Effectiveness of the Design Platform Canva on the Creative Thinking of Visual Communication Design Students

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ABSTRACT
Technology has penetrated the creative industry, particularly in the Visual Communication Design sector, particularly in the field of visual design tools. One clear example of this technological advancement is the Canva instant design platform. Canva has become a widely used design application due to its user-friendly design features. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence and impact of instant design platforms, specifically Canva, on the creative thinking skills of Visual Communication Design (DKV) students. Data collection was conducted through an experimental method involving 30 respondents. Respondents were divided into two groups: users of the Canva instant design platform and users of the Adobe family of conventional design platforms. Based on the results of the data processing and experiment, it can be concluded that the Canva instant design platform has a significant impact on students' creative thinking patterns, particularly in terms of fluency in expressing ideas visually. The findings indicate that Canva users tend to have higher creative thinking scores than Adobe users, with average scores in the moderate creative range. Assessment was conducted using a creative thinking rubric with five main indicators: fluency, originality, elaboration, symbolism, and flexibility.

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes in various fields, including graphic design (Moussadecq et al., 2022). One prominent innovation is the emergence of instant design platforms such as Canva, which offer convenience in creating visual designs without requiring deep technical skills. This platform provides various templates and design elements that can be used instantly, making it attractive to Visual Communication Design (DKV) students for both academic assignments and personal projects.

Table 1. Organizational Statistic on Canva Usage
Source : 53 Canva Statistics for 2025 (User, Revenue & Trend), n.d.

Company	Canva Usage Percentage
Higher Education	28,40%
Non profit Organizations	13%
Marketing & Advertising	12,20%
Information & Technology	9,80%
Education Management	9%
Computer Software	6,40%
Retailers	5,40%
Internet	5,40%

Property	5,40%
Religious Institutions	5%

The use of Canva in higher education has the highest percentage, as shown in the table above, demonstrating that Canva is predominantly utilized by academic institutions. Study programs or departments that are specifically and directly related to Canva itself find this platform particularly relevant. The Visual Communication Design discipline plays a diverse role in shaping students' creative thinking abilities, especially in producing visual works. Creativity is generally understood as an idea that encompasses a wide range of cognitive styles, performance categories, and various benefits (Adiluhung, 2021). Creativity refers to divergent thinking and products that are accepted as creative. The DKV field serves a fundamental function in conveying targeted visual communication that not only delivers a message effectively but also illustrates that message dramatically.

Table 2. Departmental Statistics on Canva Usage
Source : *Study and Research on Canva as the Design Application of Choice for Art Students, 2023*

Faculty of Fine Arts and Design	Percentage (%)	Faculty of Performing Arts	Percentage (%)
Batik	1%	Etnomusikologi	0%
Visual Communication Design	50%	Karawitan Art	0%
Interior Design	0%	Pupperty Art	0%
Film and Television	13,3%	Dance Art	6,7%
Photography	6,7%	Theater Art	16,7%
Kris and Traditional Weapons	0%	-	-
Craft Art	3,3%	-	-
Pure fine Arts	0%	-	-
Total	**74,3%**	**Total**	**23,4%**

Research by (Setiono, 2023) at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts (ISI) Surakarta shows that Canva has become the main alternative for art students in producing visual works, with Visual Communication Design (DKV) students making up 50% of the largest users. This is concrete evidence of technological disruption in the field of art education. The DKV sector itself has grown rapidly with an achievement rate of 8.14% in 2017, supported by the rapid development of technology (Rahmasari & Yogananti, 2021). Several studies demonstrate the effectiveness of Canva in improving students' creativity. (Lase et al., 2024) found that Canva was effective in increasing creativity in the creation of learning modules. (Annisa Nur Amini & Budi Suswanto, 2024) proved that Canva can become a new innovation in graphic design that helps students produce creative and engaging designs. This development has also taken place at ISI Padang Panjang, particularly in the DKV Study Program, which aligns with the campus vision and mission of adapting to technological developments in Malay arts and culture. DKV students at ISI Padang Panjang actively use Canva for both academic and personal projects. Some even become Canva creators who gain financial benefits.

