VISUAL COMMUNICATION MEDIA PLANNING AS AN EDUCATIONAL MEDIUM FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)

Evelyn Firdaus¹, Anny Valentina², & Yugih Setyanto³

¹Undergraduate of Visual Communication Design, Universitas Tarumanagara, Jakarta *Email: evelyn.625200018@stu.untar.ac.id*²Faculty of Art and Design, Universitas Tarumanagara, Jakarta *Email: annyv@fsrd.untar.ac.id*³Faculty of Communication Science, Universitas Tarumanagara, Jakarta *Email: yugihs@fikom.untar.ac.id*

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ABSTRACT

The last five years in Indonesia, the number of autistic children has increased rapidly, estimated to reach 2.4 million in 2021. Genetic and environmental factors are suspected to be the main contributor. While the numbers of autism kept increasing, the parents of the autistic childrens are unable to handle their child, some of them are unable to accept the child's condition, and others are just unprepared and uneducated with their child's condition. They are unaware of the possibilities that their child would be autistic, so when it happened, they cannot accept their child's condition. However, there is very little education out there that disseminates this education as a form of early prevention for the prospectives parents. This campaign was created with a purpose, that many prospective parents out there between the age of 21-32 years become more aware of the problem currently circulating, so that they could lower the risk of autism for their future child and if their child is born with autism, they are prepared mentally and knowledgeably ready. Qualitative methods are used in this research. Observations, literature study, surveys, and interviews were used in data collection. Miles and Huberman model data analysis were also used for data processing. Data reduction, data that have been gathered is being simplified and classified based on needs. As the result, social campaign named "My World" is created to give them a better understanding about world from the autistic perspective. To spread awareness of this campaign, a wide reach media that can be sustainable is needed, such as Out Of Home (OOH) advertising, and Instagram as the sustainable media. As Instagram users have similar age range and characteristic with our target audiences. With 5A (Aware, Appeal, Ask, Action, Advocate) communication

Keywords: autism, educational, media, parenting, planning, visual communication

1. PREFACE

A neurodevelopmental illness known as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is characterized by difficulties communicating with others, narrow interest and repetitive action (Hodges et al., 2019; Yu et al., 2023; Mughal et al., 2024). This disorder interferes with a person's ability to communicate and interact socially, it could be detected before 3 years old. In Indonesia itself, until now there are no specific survey institution regarding the exact number of autistic children in Indonesia. However, based on reports from professionals working in the field, there has been an increase in number of autistic people in the last five years. In 2021, the number of autistic children is estimated to reach around 2.4 million (Hafil, 2021; Tempo.co, 2023). Even though the exact cause for ASD still remains unclear, the research on the causes of ASD itself has resulted in the two main contributing factors: Genetics and environment. However, from the two factors, genetics played a big role, as it is shown in many ASD researches, such as, the twins, relatives, and rare syndromes (Wei-ju, et al., 2021). As for the environmental factor, consuming certain drugs during pregnancy can trigger autism for the child. However, not only drugs, but continuous exposure to chemicals, such as Bisphenol A or BPA content during the prenatal or pregnancy stage can increase the risk of ASD for the child (Hansen et al., 2021).

Based on the results of the pre-research initiative interviews with experts, the current problem circulates around parental rejection and their readiness to handle the situation. There will be several stages that the parents of an autistic child will face until they finally accept the condition, such as,

denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance (Rachmayanti & Zulkaida, 2007). For an autistic child, parental acceptance for their autistic children plays a huge role in the child's therapy progress. According to the experts, Parent's acceptance can play a big role for their children progress and mental state. An autistic child with supportive parents or family member will produce better results, because being accepted and supported would effect their mental state, such as their own self-acceptance, confidence, and their willing.

There were similar education activities that have been carried out before:

Figure 1
Social Campaign "Aku Pasti Bisa"



From the observation conducted by the author, founded that the campaign titled "AKU PASTI BISA" (Figure 1) initiated by Fernandus et al. (2020). The goals of this social campaign is to raise public awareness of the current social phenomena. Social Change Campaign adopted for this campaign, to be more precise, is about designing a visual to attract the audience to raise awareness for the creativity and skills of special needs children. This campaign is also used as a place for special needs children to make art works as functional media with a selling value (Fernandus et al., 2020). This social campaign is to educate and spread positive awareness to the audiences that autistic kids are also as capable as normal kids, so people and parents of an autistic child could accept their child condition. However, the campaigns that have been created up until now, have not been able to solve the problem that is currently circulating in the society. Most of the campaign that have been made are to overcome the situations that has already occurred, rather than finding methods to prevent it or educating the parents beforehand of how they should prepare if their kids have autism.

