

LIMINOÏD DESIGN DIMENSION

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ABSTRACT

The idea of design transversality is embedded in all topics related to design and is linked to many academic fields and organizations. In this paper, on the basis of liminal theory, we argue that the idea of design and transversality connexity is a central idea, which must be highlighted and is derived from a strong epistemological concept. The paper then defines design in liminoidity, which means that design is “not here, not there” but in an ontological sense lies always betwixt and between two ideas and no consideration of this design characteristic can be the core from which paradigmatic negative conflicts between fields and disciplines, in their links to design, can be generated.

Keywords: Design - Interdisciplinary - Marketing - Engineering - Art - Management - Liminal.

1 INTRODUCTION

Anyone undertaking design research is confronted immediately with one characteristic that seems intrinsic to design. This characteristic is arrived at by the conjunction between coordination (and) subordination (as), a state influencing any design thinking. Design is *de facto* rooted in the notion of “conversational implicature” (Grice 1975) In other words, design implies in a constant way that something else lies behind the design. For example we can add the terms strategy, art, marketing, ageing, innovation, disability, law, and the list can continue indefinitely.

This statement is significant and requires further exploration to understand its implications. This can be expressed through Aristotle’s principle; “the beginning of all sciences is the astonishment that things are just like that.” It is important therefore to be astonished and to raise questions about the foundations of design.

This paper explores this concept and asks the questions. Why is it necessary for design to encompass other fields, concepts, functions or disciplines? In other words, why does the idea of design as an autonomous concept require apparent connexity?

2 DESIGN TRANSVERSALITY

Other researchers have already made direct and indirect links with theories of design. In particular the complexity model put forward within the framework of the research project undertaken by Findeli 1998, the convergence model between design theory and management theory (Mozota 2003), the expandability of design (Hatchuel and al.2003), and design as a system of representation (Mathieu 2006) (Hoffman, Mathieu Roehrich 2008). Each of these studies have contributed significantly to design theory, although the inclusion in this list of Findeli’s model may raise more questions than it answers. If we refer to the problem highlighted by Casti about dialogue between two academic researchers on the complexity of design theory, “The complexity is what you do not understand,” says the first, “You do not understand the complexity,” replied the second (Casti, 1994). The following paper examines these ideas and puts forward a theory in response.

In the first instance, an intuitive response can be developed through the concept of design transversality, which provides an initial answer. In this sense, design appears in a constant state of dialogue with other fields. In stating that design is transversal only provides a partial epistemological viewpoint.

Interrogating this idea further, it is possible to extend the concept that design is experiencing a continuous state of duality and constant connection with other concepts. So why is design constantly involved in a dynamic dialogue realized through an extension of the concept of coordination and subordination.

The intention of the argument put forward in this paper is to provide clarification and to put forward a more flexible understanding of design theory. This theory has its roots in the following hypothesis:

Can a key characteristic of design be the fact that design must always be coupled with another entity, and if this is a key feature of design rather than its avatar, any attempt to include design exclusively in a single dimension must result in a state of conflict. This has been expressed as “paradigmatic wars” (Koenig 2006).

3 LIMINAL THEORY

Using the concept of Liminal Theory (El Hilali, 2008) our thinking can be developed by responding to anthropology theory and Victor Turner’s theory of liminality. However it is first necessary to define the principal and its subsequent extension to liminoïdality.

Victor Turner’s liminal principle refers to any intermediate situation turned into a permanent and stable condition with the distinction related to the idea of stage and the passage from one situation to another. That space was defined by Turner as a liminal state before he discovered many other intermediate states more rooted in the stability to which he designated the term liminoïdal. It is this theory that we are using to explore the field of design by adopting this approach it becomes possible to highlight an original perspective on the connection between design and the integration with other disciplines.

Turner refers to the concept of “rite de passage” when discussing the liminal idea of state: “By state, I mean here a relatively fixed or stable condition and would include in its meaning social constancies such as legal status, profession, office or calling, rank or degree”. In this sense Turner appears to be offering a transitional state, anchored in stability.

To observe the liminal concept, we can for example, consider how human life is a liminal state enrolled in a phase between a birth and a death. In architectural design, the concept is more materialized: bay window, window itself, entrance hall, square, are all spaces whose strength is driven by their liminoïdal features, they are between internal and external space. The centaur, as described in Greek mythology, is seen as a shared state of man and horse and is another example of a liminoïdal representation. Turner defines his concept in the following terms: “Liminal is neither here, nor there, they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial”. The question that arises from this focuses on the theory of how liminoïd notion is concerned about design ?

4 FIGURES OF LIMINOÏDALITY CONSTRUCTIONS

The first expression of a liminoïdal design characteristic lies therefore in major academic disciplines such as architecture, engineering, management science and art and it emerges through two points: Firstly, it lies in the fact that none of the disciplines in question can claim exclusivity linked to design. Secondly, as soon as belief in exclusivity is initiated, this kind of thinking contradicts itself as the reasoning is performed through a liminoïdal design perception. In other words, through a questioning of what lies internally and externally at the border and which is neither inside nor outside but betwixt and between.

