applied in a variety of media. The day in designing it needs to consider rules that will strengthen the character display, including: (a) Standard display of characters. Display or create images with different looks; front, side, rear, three quarters/medium shot. (b) Introducing the cast of characters in a variety of viewpoints (angle), such as the appearance from the above and the bottom.

Generally, the characters take personification from human, then the appearance or the head sector becomes an important part. The head part is the factor that determines a person's body language expression that commonly called expression. This expression becomes a means of communication to the audience, consist of: Sad expression, happy expression, angry expression, smile expression, laugh expression, and fear expression. For the design process other than by drawing sketches, there are some important things to note which are; character inspiration, acting, charms, characteristic attributes, clothing and other traits. In designing, the character the designers usually have different ways.

Selection of target audience refers to the flexibility of the resulting design in the future. On the basis of this consideration, the authors decided the design result can be accepted by various layers of the audience, but leaning to the children, with the general identification such as demographics, geographic, and psychographic. In the category of demographics, male/female, age 8 – 13 years old, with a secondary target all ages or young family that have children become the consideration in designing it. While in the geographic category, authors choose Jabodetabek (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi). And lastly, in the psychographic category, the authors choose to like the animated film, go fro a stroll and a lot of free time.

After considering all the aspects of the design process that must be done, the author as a designer makes some determination. The strategy used is using the main idea as a guide. The main idea, as the basis for the design there are a few alternatives, such as friends of the urban forest, friends playing in the woods, liking the urban forest. From the main idea of the alternatives above, the phrase "Friends of the urban forest" becomes the primary choice. There are two alternative names of characters, namely: Huti and Shuta. Huti means Our Urban Forest, while Shuta means the Friends of the Urban Forest. Both characters if personified as humans are Adolescent with age range 11-13 year, Male, with nosy personality, but kind-hearted and caring for the environment.

In this case, the author decides to select visual elements that exist in the tree. It is identical to the image of forests that often imagined with a collection of plants or trees. Other elements, such as soils and rocks are not used as a visual inspiration because it is too general and has multiple interpretations. To add the attractive impression and unique character, the author combines with the elements of human facial expression. The key of expression on the face is the mouth and eyes. For the supporting visual elements, the author uses visual elements that existed before, namely from urban forest logo from the previous studies. The logo has included a lot of visual elements that describe the activity of people in the urban forest.

The following are the visualization process: (1) Searching or collecting several types of leaves with different shapes; (2) Selecting of leaves based on a simple shape; (3) Silhouettes of leaves and alternatives sketch process; (4) Sketching is transferred in the form of computer graphics; (5) A simple computer graphic is selected, combined with the name design and character placement in the supporting graphic elements.

The basic idea is leaf as an element of the face and body. Leaf shape should be clearly visible in silhouette, as shown in Figure 3. While in Figure 4, it can be seen leaves sketches become the character.
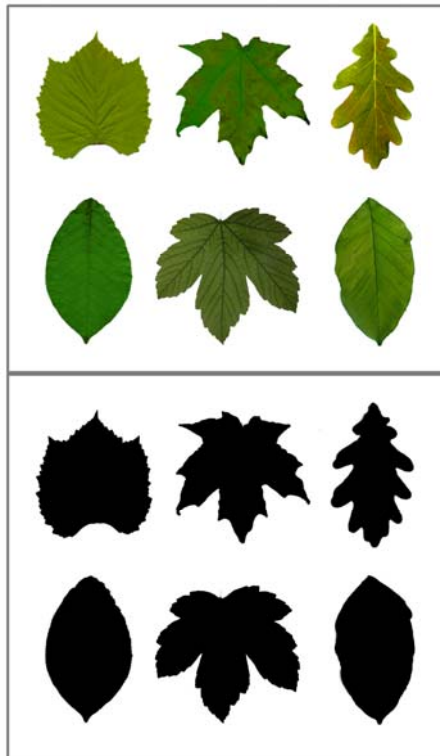
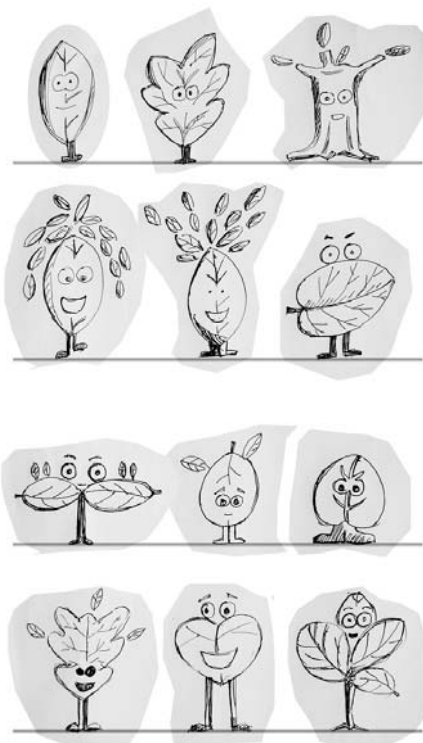Figure 3 Profile of Leaves and Leaves Silhouette as the Basis of the character

Figure 4 Character Sketches
(Sketch by Tunjung Riyadi)

At this stage, the sketch result will be tidied with computer graphics techniques. The writer uses vector style visual approach, using Adobe Illustrator software. The results of the sketch can be seen in Figures 5, 6, 7, 8.

