

The Power of Merchandise in Building the Image of Universitas Negeri Padang

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to describe the role of merchandise in building and developing the impression of an institution, including in developing the reputation of a university. In specific, this article analyzes the strength of merchandise in introducing Padang State University at the national and international levels. As a state institution located in Padang, Padang State University is a higher education institution developing towards the State University with Legal Entity (PTNBH). To get to the status of a legal entity, it needs sustainable development, particularly in implementing the Tri Dharma of University, including introducing Padang State University to the country and abroad. The procurement of merchandise is seen as one system that can build the image of Padang State University to the prospective students and community members. The approach used in this article is the merchandise as a reference in developing the concept of souvenirs that have meaning for those who receive them. Besides, the concept of branding is required as well to provide a deeper understanding of the target audience in appreciating Padang State University as a university. This merchandise system is also conceptualized with an aesthetic approach related to the existence of Padang State University in elevating education in Indonesia. The merchandise designing method used is the Research and Development method that can break down the design procedure in a comprehensive manner, obtaining merchandise that can meet the requirements in promoting Padang State University to the target audience. The output of this design is the prototype of a tote bag, sling bag, t-shirt, keychain, leather pin, and sticker. This article is presented in the International Conference on Language and Arts (2019).

Keywords: Merchandise, Branding and Aesthetic, visual communication, fine art product.

1. INTRODUCTION

To date, Padang State University (UNP) is reforming its management system to improve the quality and clustering of the state university with legal entities (PTNBH). The change to the management system requires UNP to fulfill requirements following the regulation of the PTNBH. The human resources (HR) in a university of legal entities must have a world-class quality, which is the ability to produce research and innovation that can compete at the international level (Mohamad Nasir, 2019). The real effort that must be done by UNP is to improve the quality of human resources and the development of management systems. One of the management concepts in the development sector is to conduct socialization related to the existence of UNP for the users, namely parents and prospective students. The socialization of UNP as a quality university with 'A' accreditation can be done using the merchandise system. A souvenir that is designed that symbolizes the existence of the UNP can be used as a form of socialization or promotion to the target audience, namely the community of UNP users in Indonesia, and abroad.

The idea of a merchandising system as a medium of visual communication or promotion cannot stand alone. Merchandise as a system is related to the target audience and the image or brand of the institution to be promoted. If UNP is the owner of the merchandise, then the target audiences are prospective students and their parents, prospective lecturers and prospective educational staff. Whereas, the brand or image to be promoted is the quality that has been owned by UNP as a university.

Merchandise is an object that is used as a gift from someone to someone else. Aside from being a gift, the existence of merchandise is an effective promotional media in introducing certain brands to the audience (Putra, B. W. H., Hajati, N., & Slamet, A. R., 2017). Merchandise can also be seen as a supporting tool in introducing products to the public (Gaul, M. Y. L., & Waloejo, H. D., 2018). It is an object deliberately designed to introduce and give an understanding of a brand or an institution to the target audience. The presence of merchandise can make an impression on the audience's experience of the institution that issued the merchandise. In the context of this research, the merchandising agency is Padang State University (UNP) located in West Sumatera province.

UNP as a state university is generally known by the people in Indonesia, especially the people of West Sumatra.

UNP in the concept of branding can be seen as a brand that represents a place or better known as a university named Padang State University. A brand can also be seen as an image that is owned by the institution represented by a brand. Related to the existence of the image behind a brand, the concept of an image can be seen as an emotional perception inherent in the brand (Semuel, H., & Wibisono, J., 2019). Brand experience is a sense in the form of sensations that are owned by consumers towards the brand (Semuel, H., & Putra, R. S., 2018). In the concept of economic brand awareness can be interpreted as a form of consumer's tenderness for a product brand (Dwiyanti, E., Qomariah, N., & Tyas, W. M., 2018). The existence of a brand or image of an institution or producer for consumers or users is strongly dependent on how well a brand remains in consumers' memories. Padang State University as a brand has an image that is pertinent to the vision, mission, and systems used by the university. The vision, mission, and system of a university can often only be seen as a written document. Communities majorly see a university from the physical appearance and student activities within the university. The physical elements of a university are seen from the large university area, the complement of facilities, numbers of buildings and classrooms at the university. Students' activity can be seen through the attitude and perseverance of students inside and outside the campus. The attitude of students at the university can be on the seriousness of students in attending lectures, whilst the attitude of students outside the university is reflected in the attitude of students when dealing with various elements of society.

