

## An Anthropological Approach to Interface Design Mobile Apps for the Creative Economy

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### Abstract

This study explains a collaborative approach as one of the strategies needed to develop the creative economy in the Bandung city area. Anthropology is currently challenged by Indonesia's increasingly dynamic development, which not only offers recommendations from field research but also offers tangible results in the form of human development and applied anthropology. This article aims to provide a new perspective that design science, with its design thinking approach, is closely related to the ethnographic approach used by anthropologists. It seeks to deepen the relationship between anthropology and design given the growing attention to the potential impact of design and innovation in solving sociocultural problems. The relationship between anthropology and design has a place and a challenge to play a role in efforts to set simple and realistic goals, develop a humanistic approach, and prioritize sensitivity to the socio-economic context and cultural values and practices of local communities to create sustainable projects. This will change, and will fuel theoretical research debates on concepts and methods of interest in academia and practice.

**Keywords:** Anthropology, Design, Creative Economy

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Collaboration in the design world is nothing new; it is known as co-design, an acronym for collaborative design. In co-design, designers are required to share their thoughts and insights with end users. This not only aims to broaden the scope of designers' engagement with users during the design process but also to directly address production constraints and user trust. For designers, a crucial element of this process is identifying and working with future product users. Co-design can also foster close relationships between designers and end users, starting with designer-organized workshops aimed at gathering user feedback [1]. Designers using this approach view users as collaborators whose knowledge is important and relevant to the design outcome. Creating meaningful relationships between designers and collaborators fosters ethical and socially valuable designs, not just artistic ones. Of course, every co-design process is based on defining the roles of the design experts and the end users who will use the designed product [1].

In collaborating with designers, anthropologists employ a rapid ethnography approach in their research. Rapid ethnography is an ethnographic approach with shorter fieldwork duration, through targeted interviews

and observations focused on specific products, systems, or environments [2]. This is because designers' work requires rapid data collection, making the rapid ethnography approach a more appropriate technique for creative design practice. This approach is an efficient and effective way to achieve a sufficient understanding of societal behavioral patterns (an "emic" perspective).

Therefore, both designers and anthropologists must be able to clearly define the research objectives before conducting rapid ethnography. The rapid ethnography process is based on three main principles: first, narrowing the field before beginning the research. Emphasis can be placed on practice to highlight important activities and identify key informants; second, using multiple interaction observation techniques to increase the likelihood of discovering relevant design user behavior; and third, using collaborative methods and computerized data analysis.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Design Anthropology in Interface Design

Design anthropology is an approach that integrates anthropological methods with design practices to understand the interactions between humans, culture, and technology. In the context of application interface



design, this approach is important because it allows designers to understand user needs based on their social and cultural experiences. Gunn and Donovan [3] explain that design anthropology focuses not only on user observation but also on user involvement in the design process. This approach is relevant to the development of applications like Salapak, where interface design must consider the cultural characteristics of the local community to ensure ease of use and acceptance [4].

## 2.2 Co-Design in Design Collaboration

Co-design, or collaborative design, is an approach that involves users as active participants in the design process. In this research, the co-design concept was used in the development of the Salapak application, involving MSMEs and the public as primary users [5].

Sanders and Stappers [1] stated that co-design allows users to act as partners in the creative process, not simply as research objects. This results in more relevant designs because they are based on real-life user experiences.

## 2.3 Design Thinking

Design thinking is an approach that emphasizes empathy for users in the innovation process [6]. This approach is relevant in this research because it focuses on developing design solutions oriented to societal needs. Design thinking helps generate sustainable innovation by deeply understanding user needs and iteratively developing solutions [7].

## 2.4 User Interface

The user interface is a communication tool that facilitates interaction between users and systems within a program, including web, mobile, and software applications [8]. UI design is tailored to the needs of the users using the program. It encompasses various aspects, from physical appearance and color usage to animation and the communication patterns used by the program to interact with users [9].

## 3 RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a focus on design anthropology, a method that combines anthropological techniques with design practice to understand the interactions between users, social contexts, and the products they create [10]. The primary focus of this approach is that design goes beyond simply creating artifacts, but also builds relationships between humans, technology, and culture. According to Gunn and Donovan [3], design anthropology allows designers to capture users' experiences in everyday life and position users as active elements in the design process.

In its implementation, this research employed the rapid ethnography method, an ethnographic approach with a short research period but still aimed at exploring user behavior and experiences. This technique is popular in the design world because it can provide rapid and relevant insights.

This approach is also suitable for interface design needs that require rapid yet in-depth user data. Furthermore, the concept of ethnography in design is also, who emphasize the importance of understanding users' work contexts in the interactive system development process.

