

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Art and culture grow up together, they cannot be separated. This can be seen in the fact that different groups with different cultures usually create art that is radically different from other cultures' art. One group, for instance Chinese painters, will use bold black lines and limited or washed out color, while Renaissance painters will use more form based painting and representative colors, with no outlines at all. While it is possible to have a culture that didn't have any form of visual art, every culture produces art. The simplest cultures have stories and myths they pass down through the generations. A society cannot have art without culture. This is true since art is an expression of a culture. When an artist paints a picture or writes a poem they do so using forms that are culturally defined, images and language are used in ways that people in that culture understand. It is often difficult for someone from a culture that varies greatly from another to understand the art from that other culture. They may find it may be interesting or beautiful but they will not understand it the way someone from that culture will. This can also be seen through how art changes when one culture assimilates features from other cultures.

This gives a backdrop to the development of Martial Arts. The word martial comes from the Roman god of war, Mars. As such, a martial art is an art form that relates directly to war. This art form began as a simple need to protect oneself, family, tribe and nation (Kostynick, 1989). Starting as simply a means for defense and attack it often developed a part which was performance based. The movements found to be effective for protection also came to be admired for their beauty. Since martial arts developed inside a culture they often reflect the cultural values of a group. For example in Japan martial arts were considered a valuable skill in of itself and so carried a prestige. As such Japanese martial artists became an elite class. While in China the martial arts were considered good because they were necessary but academic study was considered of much greater value. As such anyone could

practice Chinese martial arts but in Japan they were reserved only for the elite classes (Kostynick, 1989).

Indonesia is no exception to the culture giving rise to martial arts. Since each culture develops its own martial arts, the diverse cultures that make up the diverse country of Indonesia created many different styles of martial arts. These different forms of martial arts have continued to grow and change as the conditions in which they existed changed. Today these diverse forms of martial arts have been recognized to have similar characteristics and have been grouped under the term Pencak Silat.

Pencak silat has had difficulties developing throughout modern history due to its almost continual subjugation by foreign powers, first by the Dutch and then the Japanese. Also due to the fact that the various forms were often only taught to family members, pencak silat in Indonesia has suffered from recognition. It is also losing ground in Indonesia to foreign forms of martial arts such as Tae Kwon Do and Kung Fu (Fatimah, 2014). If this trend continues it is possible for Indonesia to lose an important art form, an art form that is a direct result of its culture.

One important reason for the preference of Indonesians to choose a foreign form of martial arts is global pressure, a push to emulate what is popular in the world. As Indonesians see what is in the movies and television, they want the same things. Martial arts in other countries have benefited from exposure on the world stage. Kung Fu, Ninjitsu, Kendo (Samurai) and other forms of Chinese and Japanese martial arts have regularly been used in feature films coming from America and elsewhere. Through this exposure many people have been drawn to look deeper into those cultures beyond the martial art (Kostynick, 1989). There has to date only one movie "*The Raid*" and one episode of the television program "*Fight Quest*" has featured pencak silat.

Specifically in the context of the United States of America (USA), silat is relatively unknown. Siti Fatimah, a reporter for the Tribun Jabar newspaper, explains that pencak silat is often mistaken for a Dutch martial art since it was brought to the USA through the Netherlands during and after the colonial period (Fatimah, 2014). A poll

conducted with several pencak silat schools in the USA confirms that most Americans have no or little knowledge about pencak silat.

Indonesia stands to gain artistically and culturally if pencak silat is better known and appreciated throughout the world. Not only will the rest of the world better appreciate Indonesian culture and arts, but as this happens Indonesians themselves can take pride in their own culture and art. Through that increased pride, Indonesians themselves may develop more interest in Indonesian arts and culture instead of looking to the rest of the world.

Visual Communication Design is an excellent vehicle for promoting pencak silat in the world and specifically in the USA. There are two dominate reasons for this, first since pencak silat is a predominately physical art form, visual media is perfectly suited for portraying it. How many words would it take to describe a starting stance? One photograph or illustration can instantly show the proper stance. More importantly than the relationship between the visual and physical is the current condition of the modern world. The internet has created opportunities where none existed before. In the past 50 years if someone wanted something to be known worldwide, it had to be in a film, it was almost the only media that was distributed worldwide. Now anyone with a computer can reach the world, but not everyone with a computer can reach the world in a way that the world will pay attention to. In the current environment of media clutter, only good design will draw the attention of the audience.

1.2 Problem and Scope

1.2.1 Problem

Considering the knowledge of Americans about pencak silat, it is clear that an artistic and cultural gem has failed to be recognized and appreciated. This raises the several problems:

- How can the people of the USA be introduced to pencak silat?

