

PEDAGOGY OF DESIGN LANGUAGE

HOW TO CREATE A STRONGER 'BRAND-USER' CONNECTION?

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The increasing impact of technology and the integration of AI in the creative industries have sparked discussions about the value of traditional craftsmanship and originality. In this changing landscape, design education plays a crucial role in educating students to develop relevant skills for the future.

This paper focuses on fostering students' exploration of the emotional aspects of design. By developing a design language that authentically reflects users' personalities and characteristics, students can cultivate a deeper understanding of human needs and desires. This understanding becomes particularly valuable as AI becomes increasingly involved in automating routine tasks.

In the classroom, embracing the diversity of individuals and their originality enables students to develop a creative perspective on the role of technology and its impact on our lives. They can learn to strike a balance between the advantages of AI and the preservation of essential human elements that contribute to meaningful and engaging design experiences.

Ultimately, this paper aims to provide a foundation for creative resources that embrace diversity and inclusivity. By doing so, it empowers students to shape the future of the industry in positive ways that align with the values and aspirations of the newer generation.

Keywords: DESIGN LANGUAGE, BRAND, USER, CREATIVE EDUCATION, EMOTIONAL DESIGN

1. WHY

Every year, the market is flooded with approximately 30,000 new products attempting to cater to various consumer needs and desires. Astonishingly, according to Clayton Christensen, a Harvard Business School professor, 95% of these products end up failing, leaving little room for success.

A significant factor contributing to this high failure rate is the designers' tendency to overlook the understanding of users' emotional needs, which are essential for defining lifestyle choices. Market research reveals a sea of indistinguishable stainless steel and black plastic kitchen appliances, lacking visual differentiation to suit diverse lifestyles. These products often exhibit a saturated uniformity in form, ugly handles, and convoluting user interfaces.

While a product may fulfill its functional requirements and address a problem, its success hinges on its ability to resonate with users' unique personalities. Consider a

smartphone that boasts cutting-edge features but fails to evoke a satisfying tactile experience or visual appeal. LG, one of the world's largest manufacturers, decided to exit the smartphone market in 2021. The demise was not due to a lack of innovation but because their products failed to leave a lasting impression on users' minds.

Likewise, an autonomous vehicle may excel in safety features and convenience, yet if it fails to align with users' self-image or lifestyle aspirations, it may struggle to gain traction. Waymo, the autonomous driving project formerly associated with Google, possesses advanced technology, but its bulky design has garnered criticism for its unattractive appearance compared to other smart vehicles. The reaction of consumers to such a design choice remains a captivating subject.

Hence, it is crucial for designers to consider not only the functional aspects of a product but also the emotional needs and desires of the user. By doing so, they can craft products that not only solve problems but also forge a deeper connection with the user, significantly enhancing the chances of success in the marketplace.

2. VALUE OF DESIGN LANGUAGE

The consumer's purchase decision is a multifaceted process influenced by various factors. Procter & Gamble suggests that this decision-making moment, where consumers choose one product over competing offerings, often takes less than 10 seconds. In this process, the emotional aspect of the consumer's mind plays a significant role. Moreover, the product experience itself is highly personal and subject to change over time. Extraordinary product experiences leave a lasting impression on consumers, and it is within this moment that the value of design language truly shines.

As British technology journalist Ben Lovejoy pointed out, the market demands a variety of customizable choices, especially in an environment where advanced product features tend to become homogenized. This is evident in the growth of Beats in-ear headphones, which saw a remarkable 553% increase in sales, compared to a 3% growth in AirPods shipments. The success of Beats headphones can be attributed to two key factors: brand awareness and availability of options for personalization and variety.

As such, design language offers two distinct benefits that directly impact a consumer's purchase decision. Firstly, it contributes to brand recognition. By maintaining a coherent and consistent design language over an extended period, companies can cultivate a sense of corporate brand awareness among consumers. This, in turn, fosters brand equity and reinforces consumer loyalty to the brand.