From the campaign in figure 1, it did not involve media planning or a series that would be held for the education. Because there is still a gap in this problem, the author invented a campaign to solve the problem that is currently circulating, a social campaign with the duration of 3 months. In this social campaign, Experiential Learning is included. So, not only are listening or reading from social media are about this education but, audience can get new experiences. Experiential Learning or EL is focused on learning through experience and evaluating their previous experiences. This method allows the learners to learn while "Do, Reflect, Think and Apply" (YangTao, 2021). In this matter, Experiential Space Design or Experiential Design was also used. Experiential Design is an approach based on human-centric to give positive experience and enhancing users' well-being, it values human experience on top of other values (Wilson, 2024). Through this social campaign, not only do we provide the audience with education, but also directly involving them to take action in experiencing the world from autism perspective, to get to know ASD better and understand their world and the way they react to things.

Through this campaign, it is anticipated that more and more prospective young parents will understand and comprehend the causes of ASD in children, so that they can reduce the risk by

taking precautions from an early age. And hoping that they could understand better by experiencing the world of autism which is completely different than others, so that they can appreciate autistic children more and if one day they have a child with autism, as a parents, they are ready to accept them and will be able to handle it both knowledgeably and mentally to face their autistic child.

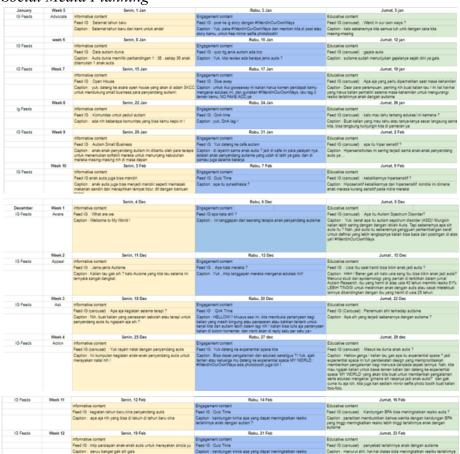
Media

Beside Experiential Space Design, this campaign will be using social media; Instagram. Based on the data taken from surveys and literature study, Instagram is popular among our target audiences, ranging from 21-32 years. According to the data from *We Are Social and Hootsuite*, Instagram is in the third position of social media with the most active user (Naurah, 2023). In Indonesia itself, by April 2023, Instagram users had reached to around 106 million people (Annur, 2023). Instagram is a social networks that can help its user share photos or videos with those closest to them or other users (Sendari, 2019). Out Of Home (OOH) advertising was also used to spread awareness about this campaign to the audience. OOH is a type of advertising that targets People who are outside their home. OOH can be found in many forms such as, billboards, public transport, public facilities, and many others. OOH is known to be great to reach targets in a bigger scale and to deliver message effectively (Aliya, 2021; Lister, 2022).

Visual Communication Planning

This campaign will be going on for 3 months in Instagram with 3 post a week (Figure 2). with each stages of 5A (Aware, Appeal, Ask, Action, Advocate) per week.

Figure 2
Social Media Planning



2. RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative methods are used in this research. Observations, literature study, surveys, and interviews were used in data collection. Observations were made on a family who had difficulty dealing with their autistic child, because they did not expect that their child would be an autistic. Literature studies were obtained using journals and articles related to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) related, as well as research reports from experts. The surveys were applied to the form of conducted using Google Forms. Lastly, interviews were conducted with a therapist for autistic child and a teacher from a private school who has experience working with autistic children and communicating with their parents. Miles and Huberman model data analysis were also used for data processing. Data reduction, data that have been gathered is being simplified and classified based on need. After that, the data being presented by graphs, chart, and etc, are to make it easier for other parties to understand.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Autism Spectrum Disorder is divided into 5 types, Asperger's Syndrome, Rett Syndrome, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder (CDD), Kanner's Syndrome, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS) (Hoffman, 2023). Scientists found that there is a link between the mutations of PTCHD1 and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other intellectual disabilities (Jaekyoon et al., 2023). According to Ted Abel, a PhD director of the Neuroscience Institute at Iowa, the risk ratio for autism in boys is greater, 4:1 which means, for every 1 girl affected by autism, there are 4 boys affected by autism (Kay, 2017). According to studies, there are several other factors that could causes ASD, such as:

(a) Maternal and Paternal Age

According to the research, paternal age over 40 years at the time of pregnancy can increased the risk for ASDs in their offspring by 1.4 times. As for the maternal age over 35 years can increase the risk of ASDs by 1.4 times in their offspring. They suggest the children with fathers over 40 years by the time of pregnancy to undergo a screening for ASDs at an early age (Budi et al., 2015). Study also found, that there is an association between advancing maternal age and the risk of autism (Sadin et al., 2012; Sari et al., 2022).