Figure 5 Character Design Alternative
in Computer Graphic
(Design by Tunjung Riyadi)

Figure 6 Selected Character Design Shuta Version
(Design by Tunjung Riyadi)

Figure 7 Character Design Shuta Version with Supporting Visual with Color Variation
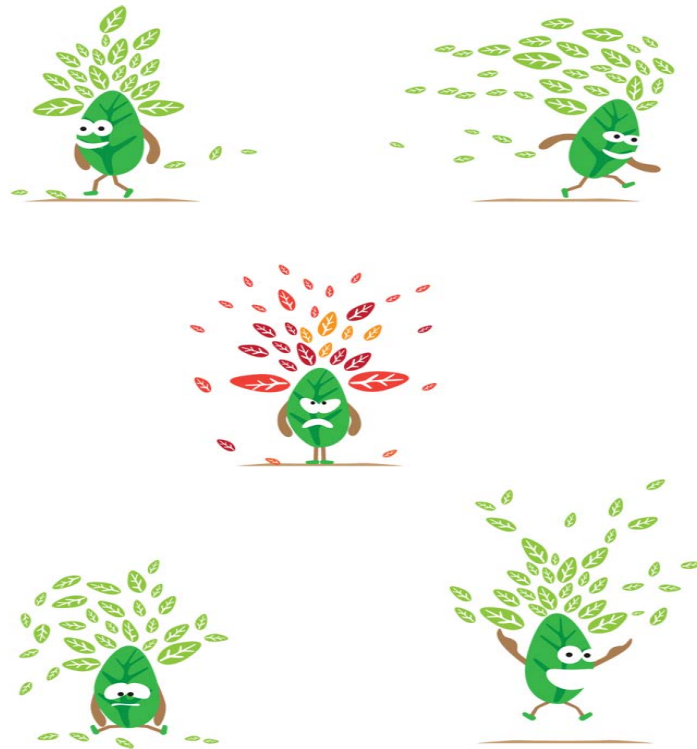(Design by Tunjung Riyadi)

Figure 8 Expression and Character Gestures
(Design by Tunjung Riyadi)

CONCLUSIONS

Character design has extensive functionality. When placed in the realm of the campaign, the character functions as a carrier and a messenger. In this research character design, "Shuta" provides the scope of work that the character design itself can visually predict the requirement of the social campaign, especially in visual communication need. The result and the impact of how successful the character design "Shuta" are different scope in another field of research or continuation from this research. Therefore, after the character is completed, then the role should be identified clearly. If as a mascot, then the character plays a major role as a means of communication. On the other hand, the characters can be grown as product design, which has economic value. In this designing, authors begin with a simple way, which is taking elements of the leaves as the main idea of the character. Data about the urban forest is as foundation reinforcement for message inspiration if the function character will be grown to all lines. As the basis for visualization, data are needed about the urban forest in Jakarta, and the implementation of the theory relates to creation, in this case, the theory of gestalt, the creation of visual identity and communication theory.

The strategy used is to determine the main idea of the character as a "friend of the urban forest", which could be the tagline, campaign title or product development idea. Interesting things discovered is the importance of ease of character application to the variety of possible development. In addition, the simplicity of the form and the certain characteristic is the important form to facilitate the audience to remember the characters.

Character design has many opportunities to be developed. Based on the initial idea about urban forest campaign, later the development of it into the character designs becomes quite easy in its

development. Character design as a messenger indeed needs other designs to make the position clear. This is where the power of the designer to branding the characters became a strong urban forest icon. Once that is achieved, it will be easy to develop related characters into other designs products. The idea of the urban forest care could still be voiced by utilizing the character into other design products for example comic character, animation series, and merchandise products if entering the realm of tourism. With this product, the indirect campaign about the urban forest feels more easily acceptable because of the closeness of audience with characters that are already well-branding.

As a designer, it takes sensitivity to the surrounding condition. The issue of the existence of urban forest can be an inspiration to create certain social messages. On the other hand, the delivery of the message itself can be done in various ways. Designing the characters becomes a tool to create "spokesperson" of social issues. Even with a blend of scientific illustrations and animations, the characters can be a product of IP (intellectual property) that would be economically viable when it develops and famous. These are things that the researchers would suggest for themselves and readers for the sensitive and continues to find inspiration in the design, especially in the case of social issues.

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