

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION IN FASHION

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Abstract

Growing Impact and Importance of Design Education in India has matured over the years and is booming. By 2020, the potential market for design in India is expected to be INR 188.32 billion. From a handful in 2010, the number of design institutions has grown to over 70 by 2016. Given the positive demographics, rising educational aspirations, openness to pursue alternate careers, employment opportunities and increased affordability of higher education, the number of design aspirants is increasing every year. The nature of fashion education reflects the evolution of fashion education, from the earliest forms of apprenticeship to modern notions of educational systems producing 'professionals'. The majority of curriculum focuses on fashion design and technology, although a few programs offer degrees focused on the business side of the apparel industry. Degree opportunities range from technical diplomas and certificates in such areas as apparel production competencies garment fabrication, sketching, cutting, tailoring, embroidery, and computer-aided design (CAD) and fashion retail management, to four-year bachelor degrees in fashion design. The Indian Government is promoting and supporting design through setting up design clinics and establishment of four new National Institutes of Design. Global corporations are willing to work with Indian designers to understand the local market, which puts the spotlight on design industry. Quality of design education will have to be maintained at a larger scale, because design education is likely to explode. The market is very large and the number of students will grow exponentially, which means that efficiencies will have to be developed to deal with this along with upholding the standards of quality.

Keywords: higher education, design, fashion, professional

Introduction

Indian traditions and crafts provide a wonderful backdrop and inspiration towards looking at and understanding modern design. The strength of Indian design stems from its deep cultural roots and its growing economic position. India has a vibrant design industry and an ever-increasing number of design users backed by a strong platform of design education. Indian designers have a mix of talent, insight and experience. Many young designers are choosing to work at in-house departments which offer benefits, countable hours, career ways, and opportunity for greater collaborations. Exposure to major international projects is also one of the attractions. The design industry could broadly be categorized in three: in-house design teams, design businesses and freelancers. In India, there is no standard definition of the term Professional Designer. In addition to the designers qualified through the number of design programs, there are also a number of professionals, who are not formally trained, working or operating as designers. For example many fine arts students acquire graphic design skills and work as graphic designers. The Government of India has offered increased support for design education by a few initiatives such as new National Institutes of Design (NID), design innovation centers, Design Education Quality Mark and national aptitude tests for design. By 2020, the potential market for design in India is expected to be INR 188.32 billion (GBP 1.43 billion). Only a fifth of the design market is currently tapped. From a handful in 2010, the number of design institutions has grown to over 70 by 2016. The number of designers required by 2020 in industrial, graphic, communication, packaging and other design domains will be 62,000, provided the design potential is fully realized. Currently there are approximately 7,000 qualified designers in the country and approximately 5,000 students in design education. International Collaboration Opportunities

Objectives

- Scope of fashion and fashion designing in professional development
- Impart knowledge about the importance of higher education in fashion

Review of literature

The Indian government acknowledges the role of foreign universities in achieving its mission of transforming India into an Asian higher education hub and there are positive signs of a major policy initiative in this direction coming through. In India there is a major concentration of design companies and design institutions in the four urban areas—Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore and Pune. It is a fact, that although fashion design is often the point of start of fashion education, design is only a small part of the wider fashion industry. Ultimately the fashion industry must benefit from the increasing

professionalization of the sector and the tailoring of the academic offer to meet niche and hybridised education. In principle an MBA in Fashion Management should be an advance on a general MBA. The fashion industry has been undergone substantial transformations to accommodate the needs and aspirations of the consumers. Fashion houses are constantly searching for fresh ideas and creating new product. Fashion industry is now working with multiple collections throughout the year – the traditional Fall/Winter and Spring/Summer collections per year is story of past now. Fast-fashion (Frazer, 2006) companies such as Zara, Hennes and Esprit have been 2 successfully using agile manufacturing, lean production and quick response strategies to reduce the production lead time, increase their competitive advantage and expedite the design process. To accept this latest trend, ongoing challenges and remain competitive in the marketplace, fashion designers and professionals must work on many other factors beyond the visual design of a garment. It is pertinent to address the relationship between designer (ideation), product (innovative design) and consumer (aspirations).