Secondly, design language plays a crucial role in connecting with specific consumer cohorts that share common values. For instance, Millennials (Gen-Y) are known for their emphasis on diversity and inclusion, which greatly influences their decision-making process. Unlike Gen-X or Baby Boomers, Millennials have developed their

own aspirations through market experiences and place greater importance on aesthetic values that fulfill their emotional needs. In this context, design language serves as a powerful tool to communicate these values to consumers and assist them in making well-informed purchase decisions.

Overall, the value of design language extends beyond creating a recognizable brand identity. It also serves as a means of effectively communicating the brand's values to consumers and establishing a strong emotional connection with them.

3. IMPERATIVE

To create products that deeply resonate with their target audience, designers must have a thorough understanding of the aesthetic value and design language. The emotional connection consumers form with a product's appearance often plays a pivotal role in their purchase decisions, underscoring the importance of meticulous attention to design language and its resulting emotional response.

Design aesthetics are highly subjective, varying according to individual tastes, preferences, personality traits, lifestyles, and values. Consumer interviews have revealed four distinct consumer groups, each showcasing unique personalities and values: performance-oriented, passionate, spontaneous, and familiar. Performance-oriented consumers prioritize purposeful features, while spontaneous buyers seek out unique and enjoyable product experiences. Passionate consumers view products as an extension of self-expression, while familiar consumers prioritize core values such as safety and stability.

This understanding highlights the crucial need for designers to comprehend their target audience and create product designs that align with consumers' personal lifestyles and values. By doing so, designers can develop products that not only evoke emotional appeal but also provide a sense of identity and self-expression. When consumers feel a strong emotional connection to a product, they are more inclined to make a purchase and potentially become loyal customers.

In essence, the aesthetic value of a product and its design language are pivotal factors for designers striving to create products that effectively resonate with the emotions, values, and personalities of their target audiences. Grasping these elements empowers designers to develop products that not only fulfill functional needs but also offer a profound sense of identity and self-expression to users.

4. PEDAGOGY OF DESIGN LANGUAGE

The pedagogy of design language employs a structured approach to teach students the essential principles and elements of visual communication and design. It encompasses a range of techniques and tools, critical thinking about design choices,

and effective visual communication. This comprehensive approach involves various components such as lectures, workshops, assignments, critiques, and collaborative projects. Its overarching goal is to provide students with a solid foundation in design methodology and practice, empowering them to become successful designers. Collaborative group work is particularly effective, as it allows diverse team members to explore a wide array of design options by bringing their unique forms and surface characteristics to the sketchbook.

Design language plays a pivotal role in establishing a brand's identity and has a profound impact on consumers' emotions and perceptions. To cultivate a successful design language, students are encouraged to delve into contextual research to understand the value and personality of their target users. Additionally, they explore the development of form languages and surface characteristics, such as color, material, and finish. These elements enable them to express the product's personality and set it stand out amongst competitors.

Moreover, students are prompted to engage in an exercise that involves exploring a matrix of design languages and validating concepts. This exercise is instrumental in developing their own brand and catering to the emotional needs of the target consumers. The matrix typically incorporates two axes: Technology and Lifestyle. The technology axis reflects the consumers' openness to accepting innovation, while the Lifestyle axis represents their personality traits. This exercise empowers students to refine their design skills and create market-viable products that resonate with their target audience.

Overall, the pedagogy of design language equips students with the necessary tools and knowledge to navigate the world of design. By fostering an understanding of design principles, encouraging exploration of form and surface characteristics, and facilitating exercises that validate design concepts, students are empowered to create compelling products that meet the emotional needs of consumers and make a significant impact in the market.

5. ASYNCHRONOUS CRAFTING

The development of design language can greatly benefit from asynchronous crafting, which offers students the opportunity to explore diverse aesthetic values and visual languages. This visualization exercise is particularly effective when archetypes and attributes are clearly identified. By focusing on specific user segments that elicit an emotional connection, students can create powerful design solutions that establish a strong brand-user bond.

The conventional linear process of design language development often hinders creativity and restricts the exploration of varied aesthetic values. In an era where design is increasingly focused on diversity and inclusion, it becomes imperative to

cultivate design language that reflects the values of a broader range of users. Asynchronous crafting introduces a lateral approach to design language development, enabling students to delve into a wide spectrum of aesthetic values and visual languages.

