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DESIGN COMMUNICATION: FASHION DESIGN STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON DIGITAL VS PHYSICAL MOOD BOARDS

Walter Chipambwa¹, Evelyn Vimbai Chikwanya²^{1,2} School of Art and Design, Department of Clothing and Textile Technology, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe

Introduction



Creatives strive to make their work instantly recognizable and distinguishable through being resourceful and transforming ordinary work into extraordinary works of art. In the past, designers created mood boards utilizing other resources from print media such as magazines and newspapers, however due to the constant developments and advancement of digital technologies in the contemporary environment, print content providers are no longer offering printed media products but rather share and sell through online. Print media has been around for many years, but due to technological advancements, social media has had a significant impact on how people receive knowledge and updates. People are flocking to the new technology, making it difficult for print media to actually print on large scale as the sector has been affected by advances in technology. As a result of these changes, some designers have already gradually transitioned from physical mood boards to digital mood boards, as they seek to improve communication between the designer and the final consumers of their work. A mood board, in particular, is a collage of arranged pictures, components, word, and other design features into a template that is symbolic of the final design style and is used to generate any other form of concept design. Historically a number of designers have developed expertise in creating physical mood boards using newspapers and magazines, but due to the changing technology in the business world, a new relationship between designers and digital mood boards is starting to emerge. According to Cassidy (2011), a mood board is an essential part of the design process as it plays a role in development of the concept.

Problem Description



In the past, designers created mood boards utilizing other resources from print media such as magazines and newspapers, however due to the constant developments and advances in digital technologies in the contemporary environment, print content providers are no longer readily offering printed material or media but rather share and sell magazines online. Due to the technological advancements designers are facing challenges in creating mood boards because of the unavailability of print media.

Methods



The students were given a situational design problem in the fashion design class and were tasked to come up with a physical moodboard and a digital mood board of the same problem. They were asked to evaluate the two methods of mood board construction they used and share their experiences. The study used students who were in their final year of study as they would have gained much knowledge from the first year they enroll and they are also expected to do a final capstone design project.

Results



In this study the students managed to come up with their mood boards and others successfully managed to communicate their design ideas as this is one of the key attributes of a mood board to communicate (McDonagh & Storer, 2004). A poorly constructed mood board may not be interpreted the same way with different viewers and in this study the students preferred to add both text and hand drawn sketches to help the viewers understand their design ideas. As a design tool mood boards have to effectively try to communicate the concept without much explanation. The students also agreed that their efforts in making the mood boards was affected by the fact that in fashion it is the final product that really matters. The journey one would have gone through in the process of solving the design case might not really matter to the student but the ultimate product. *Digital mood board in fashion*-The students managed to use general creative design software such as Adobe Illustrator, CorelDraw and AutoCAD. Other students also managed to use free mood board applications like Pinterest, Canva and GoMoodboard. From the interviews with students it was highlighted that use of these software or applications to make fashion mood boards was somehow difficult as most of the students had to learn some of the tools for the first time. Despite the easy sharing of digital files that happened amongst students sharing images to use for the task at hand most of the students argued that the detail they would have wanted to add to make their mood boards was difficult to put across.

Physical mood boards-The making of physical mood boards meant the student had to collect images from newspapers, magazines, flyers and other various sources. Due to changes in technology the print media has been on the downward trend and as such students faced some difficulties in getting wide varieties of images from different sources. From the observations students spent a lot of time making the physical mood boards as they tried as much as they could to put the detail they thought was relevant. One participant stated, "I have to make sure my fashion idea is well communicated so I have to add fresh leaves and grass to really put emphasis on life and sustainability of my product". The use of mood boards in fashion helps to capture the emotional experience from different viewpoints.

Table 1: Observation key points

	Case 1 Physical moodboard	Case 2 Digital moodboard
Construction (time)	Takes a lot of time	Takes less time
Viewer engagement	Highly engaging	Depends on hardware, software
Creativity	Allows one to show their creativity	Limited or affected by the software skills
Effectiveness in communication	Very effective for physical viewers	Effective in geographically distant engagements
Sustainability	Promotes sustainable design	Less use of materials
Resources	Need to collect items all over	Easily available online

Discussion / Conclusion



All the ten (students) managed to produce the two mood boards and participated in the semi structured interviews. The observations done and were recorded and key points highlighted in all the practical sessions when the students came to class for the development of their mood boards. All the students managed to create their mood board in both formats that is the physical and the digital mood board. The physical mood boards are iterative in nature and during the observations it was highlighted that some students kept changing their collages up until a point they thought they were now good visual presentations. For the digital mood boards the students were allowed opportunities to explore various software they were comfortable with in making up the mood board. Mood boards are important in the design industry and in fashion they can assist in communication of the design. The process of developing a digital mood board was similar to that of the physical mood board though students preferred the physical mood board. In fashion design the physical mood board was found to be more expressive as it is more detailed than the digital mood board, which on the other hand is easily communicated unlike the physical mood board. Mood boards are important during the concept development stage as they dictate the project direction and once this is interpreted wrongly the viewers will fail to appreciate the design itself. In this study the students preferred adoption of the physical mood boards for the live presentations as these proffer more detail to the design thinking process. The study concludes that digital mood boards are easy to make as they require less resources but they do require the students to first develop their graphic design skills so that they can be as informative as the physical mood boards. The study also puts emphasis on the need for students to be taught the process of making the physical mood board first so that they appreciate its importance in the design thinking process and be able to then transfer this onto the digital platform. Mood boards are qualitative in nature and are important in visualizing the design idea and they play a key role in developing the student's creative thinking process a view also supported by (Freeman, Marcketti & Karpova, 2017).

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