The connection to design is therefore present as a “strange” characteristic because the inclusion of design in one exclusive discipline is not possible because of the liminoïdality of design. Failure to account for the liminoïdal characteristic of design can lead to a state of epistemological fear or anxiety. Two examples can be used to illustrate this point. Design as a form of art and as part of economic life is able to generate

a form of anxiety (Rosenberg 1964) (Buchanan 2007). From an opposing perspective the liminoïdal perception of Art within visual communication disciplines leads one researcher to the conclusion that design must be disconnected from art (Quinton 2006). Therefore we can advance the theory that a lack in liminoïdal design perception results in this kind of reasoning.

Reading design from its liminoïdal dimension shows in this sense the weakness of an argument which tries to encompass design within a discipline and reinforces by the same manner design and disciplines in liminoïdal situations. When considering disciplines we include also design as its own discipline. The liminoïdal design principle is thus intrinsic to design by definition. Thus, in management science, a liminoïdal design dimension is evident through an organization's function and management disciplines.

The design theories mentioned above have shown how management sciences disciplines and management functions are able to achieve strong points of convergence and interaction. The question that remains unresolved as a result of these models may emerge as follows. How do these convergences and interactions arise from their nuclear points?

In response to this question, we advance here this idea. If this dynamic of convergence and interaction is possible, it's because liminoïd design has prepared it further upstream. By generating a liminoïdal dimension, design creates the material from which bridges and interactions between disciplines and functions will be built. In other words, liminoïd design is a launch platform, the base and the root from which transversality and connexity design engage and begin their flight.

5 DESIGN LIMINOÏDALITY IN MARKETING

In the development and illustration of the idea discussed here, it is pertinent to observe how a liminoïdal dimension is constructed in marketing.

Significant research has highlighted design and marketing interaction (Cooper & Press 1995) (Mozota, Veryzer 2005) (Mathieu 2006) (Bruce & Daly 2007). However, various studies have shown from the idea of convergence of purpose of design that the contribution of design to marketing can be integrated with a marketing mix, branding and new product development concepts (NPD). Role of design in marketing remains unclear and limited to a tool for differentiation. (Kotler & Rath 1984). Alternatively it may be seen as complementarily to the marketing offer (Hetzl 1993). In addition to these ideas it can be perceived that the construction between design and marketing remains unclear. Design is seen as a "strategic tool" to assist the marketing management (Cooper & Press 1995: Bruce & Daly 2007). It is not known how this convergence comes about apart from the vague idea that design is linked transversely with marketing.

The missing dimension here lies in the identification and definition of the genetic transplant from which the link between design and marketing is able to emerge. But this genetic construction stays restricted to grammatical coordination "and" on one side and in a tool metaphor on the other side.

The observation that design is a characteristic linked to liminoïdality opens up design indefinitely, in a positive sense, to other fields. This highlights the nature of the link between design and marketing and bring a new perspective on two levels:

The first level of liminoïdality lies in the connection between design and marketing mix. In these models, we see clearly, even too clearly, how design fits with the different variables of the marketing mix. However, we do not know the epistemological foundation which allows the easy convergence of design with the marketing mix.

In this sense, marketing cannot draw attention to the mix without the fundamental presence of design

even if it appears as a neglected tool (Kotler & Rath 1984) and design cannot refer to the mix without highlighting its strategic role. The inclusion of design in a liminoïdal dimension draws a new territory for design in which it lies not in marketing and not outside but in a liminoïdal dimension. It is not transversal but lies at a mid point between transversality and connexity.

The second level is linked to the fact that design is a strategic tool in the process of new product development (NPD). If design is liminoïdal to the various components of NPD, its interaction with marketing operates on the basis of the liminoïdal principle which shapes design both in its interaction with marketing as with other functions of the NPD however, without liminoïdal exclusivity to marketing. This idea reinforces the argument regarding the complex dimension of design in NPD and branding.

Thus, from a managerial point of view, putting in perspective the liminoïdal characteristic raises the possibility of improving the integration of design into companies by clearing in advance grounded conflicts and misunderstandings which design management department may face in its interaction with other functions and essentially with marketing. From an academic point of view, the perception of design in its liminoïdal dimension allows better epistemological conversations between different disciplines where design plays an important role.

Finally, five elements contribute to the clearer definition of design through a liminoïdal concept:

1. An alternative to a weak statement epistemologically, is intrinsic to design transversality.
2. An alternative and flexible idea, contrasting with design representation, is complexity and systemicity.
3. An awareness that any exclusive integration of design within one discipline, field or function is incorrect and carries the seeds of conflict.
4. The design defined as a liminoïdal idea can expand into two ideas or entities.
5. Design, by definition, is always connected in some way to another discipline.

6 CONCLUSION

As a result of our discipline background in reference to management and marketing, this research on liminoïdal design was done from this perspective. And given the infinite design connexity, any liminoïdal exploration from other disciplines will carry undeniably a better synergy in design research.

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