Fusion of Emotion in Product Development

Abstract

Product demand has been transformed from quantitative consumption to perceptual consumption along with the arrival of an era that revolves around concept development. Consumers now demand to be treated individually because they no longer want product that just do the right thing but also make them feel the right way. Thus, the trend is shifting from the mass production era towards small brand and individualism or customised production; where manufacturers will focus more on smaller quantity but still uphold their unique traditional way. Therefore, it is important for designers to “dream big” in bringing about a product experience, by investing more time and efforts in conceptualizing ideas that are suitable and make better valued judgement; while manufacturers should “think small”, by not focusing on mass production but limited editions and exclusive designs. This is seen as a viable sustainable approach for small and medium industries (SMIs) which can lower the risk of product failing. Hence, with particular reference to ceramic industry, this paper seeks the knowledge regarding how product value can be enhanced and its impact on product experience. Based on this understanding, the paper demonstrates how designers can engage consumers through exclusive designs.

Keywords: Ceramics, Product experience, Product emotion, Product value

1.0 Product Value and Experience

Value is a fundamental term that reflects owner’s or buyer’s desire to retain or purchase a product (Neap & Celik, 1999). In product design, values are considered to be relative to cost and function. The relationship between the cost and function result in the subjective aspect of product value. To an individual, the value of a product depends on how much the product details or performance agrees with his/her value system. Hence, the corresponding experience from user’s interaction with a product is shaped by the characteristics of the user (e.g., cultural values, background, motives, personality) and the product attributes (such as, colour, shape, texture etc). According to Connaughton & Stuart (1996, p8), product value for money is “the optimum combination of whole life cost and quality to meet client’s requirements.” Therefore, value
includes cost and marginal value, which is the subjective part of value. The subjective experiences involve a perceived goodness or badness, pleasantness or unpleasantness (Desmet & Hekkert, 2007); thus, they reflect how consumers are prepared to pay for prestige, appearance, aesthetic, judicial, religion or any combination of these reasons (Neap & Celik, 1999).

Product experience, according to P. Desmet & Hekkert (2007) “is a multi-faceted phenomenon that involves manifestations such as subjective feelings, behavioural reactions, expressive reactions, and physiological reactions.” Thus, the interaction between a user and a product results in a set of affects (experiences) which include, aesthetic experience, experience of meaning and emotional experience (Hekkert, 2006).

Hence, product performance is not just about products doing the right thing, but also making users feel the right way (product experience) (Boatwright & Cagan, 2010). To bring about great experience (affects), product values must be enhanced. The natural tendency when thinking about enhancing product values is by lowering the cost; however, looking at it from the broader perspective opens up a myriad of value proposition that are not really money based. According to (“Enhanced Value,” n.d.), there are three main stream to enhance product value; enhancing product, perception and customer relationship.

Product can be enhanced by; delivering product first/faster than the competitors (i.e., reduction in development time), and delivering more incremental value (i.e., quality product at reasonable price). User perception towards the product is the degree to which a product delights one or more of user’s sensory modalities (Desmet & Hekkert, 2007); this results in an aesthetic experience. User perception is influenced by product attributes (e.g. shape, colour, aesthetic qualities, etc). According to (Norman, 2004), the influence of perception and emotion in relation to products are evidence in product purchase, use, and why people desire something. Thus, a product that is functional at a physical level, usable at a psychological level and attractive at a subjective and emotional level will make consumers not just a loyal purchaser but fully committed to the product.

Customer relationship is also a valid approach for enhancing value. According to “Enhanced Value” (n.d.), relationship is the lifeline to anticipating and satisfying customer product and service needs. It helps to sustain an existing product and build new ones. For example, in a case where customer is only interested in lower price; the relationship will be based on constantly delivering lower priced product. Regardless of how the value is delivered, “Enhanced Value”
(n.d.) opines that the value must be meaningful, motivating, unique, deliverable, sustainable and quantifiable.