(b) Nutritional Consumption During Pregnancy

During pregnancy, maternal diet is extremely important for a child's neurodevelopment. Intake of multivitamins or vitamins is important. Folic acid is one of the nutrients needed by pregnant women. According to the studies examining maternal diet and the relation between ASD, they found that and adequate intake of folic acid and vitamin D were associated with lower potential of having a child with ASD (Caichen et al., 2020; Meiyun et al., 2017).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

According to the participant audiences of the survey, with the age between 23-32 (Figure 3). Most of the audiences said that they know what Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) was, but some of them are hesitant or said they do not know (Figure 4). But, from those who said they knew, some of them could not define precisely what Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) specifically is (Figure 5). According to the audience, they think this education is important to understand before building their own family, so that they will be able to prevent or reduce the risk of this happening to their children in the future, or if their child is born with autism, furthermore they as parents will be ready both mentally and knowledgeably on handling their emotion and handling their autistic child (Figure 6).

Figure 3

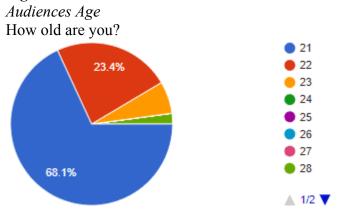


Figure 4

Audience's Awareness of Autism

Do you know what Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is?

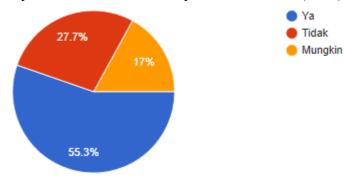


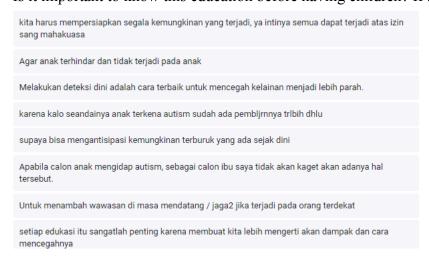
Figure 5

Audience's Knowledge about Autism

What do you know about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

gangguan yang mempengaruhi sistem saraf
gangguan saraf yang mengakibatkan tingkah kelakuan seseorang dikatakan berbeda dengan yang lain
Adanya gangguan mental atau fisik permanen pada seorang individu yang menyebabkan perkembangan mereka terhambat.
Gangguan perkembangan pada seseorang
bahwa itu adalah kelainan pd otak
Gangguan pada saraf
perkembangan yang terganggu
gangguan pada perkembangan saraf

Figure 6Audience's Reasons
Is it important to know this education before having children? If so, why?



To spread awareness of this campaign, a wide reach media that can be sustainable is needed. This campaign will be going for 3 months. Instagram ads and OOH ads will be used, to spread the awareness of this social campaign in a bigger scale and range. Instagram feeds will be going on for the whole 3 months, with each stage of 5A (Aware, Appeal, Ask, Action, Advocate) per week.

Figure 7

Time spend on smartphone a day

How much time a day do you spend playing on your cellphone?

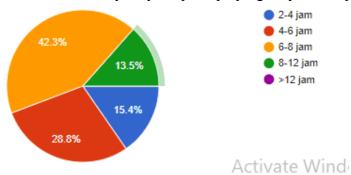


Figure 8

Social media often used

What social media do you use most often?

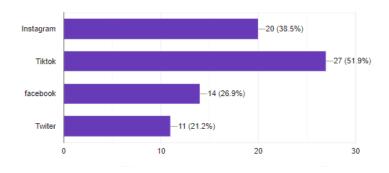
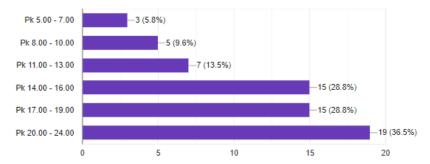


Figure 9

Times They are Online

What time of day are you usually most active on your cellphone/social media?



The target audiences participate in the surveys are between 21-32 years old. From the media habit surveys results, audiences mainly spend around 4-6 hours a day to play with their cellphones (Figure 7). The audiences are mostly online on their social media around 8PM-12AM, 2PM-4PM, and 5PM-7PM (Figure 9). Lastly, based on the result of the survey, social media are most likely to be access are Tiktok and Instagram (Figure 8). However, after some literature research that have been done, Tiktok and Instagram user have different characteristic. 70% of Instagram user are between the age of 25-34 years, notably women mainly dominating the platform. And TikTok users mainly between the age of 10-29 years also, are mostly women. However, TikTok users enjoy something more entertaining rather than serious content. Thus, it is determined that this campaign was more suitable to aim for Instagram users than TikTok users.

