Persona in a form of mood boards as a part of the design process

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Abstract. The research aimed to design a mood board by using persona as a tool to understand consumers. Persona helps clients and designers better understand the target consumers of the organization and map consumers' desires and needs. The research was a case study of Loewee Cipta Busana, one of Indonesia's garment companies that planned to design a visual identity. However, to complete the final process of designing a visual identity, a visual guideline in the form of a mood board was required. The research aimed to illustrate the whole design process and to what extent a mood board could be a useful tool to communicate with clients; to minimize the waste of guessing what the client wants. The research's result is a mood board which can help designers generate and develop ideas, keywords, and visual assets more quickly due to consumers' understanding. Mood board helps designers to communicate with clients regarding the design concept. Mood board can also help clients have a clearer direction about what they can do to expand their network and communicate their offerings to the broader market.

Keywords: mood boards, Loewee Cipta Busana, design process

1. Introduction

In accordance with the client's wants, designers are often required to make a decision that is contrary to a former design plan. As a result, designers spend more times to guess what clients want. On the other hand, the client may think that the designers are not capable of creating a design according to their business needs. Like two sides of a coin, the designers feel they have given their best design that fits the client's needs, but the client feel like the designers are not capable enough to meet their expectations. This surely can cause miscommunication, insecure feelings, and distrust between both the designers and the client. Furthermore, the clients may feel that they can do better than the designers and act as if the clients are art director. Consequently, the design will be judged subjectively due to the fact that there are no agreements reached between the designer and the client.

To anticipate these things, the designer will usually add one more phase in the design process, a mood board. Mood board is a part of the design process [1] in the form of document consisting of collage, pictures, texts, texture, patterns, and objects to illustrate the design guideline before going into the final process [2]. Mood board is not the final result of design, but visual planning to give an illustration of how the final result will look like. A good mood board should provide the context of visual selection related to the consumer's needs (problem) and the solution offered. The basic principle is to plan a design system focusing on consumer needs, then executing the concept in a visual form as a
guideline [3]. A company with proper visual planning will communicate their value better with their audiences.

Mood board also shows the aesthetic and emotional aspects of the visual. Some pictures does not depict a particular meaning; some does [4]. In addition, mood board illustrates certain implicit values of a brand or service [5]. It displays various visual alternatives, aesthetic, and spontaneous feelings of the selected pictures and other visual elements. This is because when humans see a visual, they see it literally, textually, or intertextually - examining visual elements such as colour and their associations, stories or texts, how the images support written narratives or expressing visual narratives or how a visual refers to images, styles, tradition, or other event [6].

In order to design a mood board, consumer is required to identify the problem, which is called persona. Persona is defined as a hypothesis of consumer needs in the design process [7]. Persona depicts a specific consumer demographic, psychographic, and consumer behavior [8]. This process helps designers to see how consumers interact with a product or service. Moreover, designers can understand how consumers accomplish their needs [9]. Consequently, the final solution (design and company management) can be decided by using a persona [10].

Through persona, both designers and clients are expected to have the same perspective about the design direction. As a result, several creative ideas and relevant design solutions can be made. Creative ideas will be discovered when both clients and designers have a similar understanding of what consumers need. In this case, the design is no longer subjective; design plays a role as a problem solver of consumer’s needs.

The research is a case study of a garment company, namely Loewee Cipta Busana (LCB). It is a company that has been established for four years and begins to expand its network and communicate its offering to a broader market through a new visual identity. In order to design a new visual identity, a mood board representing LCB as a distinct garment company is required. It is also aimed to portray LCB's consumer behavior and strong values that represent LCB.

1.1 Aims and objectives
This research aims to:
1. Understand the importance of using persona for designers as a useful tool to communicate with clients;
2. Understand the importance of using persona for designers as a useful tool to illustrate visual directions to clients;
3. Understand the process of designing an effective mood board through a case study of Loewee Cipta Busana, a garment company, to communicate their value and offer to a broader market.

1.2 The benefits of the research
Researchers hope that the research implications show the significance of using a persona in the form of a mood board. Consequently, designers can present more clear visual directions and having better communication with clients throughout the project. In addition, designers are expected to come up with various consumer-based designs that bring positive contribution to Indonesia creative industry, moreover global.

2. Design methods
In terms of methods, researchers have adapted John Bower's branching approach problem-solving method in a way to develop LCB's mood boards. It consists of learning, identifying, generating, implementing [6] and refining with the following steps.

1) Some problems are discovered in the learning stage by using a persona, 2) During the identifying stage, designers start to identify the main issue, 3) Designers then examine the selected issue into thinking maps and visual matrix in generating stage [6]. Thinking maps are used in order to find some keywords that represent the main issue. On the other hand, the visual matrix is used to generate a key visual which includes design elements, such as pictures, typography, pattern, and colours. 4) After
that, designers begins to develop two alternatives to mood boards that illustrate different keywords and key visuals in the implementing stage. These two mood boards are then delivered reviewers and to LCB to get some feedback. 5) Finally, in the refine stage, designers evaluate the selected mood board and revise it according to LCB's feedback. The steps are described in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Branching Approach Problem-Solving adapted from John Bower (Source: Tobias Warbung)

3. Result and discussion

3.1 Learning and identifying problems
Due to the fact that LCB is a garment company that focuses on women ready-to-wear, their target market are women fashion retail stores. From a previous persona, researchers have discovered that consumers found it difficult to reach a trustable garment vendor that prioritizes quality as a priority, specifically in time management, payment system, and production. Consumers also need to find a cooperative vendor which is communicative and understand what retail stores need. On the other hand, consumers will appreciate vendors that follow current fashion trends, so vendors fully understand how to produce a product that is related to their wants. To overcome this matter, garment vendors are usually attending some fashion exhibitions or observe social media trends and particular websites.