Through concept sketching exercises that directly relate to specific user groups, students gain a deeper understanding of the diverse needs and preferences of their target users. This understanding empowers them to create design solutions that emotionally resonate with their intended audience, thereby fostering a stronger brand-user connection.

Furthermore, asynchronous crafting fosters collaboration and teamwork among students as they work in multiple groups to explore different design solutions. By sharing their ideas and perspectives, students learn from one another and develop a broader repertoire of design language.

Therefore, embracing asynchronous crafting as a method of design language development allows students to explore a diverse range of aesthetic values and visual languages. By focusing on specific user segments and promoting collaboration, students can create design solutions that establish a profound emotional connection with their target users, fostering a robust brand-user relationship.

6. PERSONIFYING

Within a creative classroom setting, it is possible to segment people's emotional values using an archetypal personality graph. In the industry, the use of a color-coded matrix has proven to be a valuable tool for developing archetypal personas. Colors have the ability to influence human emotions and behavior, and designing a language around specific codes can evoke particular personality traits and emotions. Presented below are sample studies that have been developed for design language, focusing on archetypes.

Red | *PASSIONATE*

- Passionate people are dynamic and expressive in their behavior and appearance. They have a pronounced sense of style or fashion that draws attention to them, and they also have a sensual quality to their movements. In addition, the person likely focuses on achieving high-quality results in whatever they do.
- Visual Attribute: *DYNAMMIC, PRONOUNCED, SENSUAL, QUALITY-ORIENTED*

Blue | *PERFORMANCE*

- People who value performance are purposeful and intellectual, as they often prioritize achieving their goals and making progress in their lives. While performance-oriented individuals may have a strong desire to justify their actions, they may also recognize the value in taking risks and making decisions based on intuition or emotion rather than solely on rational thoughts.
- Visual Attribute: *FUNCTIONAL, PROFESSIONAL, INTELLIGENT, PRECISE, PERFORMANCE-ORIENTED*

Yellow | *SPONTANEOUS*

- Spontaneous consumers are adventurous and open to trying new things. They prioritize the quality of their experiences, rather than sticking to routine or tradition. This personality type may be energized by novelty and the excitement of trying something unfamiliar. Their willingness to take risks indicates that they may be comfortable with uncertainty and enjoy the thrill of stepping outside of their comfort zone. This trait can be an asset in pursuing new opportunities and achieving personal growth.
- Visual Attribute: *FUN, UNEXPECTED, CRATIVE, VIBRANT*

Green | *FAMILIAR*

- Familiar consumers refer to individuals or households who value an essential lifestyle. They prioritize their health and stability in order to achieve personal happiness and fulfillment. This is a positive mindset and a healthy approach to life.
- Visual Attribute: *SIMPLE, RELIABLE, STABLE, EASY*

7. ARCHETYPES & ATTRIBUTES

Archetypal segmentation (*Figure 1, 2*) and lifestyle attributes (*Figure 3, 4*) are a common method used in industry to identify specific consumer groups based on their shared characteristics and behavioral patterns. This can help students to better understand their target audience and develop effective marketing strategies in class.

Personifying target consumers through the use of personas is a useful tool for creative teams to develop a deeper understanding of their target audience's need, want, and desire. By creating detailed personas that represent different segments of target audiences, students can better design concepts to meet the specific needs of each group and prepare a powerful story telling.

Using multiple personas can also help to generate a range of design concepts that appeal to different segments of the target audience. This approach can help to stimulate creative thinking and generate new ideas that may not have been considered otherwise.



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Overall, using archetypal segmentation, lifestyle attributes, and personas can help students to learn more targeted and effective marketing strategies that resonate with their target audience and ultimately drive business success.

Figure 1 and Figure 2 exemplify archetypal segmentations and attributes.