A review of previous studies shows variations in approaches to measuring student creativity. The study by (Annisa Nur Amini & Budi Suswanto, 2024) used a research model focused on the experience of using the Canva application, grouping student creativity levels based on their experience using Canva to complete internship assignments. The research object targeted internship students at SCTV television station. Meanwhile, the study by (Deswanty et al., 2024) conducted experiments on students by observing the tasks given. Drawing flora was part of the drawing process. The ability to imitate through observation of objects is crucial in the drawing process. Students must carefully observe objects and then apply them to drawing media. The results showed that student creativity was still not optimal, as some students tended to use imitation techniques rather than free imagination during art lessons. Another comparative study by (Gusti et al., 2021) focused on user experience in accessing the Canva application using qualitative research methods. The study described general experiences related to obstacles and advantages in using Canva from the perspective of graphic designers or design service users. These three studies show different models and ways of determining levels of group or individual creativity.

Unlike previous studies, this research focuses on DKV students as the target audience with a challenge method in the form of designing posters on the theme *"Creative Young Generation"* according to each respondent's style and understanding. The level of creativity is measured using an assessment rubric based on Guilford's theory as presented in studies by (Kuncoro Adi, 2022) dan (Rismanita et al., 2011). This research contributes to scientific renewal in the design field, particularly in measuring student creative thinking through a systematic and structured rubric assessment method. Comprehensive measurement aspects of students' creative thinking have not been widely explained in previous studies. Therefore, this study aims to clarify how to measure students' creative thinking levels and identify the indicators of its evaluation parameters.

Observing the development of Canva features and the consumptive behavior of DKV students at ISI Padang Panjang in using Canva as a design tool, skepticism arises about its impact on the creative process. When students rely on one design tool that provides convenience through instant visual assets, it may affect the quality of the creative process itself due to dependence on a single platform. This impact needs to be examined in depth, both its positive and negative aspects, in the students' creative process. Based on this phenomenon, this research focuses on the main question that must be answered through empirical investigation. Is there a significant difference in the level of creative thinking among ISI Padang Panjang DKV students between those who use Canva and those who use the Adobe family?

METHOD

This study measures the effect of using Canva on DKV students' creative thinking in response to developments in digital design technology. Considering the importance of understanding technology's impact on the evolution of human creativity, this research was conducted to empirically determine the influence of an instant design platform Canva on DKV students' creative thinking skills. The study employed a mixed methods approach with *quasi experimental post-test-only control group design, in line with* (Romlah et al., 2021) who also used mixed methods. This design was chosen because the research subjects could not be fully randomized, yet it still allows for valid comparisons between the experimental and control groups. Data analysis used both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Syahrizal & Jailani, 2023). Quantitative data from the assessment rubric were analyzed using descriptive statistics to portray each group's creative thinking profile. To test for significant differences between groups, data normality was examined using the *Shapiro Wilk test.* Qualitative data from observations of the creative process were analyzed descriptively to support interpretation of the quantitative results.

Data were collected through systematic stages to ensure research validity. The first stage involved distributing questionnaires to identify willingness to participate. A total of 30 DKV students were obtained and divided by purposive sampling into two groups: 15 students used Canva and 15 students used the Adobe Family. Both groups were assigned a poster design task with the theme "Creative Young Generation" and the same working time. Next, the research instrument took the form of a *creative thinking* assessment rubric based on Guilford's theory, adapted from (Kuncoro Adi, 2022). The rubric comprises four main indicators: Fluency, Flexibility, Originality, and Elaboration. Each indicator was developed into measurable sub-indicators with a 1–3 rating scale. The rubric's validity was tested through expert judgment by two graphic-design academics. Scoring was carried out by two independent assessors one experienced creative-industry practitioner and one design academic to ensure objectivity from both practical and theoretical perspectives. Reliability was measured using inter-rater reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha coe fficient ≥ 0.953.