- How can pencak silat stimulate interest in Americans towards the art and culture of Indonesia?

1.2.2 Scope

This project will be applied globally with a focus on The United States of America.

1.3 Goal of the Design

The goals of this design are:

- Introduce pencak silat to the American people through effective use of media in America
- Through pencak silat, to introduce Indonesian art and culture as something exotic, beautiful and worthwhile.

1.4 Source and Data Gathering Techniques

- Data research will include books, magazines, newspapers, demographic studies, and internet sources.
- Pencak silat practitioners will all come from the City of Bandung and outlying areas.
- Further demographic information will be gathered through survey of silat schools both in the USA and Indonesia.
- A survey will also be conducted with members of the target audience.

1.5 Design Process Chart

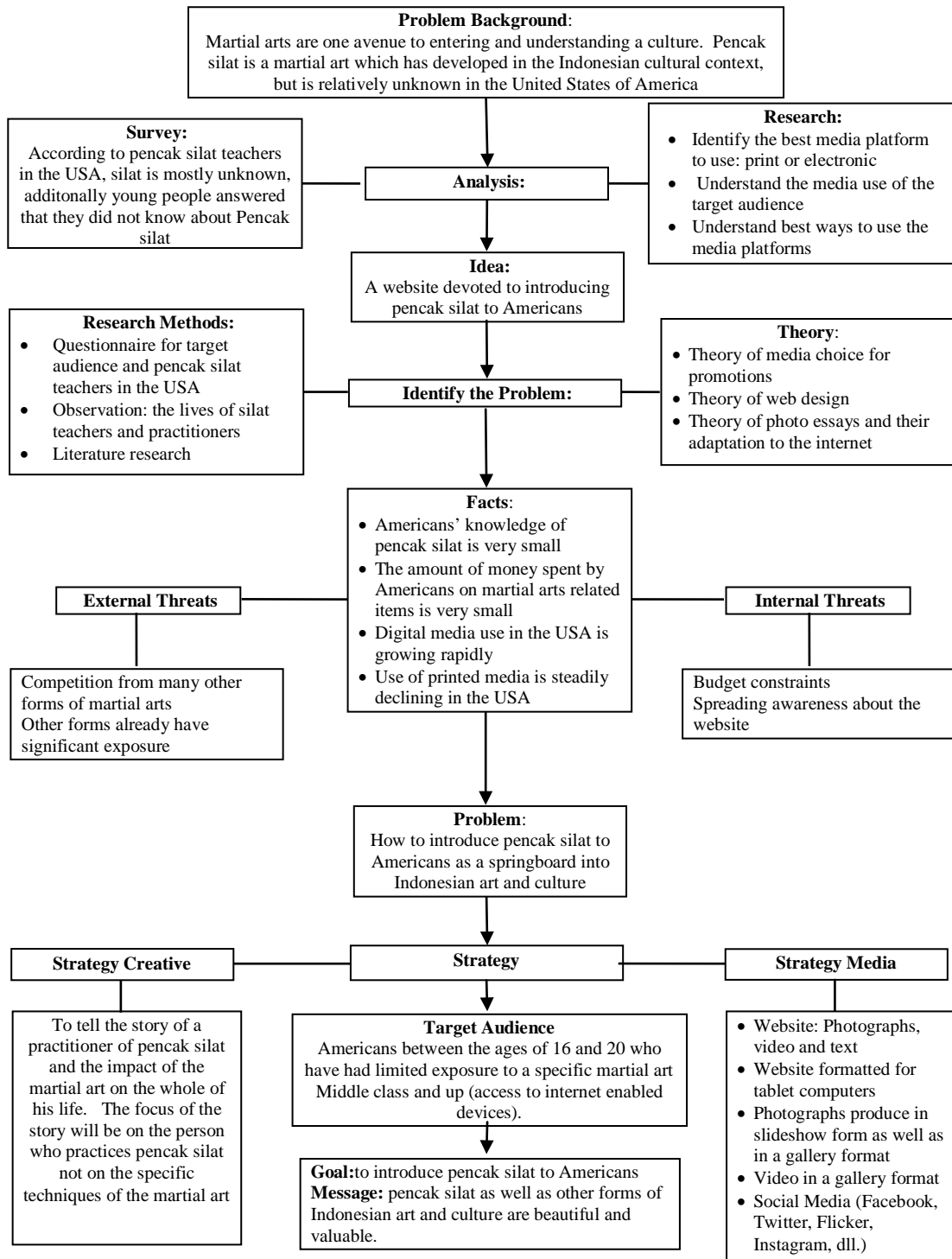


Diagram 1.1 Design Plan
(Source: Document)