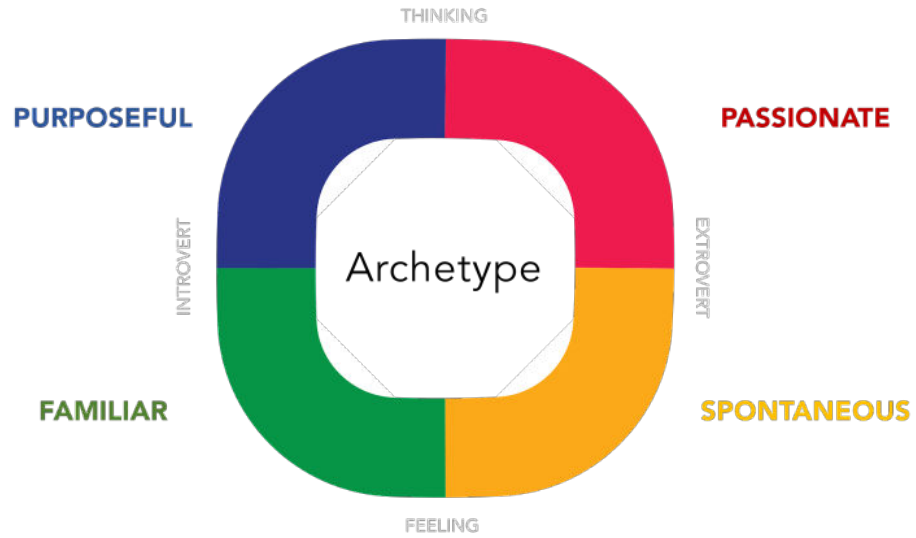


Figure 1. Archetype Framework



Figure 2. Archetypal Attributes

Figure 3 shows lifestyle product examples of each archetype. Figure 4 exemplifies design attributes that can be useful to explore design languages and product innovations.

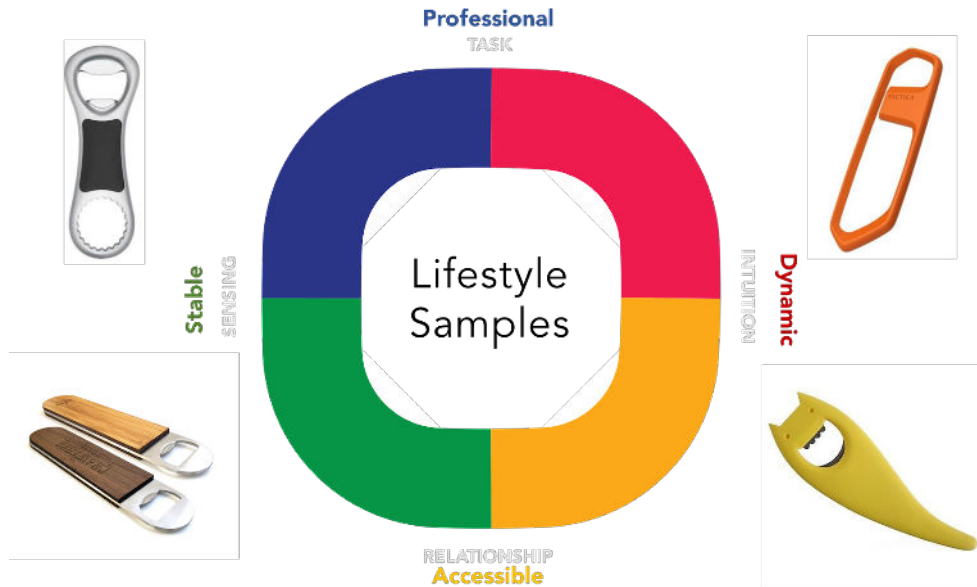


Figure 3. Lifestyle Product Samples



Figure 4. Lifestyle Product Design Attributes

9. CONCLUSION

The purpose of design language is to create a powerful and coherent aesthetic that reflects organization's the brand value and users' the emotional value. By understanding the target consumer's personality and values, students can develop design language and surface characteristics that resonate with them on a personal level. This, in turn, can create an extraordinary product experience that is acknowledged and remembered by consumers.

To achieve this, students can be encouraged to undergo contextual research and practice form development within an archetypal matrix to create a range of visual languages and validate them for their own purpose. Ultimately, the value of design language lies in its ability to build meaningful brand and product experience and connect with consumers on an emotional level.

Overall, asynchronous crafting is a method of design language development that can help students create powerful design solutions that make a stronger brand-user connection. By focusing on diverse target users and exploring a wide range of aesthetic values and visual languages, students can develop a deeper understanding of design and its impact on users.

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