Table 3. *Reliability with Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient*
Source : Authors' SPSS Data, 2025

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.953	.953	28

To precisely identify significant differences in interpreting the experimental results, inferential data-analysis techniques were employed to demonstrate whether there were significant differences between groups. An independent samples t-test was chosen to test and determine the interval of respondents' creative-thinking scores. This approach was also reported in (Siregar et al., 2023) regarding the use of the t-test to determine effects between respondent test groups.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Result
1. Use of the Canva Design Platform by Students

The findings show that the average *creative thinking* scores of DKV (Visual Communication Design) students fall into the moderate category (1.67–2.33). This indicates that students are fairly capable of expressing ideas communicatively, but have not yet maximized symbolic exploration and visual originality. Within Guilford's theoretical framework, the highest achievement appears in the *fluency* aspect namely, the ease of generating ideas and maintaining continuity of the visual message. Conversely, the lowest scores appear in the *originality* aspect, especially on the *symbolization* indicator. This condition shows that students are more skilled at composing clear visual messages than at creating a distinctive visual style. Canva supports increased *fluency* because of its practical nature, but it does not strongly encourage exploration of *originality*.
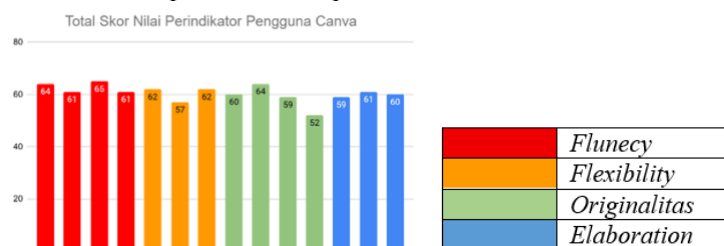
2. Student's Level of *Creative Thinking*

Table 4. Respondents' Creative Thinking Level
Source : Authors' SPSS Data, 2025

Group Statistics

	GRUP_APLIKASI	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
RATA_RATA	ADOBE_A	30	1.730	.6385	.1166
	CANVA	30	2.017	.6513	.1189

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
RATA_RATA	Equal variances assumed	.405	.527	-1.721	58	.090	-.2867	.1665	-.6200	.0467
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.721	57.977	.090	-.2867	.1665	-.6200	.0467

Based on the test results, the p-value in the Sig column is less than 0.05, which means there is a significant difference between the average creativity of Canva users and Adobe users. Therefore, the t-test results confirm that there is a difference in the creativity level of users of the Canva and Adobe applications, with Canva users being far more creative than Adobe users. The average per-indicator values presented fall within the moderate *creative thinking* interval, with mean scores above 2.017. This indicates that, statistically, the cognitive process of ISI Padang Panjang DKV students in producing visual communication is at a moderate level of *creative thinking*. This conclusion was obtained through an *assessment* process using a rubric method by an evaluation team, with the scores aggregated from two raters. Concretely, Canva with its ease of use features and ready-to-use templates has a significant influence on students' *creative thinking* cognitive processes. In practice, Canva provides freedom for comprehensive exploration of visual work.

Bar Chart 1. Total Score per Indicator for Canva Users (Source: Ramdani Abdul Malik, 2025)

The level of *creative thinking* is measured based on rating intervals. *Creative thinking* categories can be seen from the processed assessment results. The processed data are then grouped based on:

$$i = \frac{Range}{Number\ of\ Classes\ (K)}$$

Notes :

Range : Highest Score – Lowest Score

K : Number of Classes

i : Interval Width

$$i = \frac{2.00}{3} = 0{,}66$$

The value 0.66 is the calculated difference used to determine the average value related to the *creative thinking* patterns of DKV students. Thus, it is necessary to set interval bounds to assign average values for drawing conclusions.

