

The Many Faces of Inspiration: A Study on Socio-Cultural Influences in Design

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Abstract : The creative journey in design often starts with a spark of inspiration, the source of which can be from myriad stimuli- nature, poetry, personal experiences or even fleeting thoughts and images. While it is indeed an important source of creative exploration, interpretation of this inspiration may often times be influenced by demographic and psychographic variables of the creator - Age, gender, lifecycle stage, personal experiences and individual personality traits being some of these factors. Common sources of inspiration can thus be interpreted differently, translating to different elements of design, and using varied principles in their execution. Do such variables in the creator influence the nature of the creative output? If yes, what are the visible matrices in the output which can be differentiated? An observational study with two groups of Design students, studying in the same design institute, under the guidance of the same design mentor, was conducted to map this influence. Both the groups were unaware of each other but worked with a common source of inspiration as provided by the instructor. In order to maintain congruence, both the groups were provided with lyrical compositions from well-known ballads and poetry as the source of their inspiration. The outputs were abstract renditions using lines, colors and shapes; and these were analyzed under matrices for the elements and principles used to create the compositions. The study indicated that there was a demarcation in terms of the choice of lines, colors and shapes chosen to create the composition, between both groups. The groups also tended to use repetition, proportion and emphasis differently; giving rise to varied uses of the Design principles. The study threw interesting observations on how Design interpretation can vary for the same source of inspiration, based on demographic and psychographic variances. The implications can be traced not just to the process of creative design, but also to the deep social roots that bind creative thinking and Design ideation; which can provide an interesting commentary between different cohorts on what constitutes 'Good Design'.

Keywords : design compositions, inspiration, interpretation, psychographic factors, social factors

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