Data collection was conducted through observation, semi-structured interviews, and user involvement in the co-design process. Observations aimed to understand user activities, particularly MSMEs and the public, when using digital platforms. Interviews were conducted to explore user experiences, needs, and perspectives regarding application interface design. Furthermore, users were directly involved in the design process as co-collaborators. This approach aligns with the concept of participatory design, where users play an active role in the design process [1].

## 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Salapak program envisions collaboration between MSMEs and the cooperative office to expand the market for MSME products and become a productive medium for producing superior products that are globally competitive. The public, through their activities as consumers, also assists in assessing the effectiveness of the ecommerce website design.



Figure 1. Application Home Page

The main page displays a variety of products produced by Bandung City's MSMEs, including clothing, shoes, snacks, wallets, and more.

#### 4.1 Collaboration

Salapak collaborated on the e-commerce interface design, developed a strategic plan, and implemented a "role to create impact" scheme. Salapak's collaboration with MSMEs resulted in a robust interface design, mapping the relationships between business, product, people, community, sustainability, and brand. The integrated, quick-win program approach creates the right partnerships for short-, medium-, and long-term systemic sustainability between innovative actors, MSMEs, the government, and the Ngada community. The strategic plan was designed using three approaches: internal, external, and cross-sectoral partnerships and collaboration.

The collaboration between creative actors and designers received a positive response from the local government and community. The SALAPAK team is enthusiastic about re-elevating MSME products in Bandung. The interface design carried out tries to create a design that is easy to use by local communities with different cultural conditions, through the works produced, this is an effort to get people used to using the user interface.

#### 4.2 Experience Journey

SALAPAK can engage in community empowerment programs through a collaborative approach in the region through user interface design. The SALAPAK team developed an e-commerce-inspired product to promote MSME products. The SALAPAK team also designed a service system, followed by product service, supported by various workshops for the community. The "Experience Journey" serves as a reinforcement for exploring values dedicated to developing cultural tourism, serving as a gateway for tourists to learn more about Ngada. The SALAPAK team detailed this "Experience Journey" into a series of memorable and meaningful activities, thanks to the design touches and various collaborative products that support the creation of specific experiential values. Likewise, the SALAPAK team paid attention to interface design that aligns with local culture and can be used as an educational tool. The production process utilized responsive and user-friendly designs to facilitate production. The implementation of responsive design to assist small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) during the production phase demonstrates how user-friendly interfaces can increase productivity and reduce production errors. The following is a summary of the creative industry value chain:

1. Distribution  
Improving the distribution experience through user-friendly navigation highlights the importance

of clear navigation design in facilitating product distribution. An effective user interface also plays a crucial role in supporting shipping management and inventory monitoring more efficiently.

2. Marketing  
The use of engaging visual elements in marketing has a significant impact on the success of MSME marketing strategies. Well-designed user interface features can enhance the visual appeal and effectiveness of online marketing efforts.
3. Customer Interaction  
The user interface plays an important role in fostering relationship with customers by improving interaction quality. A well-designed UI can facilitate communication between users and support services, as well as enhance the use of communication tools available on e-commerce platforms.
4. Efficient Checkout  
A fast and straightforward checkout process is essential for increasing sales. A well-designed user interface can encourage users to complete transactions, thereby contributing to higher conversion rates.

## 5 CONCLUSION

By translating the results of our research into recommendations and collaborative products ready to boost the creative economy in the region, our experience of being directly involved in the program development process using design as a tool for impactful change can be a new study. Today, design is also being challenged to create sustainable, innovative, and financially impactful solutions to socio-economic issues worldwide. From this perspective, we are interested in studying the relationship between design and anthropology, which can have a significant, sustainable impact and intersect across various fields. We believe that design must be more empathetic to human needs, innovative in addressing emerging socio-cultural issues, and a tool for change that impacts not only the designer as the creative actor but also the communities affected by it. The connection between anthropology and design will play a crucial role in Indonesia's multicultural context, where design, as a tool and even the systems developed, must be sensitive and cognizant of local wisdom. Anthropology, then, is a science that can assist in design interventions without eliminating a region's production ecosystem, which is actualized through cultural practices. The outputs of this collaborative design are expected to drive the community's economy in the creative industry. At the same time, as anthropologists

seeking to deepen our understanding of the creative economy, we hope to contribute to the development of design and anthropology, which are still relatively new in Indonesia's academic field. The urgency of this scientific development must align with the critical thinking of Indonesian creative actors to ensure that positive benefits, particularly in the development of knowledge, can be consistently achieved. Ultimately, the significance of anthropology and design will be a compelling debate in the fields of theory, concepts, and methods within academia and practitioners in the future.

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