Figure 10
Media Journey



5A adaption process is used for the communication strategy (Figure 10), which includes Aware, Appeal, Act, and Advocate. The awareness stages used Instagram ads and Out Of Home (OOH) media to make the audiences interested and curious about this campaign. This media will guide the audience to the next stage, Appeal, where the audience scans the QR on the OOH and will guide to the Instagram profile of this campaign, on the Instagram profile there will be a link provided in the bio which will lead the audience to an introduction video. In the Ask stage, the audience can leave questions on the Instagram feeds specifically for question and answer (QnA) session or directly Direct Messaging (DM) the Instagram profile. In the next stage; Action, the audience will be directed to visit the experiential space and the mirror selfie photo booth that is being held. In the final stage, Advocate, the audience can use the hashtag from this campaign #BedaDenganCaraKita to share it on their social media.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research that has been done, the media planning that suitable for this education is a wide reach media to spread the awareness of this campaign and a sustainable media to maintain this education going on for a specific period of time, for instance, Out Of Home (OOH) advertisement for a wide-reach media and Instagram as a more sustainable media, since Instagram users are similar to this campaign target audience. OOH advertisement and Instagram ads will be used to reach out audiences. To maintain the education and keep in touch with the audiences, Instagram will be used. This campaign will be going on for approximately 3 months, in each month we use 5A (Aware, Appeal, Ask, Action, Advocate) communication strategy to interact with our audiences. At last, the peak of the campaign will used another OOH, such as exhibition or experiential space design to engage with audiences while giving educational experiences. However, the effectiveness of this plan may need further research or simulation.

Visual Communication Recommendation

Figure 11
Visual Recommendation and Campaign Logo





"My World" (Figure 11) was created based on the data obtained from the audiences. The audiences will often get the wrong idea or information about autistic children because they do not have the understanding surrounding this topic. Therefore, those 'normal' people used to avoid autistic people because they are scared and afraid of them, but avoiding does not solve anything, because there is a probability that their future child could be autistic. So, this campaign was made for the audiences to get a better understanding of what Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) really is, to help them be prepared for the future. This campaign is named "My World", which means to invite the audiences to get to know and enter the world of autism and get a better understanding by experiencing the world of autism perspective, so that they no longer receive wrong information or stereotype about them. Meanwhile, the hashtag of this campaign is #BerbedaDenganCaraKita which means that everyone is different in their own way and with these differences, each person becomes unique with their own characteristics.

In this stage, Instagram Ads and Out Of Home (OOH) advertisements (Figure 12) will be used to attract the audiences. Through the ads, audiences will be led to this campaign's Instagram profile, with the link in the bio.

Figure 12

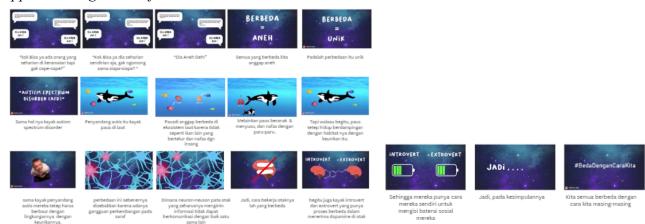
Awareness: OOH & IG Ads





In this stage, after scanning the QR code provided in the OOH Ads and the link attached in the IG Ads, they will be led to visit this campaign's IG profile (Figure 13). The link in the bio will lead to an introduction video about this campaign and autism (Figure 13).

Figure 13
Appeal: Instagram Profile and Introduction Video





In this stage, we will provide for those curious audiences that is willing to know and understand more about out campaign, they could contact us through DMs or commented in our QnA section in our feeds (Figure 14).

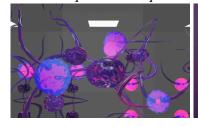
Figure 14
Ask: Instagram Feeds QnA





In this stage, after getting to know about this campaign and education more, they will be led to visit our experiential space or exhibition that is being held. In the experiential space (Figure 15), we will provide education and experience learning for the audiences, they could enter and experience what an autistic people see and listen and enter their world. After the ask stage, audiences will be directed to the next stage, Action, to come to the experiential space that is being held for a specific period.

Figure 15
Action: Experiential Space







Advocate: #BedaDenganCaraKita

For the last stage, Advocate, audiences could share their fun activities and experiences in our exhibition. This Action leads to Advocate, they need to post in their Instagram feeds or story, using our hashtag #BedaDenganCaraKita.

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