Designer and Product

Due to technological advancement, tough competition, fluctuations of changing consumer tastes and market demand, fashion designers must respond much quicker to the evolving global market, and to create products with ‘unique identity’ that differentiate them from competitors. In order to understand what determines the success and failure of a product, it is essential to understand the design mechanism. Don Norman’s three aspects of design as indicated in the Table, visual design, behavioral design, and reflective design are aspects that should be considered when designing and developing a new product for today’s consumer market.

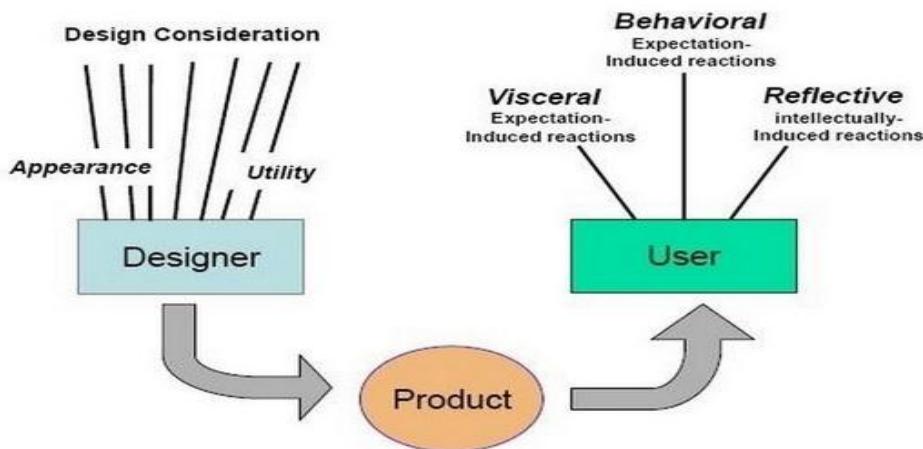


Image source: public-m.interaction-design.org

National Design Policy

Realizing the increasing importance of design in economic, industrial and societal development and in improving quality of products and services, the Government of India adopted the National Design Policy in 2007 through broad consultations. The vision behind initiating the “National Design Policy” was to have a “design enabled Indian industry” which could impact both the national economy and the quality of life in a positive manner. This was the major breakthrough in the field of fashion, mural art, interior designing and so on.

India Design Council

To implement the provisions of the National Design Policy, the government established India Design Council in 2009. India Design Council is a strategic body for multi-disciplinary design. The number of designers required by 2020 in industrial, graphic, communication, packaging and other design domains will be 62,000, provided the design potential is fully realized. Currently there are approximately 7,000 qualified designers in the country and approximately 12,000 students in design education. The choice of courses in design and the number of students interested in pursuing design course are both growing. NID conducts a national entrance examination for admissions. The number of students appearing for this examination has been growing exponentially year after year. The number of applicants for Bachelor of Design programmes was 10,451 for 100 seats. For Master of Design programmes, the number of applicants was 9,200 for 275 seats for the academic year beginning 2016.

Qualification Progression

Design education scenario in India lacks opportunities for progression from bachelor's to master's level and from master's level to Ph.D. The eligibility for admission to these postgraduate programmes is “any graduation”. Hence, the postgraduate

programme does not build on the knowledge acquired by the student during undergraduate studies. Rather, it starts with basic knowledge of design and covers the undergraduate programme content in two years. There are only a few Ph.D. programs in design in India. The number of designers required by 2020 in industrial, graphic, communication, packaging and other design domains will be 62,000, provided the design potential is fully realized. Currently there are approximately 7,000 qualified designers in the country and approximately 5,000 students in design education.