Intervals	Category
1.00 – 1.66	Basic Creative
1.67 – 2.33	Moderate Creative
2.34 – 3.00	High Creative

The influence of Canva on the creative process has a real impact. This is the rationale for conducting this research to measure the extent of Canva's influence on the cognitive process of creative thinking among DKV students as primary creative actors. This influence can be viewed from various angles, depending on the target data to be obtained. A comparison between groups shows that students who use Canva have hi8gher scores on the aspect of *fluency*, *flexibility*, and *elaboration* than Adobe users. This means Canva facilitates students in generating ideas, tailoring messages, and expanding visual details efficiently. Conversely, the Adobe group shows a tendency to excel more in technical exploration and originality, although the work process is more complex and time-consuming. These findings reinforce that the choice of design tool affects patterns of creative thinking. Canva serves as a means to accelerate ideas and visual communication, whereas Adobe emphasizes technical mastery that can drive exploration of style and originality.

Figure 1. Poster with High Creative Thinking
Source : Research Respondent, 2025

Figure 2. Poster with Basic Creative Thinking
Source : Research Respondent, 2025

3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Use of Canva

The use of Canva as an online graphic design platform has become a significant phenomenon in education, especially for visual media based learning. From an educational perspective, Canva offers several supporting factors relevant to 21st century learning needs. Its intuitive interface and drag and drop ease of use enable students and lecturers with varying levels of technological literacy to quickly produce visual materials. The availability of thousands of templates and visual resources such as icons, images, fonts, and multimedia elements helps enrich learning materials, increase visual appeal, and facilitate student engagement. Online collaboration features also allow all parties to work simultaneously on a single document, contributing to the development of teamwork skills and active participation. In addition, the Canva for Education program provides free access to premium features and integrates with Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Google Classroom, thereby supporting efficient management of assignments and learning materials. However, implementing Canva in educational settings is not without obstacles. Unstable internet connectivity is a primary challenge, particularly in regions with limited digital infrastructure. Moreover, restrictions in the free version that lock certain premium visual assets also limit users' creative exploration (Setiono, 2023). Excessive use of templates can reduce design originality and lead to visual uniformity, especially if users do not make significant modifications. Within Guilford's theoretical framework, Canva effectively strengthens students' fluency that is, their smoothness in generating visual ideas but is not yet optimal in developing originality. Therefore, educators need to emphasize modification strategies and creative exploration so that works are not only communicative but also reflect a unique visual identity.

4. Implications of the Findings for Design Learning Practice

This study is expected to have direct implications or contributions to higher-education curriculum development, enabling the education sector to adapt to and respond to technological developments, as well as to address skepticism that has arisen among students both within and outside creative-practitioner circles. In line with technological advances, engaging learning is certainly needed to capture attention during the learning process (Rinaldo & Sukmayadi, 2023). Thus, there is a need for instructional breakthroughs that use visual works so the learning process does not feel monotonous or boring. Through this research, each teaching activity and curriculum design should reinforce the creative process through students' cognition. While aesthetic visual quality is indeed a

necessity for a designer, the cognitive aspect of *creative thinking* is one of the foundational starting points in creating a visual work.

Canva can be integrated as a learning medium, a vehicle for creative assessment, and a collaboration tool that supports project-based learning and blended learning approaches. Comprehensive strengthening of ideas is a major challenge today, along with the development of science and technology. A visual work can even be presented with a single prompt that is then generated to produce the desired visual. Therefore, it is important to emphasize that creative practitioners (students) should strengthen and sharpen creative thinking grounded in knowledge and abilities that are continuously honed and stimulated in step with the times. In terms of accessibility and efficiency because Canva is cloud-based and accessible across devices Canva supports flexible and inclusive learning, allowing students to work anytime and anywhere. This expands the learning space beyond the limits of the physical classroom and accommodates self-directed learning styles (Rahmasari & Yogananti, 2021). With such strategies, a DKV curriculum can produce graduates who are not only adept at conveying visual messages efficiently, but are also able to create original and meaningful works.