The image of a university can also be observed through graduates, especially concerning the employability of alumni in the community as professionals in their educational background. Padang State University has two types of study programs namely educational study programs and non-educational study programs. The educational study program aims to produce alumni as educators in elementary (elementary), secondary, and senior high schools. The non-educational study programs aim at producing graduates into professionals under their educational background. The employability of UNP alumni in various jobs, both as teachers and as professionals can be a symbol that represents the image of UNP in public. The employability of alumni in various jobs will be a good impression that is inherent in people's memories and becomes a good impression in the memory of the community members.

2. METHOD

The method used in the design of Padang State University merchandise is the Research and Development (R&D) method. This method is considered to be able to break down the design procedure thoroughly. The R&D method clearly outlines the importance of merchandise for UNP. The data that is required to be analyzed as a

consideration in the design found the initial form of merchandise design. Furthermore, R&D also provides an opportunity to evaluate the design with a validation process with an expert in the design field. The design process can be controlled objectively until the design of merchandise passes the final stages becoming a prototype and is ready to be reproduced.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The Importance of Merchandising

The presence of university merchandise is a must. Merchandise is beneficial for students, graduates, prospective students, and the wider society. Merchandise has a significant role as a product to remember that the university exists, has produced alumni that are essential for people in various fields of expertise. The mind mapping method of thinking in design is used to find the connection between the UNP and its history, alumni, management systems, and community views of UNP.

2. Padang State University

- Padang State University (UNP) is one of the state universities located in Padang, West Sumatera. To date, Padang State University has 9 faculties consists of 15 diploma programs, 79 undergraduate and postgraduate programs. Padang State University was founded in 1954 as Teacher's Education College.

- Padang State University offers different diplomas, undergraduate post-graduate programs (1999-present). The study programs offered in the undergraduate program are: 1) Indonesian Language and Literature, 2) English Language and Literature, 3) Mathematics, 4) Biology, 5) Physics, and 6) Chemistry. The diploma programs offer 1) Electrical Engineering, 2) Civil Engineering, 3) Machine Engineering, 4) Automotive, 5) Culinary Art, and 6). Therefore, Padang State University does not only prepare the students to be educators but also to be academic personnel and professionals in the non-educational field.

- The efforts to elevate Padang State University to the level of international higher education are carried out seriously. The university is supported by all resources and taking into account future challenges and opportunities. Holistically, the program to reach the international level university must be seen as part of the national strategy to be able to compete globally. Padang State University has great potential to be the best in carrying out Tridharma University. This goal can be achieved through continuous improvements and by establishing the principles of Good University Governance by prioritizing aspects of transparency, accountability, responsibility, independence, and justice. Good University Governance is a principle pursued by all stakeholders to realize good governance for a university. (Speech by UNP Rector, Prof. Ganefri, Ph.D.).

- The motto of Padang State University is "Alam Takambang Jadi Guru". It refers to the philosophy of life of Minangkabau people. The Minangkabau people adhere to the philosophy that life can be learned through nature and the environment is something that can be used

for learning. Therefore, nature is a teacher to be pursued as a goal in a living meeting.

- The Al-Azhar Mosque of Padang State University is treated as a center of education for Padang State University academics in carrying out worship and as a source of learning

- The Research Center building is the center of the university's system management and is the rector's office.

3. Visual Concept

The design process is done by transforming the verbal concepts into visual concepts. This process is done using the mind mapping thinking method. The concept of mind mapping thinking process was chosen to make it easier for designers to find visual forms. In the context learning approach, mind mapping is used to simplify teaching materials (Baharuddin, B., 2017). Mind mapping is a creative development technique in finding and managing information through the brain (Marlinda, T., Thahar, H. E., & Basri, I., 2018). Mind mapping acts as a diagram to map ideas (Evayanti, A. D., & Sumantri, M., 2017). Mind mapping is very effective for collecting data related to the existence of Padang State University as an object of study in finding design ideas. Mind mapping helps designers in problem mapping and finding verbal concepts from verbal problems as material for analysis in design.