International Collaboration Opportunities

The United Kingdom, United States of America, Italy and Netherlands as favoured countries for international collaboration for Indian institutions. USA followed by the UK, is the top destination for Indian design students to study abroad. Greater opportunities for international collaboration are in the area of developing and delivering niche programmes in the emerging domains of design. Introducing more master's programmes and Ph.D. programmes will further increase opportunities for international collaboration. International collaborative programmes do not pose a big challenge for Indian design institutions. Students have shown an increasing interest in international mobility and other aspects of collaborative programmes, while legislative constraints have been reported to be only marginally challenging. There exists a trend of forming international partnerships to initiate a new design institution. The success of these partnerships is an excellent benchmark for more such collaborations.

The Government of India has offered increased support for design education by announcing and implementing initiatives such as new national institutes of design, design innovation centers, Design Education Quality Mark and national aptitude test for design. The Indian government acknowledges the role of foreign universities in achieving its mission of transforming India into an Asian higher education hub and there are positive signs of a major policy initiative in Growing Impact and Importance of Design Education

Barriers

There are no design research journals that get published in India. Barring a few exceptions there have been no conferences held in India where papers are invited, peer reviewed and then published. Design institutions in India are keen to enhance teaching through faculty development programmes to enhance teaching skills. 75 per cent design institutions offer compulsory courses for faculty to enhance teaching skills. They support problem based learning and encourage peer learning amongst their students. Some of the institutions support internationalization to enhance learning and teaching. Design institutions actively pursue different initiatives and activities to support internationalization.

Suggestions for Progress

- The industry wants to engage design schools in active research for new products/value chain and sponsor specialist projects. Infrastructure and facilities at the design schools have improved considerably in the last six years still need to be globally effective. Academic staff strength has grown in number with younger faculty joining. Faculty recruitment remains a challenge and as a result, institutions are recruiting international faculty though, the numbers are still small.
- Efforts to enhance design curriculum must be there, uniformly across institutions. Curricula will have to be designed to be more interdisciplinary and less compartmentalized to allow more choice and flexibility to student aspirations.
- With changing times, design education in India needs to evolve to the next level to meet the expectations of both the learner and the industry. The challenge is to move to a more holistic, multi-disciplinary design education to create design professionals who can position design more strategically as an integration of the aesthetic, business, technological and sociological concerns.
- Another key intervention needed is to embed design in the teaching and learning of other disciplines and capabilities, such as in business and engineering schools, and introduce it early in secondary schools. Quality is improving, but at a slow pace.
- Students are also less prone to study in depth, research and read text, but this is a generational phenomenon, for which educators need to adapt. Quality of design education will have to be maintained at a larger scale, because design education is likely to expand.
- The market is huge and the number of students will grow exponentially, which means that efficiencies will have to be developed to deal with this, while still upholding standards of quality.
- Employability needs to be reconsidered as many colleges are focusing largely on skills or software knowledge, when in reality it needs to be much more than that. According to 27 percent Indian design companies, Indian graduates were not good as graduates from other countries, whereas 18 percent felt that Indian graduates were not

as good as design graduates from other countries and 9 percent felt that design graduates from India were slightly better than design graduates from other countries.

- The training areas mentioned were wide ranging and included research methodologies, problem identification, conceptual development, specific software skills, renderings, presentation slide preparations, quick mock-ups, time management, creative problem solving skills, project management and professional practice.
- Mentoring at various stages of the design process, from ideation and research to client meetings and costing must be provided to the graduates in their first year of employment. Industry respondents think that India has good design schools, but there is a shortage of good faculty with industry experience.
- Industry rues the lack of facilities and interest among the staff and students to explore real materials, design details, actual functioning of new designs and very little design mentoring. They feel that Indian design school facilities are inadequate compared to design schools abroad. The curriculum needs an overhaul to make it more relevant for innovative thought process and practical outcome. It could be intensive and demanding, with more faculty-student interaction. The design education needs to offer smaller specialized focus areas that cater to specific industry verticals.

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