Discussion

1. Canva a Bridge to Creativity

The results show that students who struggle to use complex technical tools such as Adobe actually produced works with high creativity scores through Canva. This finding supports Guilford's concept of *fluency*, in which the smooth generation of visual ideas is more influenced by the accessibility of tools than by technical complexity. This aligns with (Setiono, 2023) which notes that instant-design platforms democratize visual production. Consequently, the DKV curriculum needs to allow room for using instant media as a vehicle to train fluency/ideas before deepening technical skills.

2. Templates as a Contextualization Challenge

Design instruction should emphasize the skill of reinterpreting templates as a creative strategy—not merely avoiding them, but learning from and developing ideas in response to technological developments. The use of templates does not automatically lower creativity. Students were still able to achieve high scores on the fluency aspect, showing the ability to adapt and decontextualize content. This reflects Guilford's *flexibility*, namely the ability to align form with message. Research by (Hs et al., 2023) supports the view that modern creativity is adaptive, not purely inventive.

3. Technique vs Communication Effectiveness

The Adobe group demonstrated higher technical exploration, but was less efficient in conveying visual messages. This finding confirms that technical originality does not always correlate with communication effectiveness. Design education needs to balance technical mastery with the ability to compose visual messages. The DKV discipline should strengthen the integration of visual-message aspects so that students do not become trapped in technical exploration alone.

4. Dominance of Fluency Over Originality

Fluency scores were higher than originality, indicating that students focus more on delivering messages than on building a distinctive visual identity. Within Guilford's framework, *elaboration* and *originality* remain weaknesses. This points to a shift toward pragmatic, function-oriented design learning. The curriculum should be balanced between visual-communication competencies and exercises in style exploration so that students are not only communicative but also innovative.

5. Weakness in Visual Symbolization

Symbolization received the lowest score. Students found it difficult to translate ideas into strong symbolic representation, meaning that Guilford's elaboration dimension has not been optimized. Instruction in visual semiotics and practice in constructing symbolic meaning in works need to be strengthened.

6. Canva Encourages Students to Confidently Execute Ideas Independently

Canva fosters students' confidence in executing ideas without being overly constrained by technical skills. This increases focus on the content of the message ("what is conveyed") rather than technique ("how it is conveyed"). This finding supports (Nur Astrida & Arifudin, n.d.). regarding the importance of a learning ecosystem that nurtures creative courage. DKV instruction should create an inclusive experimental space for beginners, so that creativity is not hampered by technical limitations.

CONCLUSION

This study proves that the use of the instant design site Canva affects the creative-thinking process of DKV students, particularly in the *fluency* aspect. Students who used Canva showed greater fluency in expressing ideas, balancing concept with visual execution, and maintaining message continuity in their work. These results confirm that Canva can increase fluency more significantly than the group of Adobe users. However, the findings also show that Canva has not optimally encouraged originality. Access to ready made elements and templates does accelerate the design process and improve efficiency, but it risks reducing visual exploration and the development of a personal style. Thus, Canva makes a positive contribution to the smoothness of creative thinking, but it provides weaker stimulation for the dimension of originality, especially on the sub-indicator of symbolization. Overall, the creative thinking level of DKV students falls into the moderate category. The majority of respondents are able to express ideas communicatively, but have not yet maximized visual exploration and the strengthening of symbolic meaning. This confirms that digital design tools play an important role in the creative thinking process, but they do not replace the need for conceptual reinforcement and symbolic exploration in design education.

This study has several limitations, including a relatively small sample size limited to a single institution, as well as the use of a rubric instrument that still contains elements of assessor subjectivity. Future work is advised to expand the number of respondents across campuses, combine quantitative and qualitative assessment methods, and examine other variables such as learning motivation and psychological factors that influence student creativity. In addition, a deeper examination of strategies for integrating Canva and Adobe within the DKV curriculum can provide a more comprehensive picture of how digital technology mediates the development of creative thinking.

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