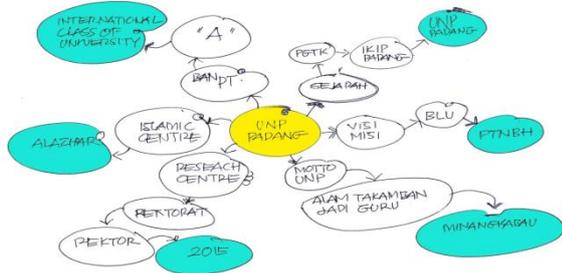


Figure 1. The Mind Mapping of Verbal and Visual Concept of Padang State University

4. Design of Padang State University Merchandise

The gate of Padang State University is the main entrance to the University. The main gate of Padang State University is made to resemble the logo of the university. On the main pillar, there is the inscription "Alam Takambang Jadi Guru". The inscription was taken from the Minangkabau people's philosophy of life, that nature is the best teacher to be used as learning. The caption "Alam Takambang Jadi Guru" was adopted as the motto of Padang State University. The gate is a symbol that can be interpreted as a place of entry and exit. Thus, the gate of Padang State University can be interpreted as an entrance of new students and the exit of the graduates. The new students enter the university to study, achieve knowledge and be creative and they will finally leave the university as a scholar.

The existence of a gate at a university can be seen as a monumental-valued statue. In other words, people enter the gate as the prospective students and at the same gate, they will leave. The gate of the university is a symbol of one's success in achieving knowledge and obtaining university degree certification as a bachelor, master or doctor.



Figure 2. The merchandise icon adapted from the gate of Padang State University

The auditorium building of Padang State University is made as an icon in the design of the merchandise. The auditorium was built in 2015 and was first used for the graduation ceremony of Padang State University in 2018. The selection of the auditorium building as one of the Padang State University icons in the design of merchandise is based on the existence of the auditorium as the place for the students' graduation ceremony. Graduation ceremony can be seen as an inauguration for students to officially obtain a degree in academic level i.e. bachelor's degree, master's degree, or doctoral degree. The auditorium as a place to hold an inaugural ceremony can be seen as a monument that reminds everyone of the graduation event of all levels of degree. Therefore, the auditorium building of Padang State University can be used as an icon that is used as a hallmark of the university merchandise.

The design process is actualized in stages: initial sketch, vector drawing, validation, and final design. Initial sketches are made based on physical data collected. Sketches are made by bringing out characters or verbal impressions. Afterward, it is visualized in the form of sketches into forms that can be captured by the eye. Impressions of the forms that are created from the accumulation of verbal concepts are finished in the form of vector images using computer applications. After that, the validation is done related to the existing vector image. Validation is done by brainstorming and presentation. Brainstorming is realized by inviting several graphic designers. Brainstorming produces input to perfect existing vector drawing designs. Furthermore, the vector image is revised following the input obtained during brainstorming.



Figure 3. The merchandise icon adapted from the design of Padang State University Auditorium Building



Figure 4. Merchandise of Padang State University in the form of sling bag and t-Shirt

4. CONCLUSION

Merchandise as a souvenir has a dual purpose, as a gift and as an object of promotion. As a gift from one person to another, merchandise aims of making a memory between the gift and recipient. Besides, merchandise as an object also means promotion, because in that object there is a particular brand. Merchandise will be remembered as a gift and as a reminder that there is a brand entrusted to the object.

Merchandise in the form of tote bags and t-shirt using the brand of Padang State University can be seen as memorabilia and promotional items. The real strength of merchandise is not in people receiving the gifts, but when the merchandise is used by the recipient and other people see it. Therefore, that is when the merchandise works optimally as a promotion. People who see the brand embedded in the merchandise will remember the existence of the brand. When someone uses merchandise with the Padang State University brand, people automatically get to know the university. It does not only work on one person but on everyone who sees the merchandise. Merchandise that is used by someone will spread widely to many people. However, that is when the promotion of Padang State University works for everyone.

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