To answer these obstacles, LCB, as one of the garment companies, sets their values as the only garment company that focuses on quality, trend updated, and priorities excellent customer service; to support potential some fashion retail stores. As a result, researchers sum up the project's objective to create a mood board representing these three core values.

3.2 Generating keyword
Considering the mood board objective and LCB's Unique Selling Point (USP), researchers decide the tone and manner that speak for LCB through thinking maps. Idea exploration is based on LCB's three core values (focus on quality, trend updated, and priorities great customer service). Consequently, researchers find thirty keywords that are inspired by the values, which are then eliminated into ten keywords that are considered to represent LCB values best. After that, five keywords are chosen: professional, firm, elegant, well made, and modern. However, professional is selected on the bottom line, as presented in Figure 2.
Figure 2. Illustration of Thinking Maps to Generate Keywords  
(Source: Tobias Warbung)

3.3 Generating visual
The next step is that the selected five keywords are processed into a visual matrix by the researchers. This step aims to create two mood board alternatives. The first mood board illustrates three keywords: professional, firm, and modern. Researchers then create two kinds of key visuals: layered pictures that were inspired by the stack of fabrics and black and white photos that represent the firm. Layered pictures concept is basically putting some pictures or words close to each other than transforming into various sizes to create depth in the design. Then the black and white photos are chosen to represent garment production activities, such as sewing process, pattern making, fabric rolls, fabric cutting, and other activities.

In terms of the second alternative, the selected keywords are professional, elegant, and well made. As a result, the selected key visuals are handmade, stitch, and pattern. To illustrate handmade and also safe-keeping, all photos are chosen to display convection process which is done by hand. It represents that each piece of fabric is well made and watched out carefully by LCB. In terms of typography, researchers decide to use serif font to show a handcrafted look, precision, and something personal. Meanwhile, close up pictures are captured by researchers to illustrate stitching quality. Stitching quality is also to demonstrate elegance. Lastly, several fashion patterns are made to represent a pattern. The progress is described in Figure 3.
3.4 Mood board and evaluation

Selected pictures are then edited as the final touch just after researchers do with generating the visual matrix. Next, these images are organized on the mood board. Finally, researchers present the two mood board alternatives to three reviewers (this step is done to get some feedback). The first reviewer is a fashion designer and also a consultant. The second reviewer is a fashion practitioner and also a lecturer. The last reviewer is a fashion designer who produces apparel products independently. Concerning the first concept, researchers gain some positive reactions. All reviewers admit that the mood board represent professionalism. However, it is lack of pictures of the production process and the reviewers want to see more.

On the other hand, reviewers find that the second mood board shows something simpler, elegant, detailed, and more feminine; while the first mood board displays industrial looks. Nevertheless, reviewers agree the second mood board that is also lack of production pictures. Although, reviewers consider the two mood boards are well done and persuasive.

In order to get a comprehensive evaluation, researchers then show the mood boards to the directors of LCB. Interestingly, they get similar feedbacks comparing to reviewers' feedback. LCB representation is delightful with the overall visual looks, and it just lacks pictures that illustrates the garment production. On the bottom line, the second mood board is chosen with minor revision, as shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5.

Figure 3. Visual Matrix to Generate Visual – alt.1 (left) and alt.2 (right)  
(Source: Tobias Warbung)

Figure 4. Mood Board – alt  
(Source: Tobias Warbung)
3.5 Revised mood board and final result
After the second mood board concept is selected and edited, researchers forward the mood board to the LCB representation as a visual guideline. One thing to note is that all media chosen in the mood boards have been discussed first with the client during the discovery stage and persona. Some points that have been emphasized within the mood board are target consumer, production pictures, particular activities in the garment company, website user interface, social media looks, colour scheme, typography, office interior, and uniforms.

Visual assets in the mood board is not a final design, and it is just a visual reference. Researchers do not execute the design concept, whereas all visual elements are gathered from the internet and other resources; some pictures are developed through specific software to get the right look. This mood board project is created so that LCB is able to predict what may happen in the future and prepare what is needed at the final stage.

4. Conclusion
To sum up, the research shows that using persona in the form of a mood board is exceedingly useful for both designers and clients. Some of the advantages are:

- Designers and clients tend to have a similar perception of what consumers need through a persona.
- Designers and other creative teams can generate and develop ideas, keywords, and visual assets more quickly due to consumers’ understanding.
- A mood board that is related to consumer's demands is more easily followed by the client.
- A good mood board represents a designer's capability for problem-solving.
- A good mood board illustrates particular emotion and core values through its visual elements.
- A good mood board help designers to communicate with clients regarding the design concept; it affects designers to do further design processes.
- A good mood board helps clients have a clearer direction about what they can do to expand their network and communicate their offerings to the broader market.

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