2.0 Engaging consumers through exclusive designs

Norman (2004) breaks down emotional responses into three levels of design which are; visceral design, behavioral design and reflective design. According to Luke (2009), the three levels come from; within our instincts, visceral, from use, behavioral, reflective and from outside influence & aspiration. Each of the three levels of design is as important as the other, however, they requires different approach by the designer (Norman, 2004).

i Visceral Design

Visceral design evokes our inner instincts and human drives. It’s a foundation level of product emotions. The principles underlying visceral design are wired in, consistent across people and cultures (Norman, 2004). According to Luke (2009), when something triggers an emotion at a visceral level, it has an immediate unknowing impact to a person. At visceral level, physical features (look, feel, etc) dominate (Norman, 2004). Therefore, attractiveness is a visceral level phenomenon where the response is entirely to the surface look of an object (Norman, 2004). For example, when a consumer takes one look at something and says ‘I want it’, before asking ‘what does it do’ and ‘how much it cost’ (Luke, 2009). Thus, it can be deduced that the attractiveness/fascination is as a result of the appealing appraisal which originates from product concern known as attitude.

ii Behavioural Design

Behavioural level is entirely about the use and performance of the product; appearance is less relevant. However, the appearance in context of the use is a contributing factor (Luke, 2009). Behavioural design addresses four main components; function, understandability; usability and physical feel. The function comes first while understandability focuses on establishing a proper conceptual model. However, a product that does what is required and is understandable may still not be usable. Therefore, usability needs to be put into consideration; it is the critical test of a product to know how the product will perform and how comfortable it feels to use. Physical feels also matters because we are biological
creatures that interact between our sensory systems and the environment; therefore, they are critical to our behavioural assessment of a product. Behavioural design that addresses these four components will elicit a satisfactory emotion. This is because, it will fulfil a goal (product concern) and will therefore be appraised as motive compliant.

### iii  Reflective Design

Reflective design points to our culture, meaning of a product or its use (Norman, 2004). It’s how we see the products reflecting our self-image and aspirations to others (Luke, 2009). This is due to products playing an important role in the statements they make to others. According to Luke (2009), the reflective level is similar to Jordan (2002) Ideo-pleasure, which is where one appreciates the aesthetics, or the quality or perhaps the extent to which a product enhance life and respects the environment. However, reflective level product is about long-term customer experience and interaction. Reflective design elicit admiration emotion; this is because, the product matches self ideal standard and is therefore appraised to be legitimate.

2.1  Case Study

![Figure 3: A double layered Mug](image)

Developing a product that correspond to consumers attitudes, facilitates their goal achievement and also meeting their standards is an approach towards engaging consumers throughout product lifecycle. Such product will be appraised as appealing, motive compliant and also legitimate. Thus, the researcher tried to apply the three levels of design to develop a ceramic mug (Fig. 3). A well known aesthetic identity in Malay culture called “gunungan” was introduced to the design (Fig. 4). This is a visceral design quality that will give aesthetic appeals (aesthetic experience); besides that, its culture values are reflective design quality which will result in attribution of
meaning to the product (experience of meaning). Furthermore, the gunungan concept incorporated also function as the base/stand for the whole mug.

Figure 4: Gunungan concept introduced to the lower part of the mug

The doubled layered wall introduced can be classified as a disruptive innovation (Christensen, 1997), as it deviates from the commonly know mug with handle (Fig. 5). The space between the two walls prevents heat transfer from inside to the outer wall, thus, making it functional without handle. This shape and configuration are aimed to address the function, understandability; usability and physical feel of the product; these are behavioural design quality which will result in emotional product experience.

Figure 5: Sectional view of the mug

The three levels of design will play a significant role in engaging consumers to the product; right from the first encounter through to after product has been used for an event (Fig. 6). At first encounter (marketing/advertising stage); the appealing quality of a product will make consumers emotionally fascinated to the product. The influence of fascinating emotion at this stage will result in consumer wanting to buy a product even before knowing the function of the product. After product purchase, consumers can be engaged with the product during the process of using it. This is achieved when product is motive compliant; users feel satisfied and thus, get emotionally attached to the product. According to (Pink, 2005), memories developed through product experience are context enriched by emotions. Therefore, a product of standard qualities will be appraised after usage as legitimate. This will make users admire the product, thereby engaging them with the product for subsequent usage.
Conclusion
According to (Norman, 2004), a good design has to be fundamental part of the design process from the very start; it cannot be adopted once the product has been completed. This process begins by identifying emotions that consumers seek and ends with a product that meets those desires. This will advance the connection of the company with the customer while extending the brand and reputation of the company within current and potential customers (Boatwright & Cagan, 2010). Thus, to achieve this, designers must be ready to tap into force beyond the confines of their minds; dream big to bring about product experience for targeted group (limited edition). With these, each of us may not create great things, but all of us can create small things in a great way.

Reference


