Drivers and barriers

ATKINSON, Paul <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6633-7242>

Available from Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:

http://shura.shu.ac.uk/21168/

Published version

Copyright and re-use policy

Drivers and Barriers

Much has been written in recent years about the increasing diversity, interdisciplinarity and changing nature of design in all its forms, including a number of articles in this very journal. However, despite the diverse and multi-disciplinary nature of design, it seems that there are always particular drivers for any design activity to take place and, more often than not, a number of barriers to overcome to ensure it takes place successfully. By and large, the authors of the articles in this issue all identify and explore drivers and barriers with respect to different design activities.

Firstly, Ho and Siu identify a postmodern driver for designers to overcome the 'consumer discontent' arising from the 'boring' constraints of functionalism by introducing emotional considerations into the design process. The authors provide a useful overview of key literature in the area of Design and Emotion and come to the conclusion that there are no agreed definitions of the various terms used in the field. In order to help clarify the position, they offer a new model to rationalize, define and explain the relationship between the terms 'Emotion Design', 'Emotional Design' and 'Emotionalize Design'.

Joe Langley's article, 'Is Green a Grey Area?' looks at the design drivers resulting from both the sustainability agenda and design for an ageing population. He finds that despite all good intentions, the two agendas are not always considered together. This raises a number of barriers that act to discourage people, in particular the elderly, from engaging with recycling processes. The solutions hinted at include better education of both public and designers. Raising public awareness of the benefits of recycling without appearing too authoritarian would help to change attitudes and perceptions towards sustainability among those resistant to environmental issues, while better informing designers about the restricted physical mobility faced by the elderly would help them to design recycling facilities they could actually use.

In a similar vein of addressing inclusivity, Chamberlain and Yoxall explore the use of interactive exhibitions as a research tool to elicit information from and disseminate knowledge to a diverse audience. Their project, 'Future Bathroom', aims to improve the usability of the bathroom for elderly people, but they encountered the barrier of younger researchers asking elderly interviewees about deeply personal issues. Their solution was to engage elderly 'expert users' as co-researchers, training them to interview their peer group and enabling the interviewees to 'open up' to people they knew would understand their concerns. To gain feedback from a much wider range of participants, the team developed an interactive exhibition consisting of a 'laboratory maze' containing various bathroom products. This 'made public a normally very personal and private activity' and encouraged the visitors to the exhibition to anonymously provide a response.

'The drivers and barriers for implementing national support programmes for design' is the subject of the article by Choi, Lim and Evans. It provides a political assessment of various support schemes for design by comparing programmes in

the UK with those in South Korea. They note that while 'governments around the world are increasingly acknowledging the role and value of design', design support for some areas, in particular the service industry, is conspicuous by its absence in both nations. The barriers to national business support for design identified include a lack of understanding, a lack of practical professional design skills, poor marketing and the complexity involved in bringing design and business together. The authors make a number of recommendations to overcome these barriers, while appreciating that while many of the problems and issues are similar in both nations, the solutions need to be applied differently in different cultural contexts and political environments.

Cultural issues underpin the final article in this issue, which addresses contemporary menswear design in Hong Kong. The authors, Li, Au and Au, see traditional concepts of menswear as outdated, having been overtaken by fast-moving consumer culture. As a result, they suggest, 'men's fashion is a critically neglected area of academic study'. They see a barrier for a global industry in learning more about the preferences of the younger generation in different cultural contexts, and survey respondents around Hong Kong as an example. Asking about the perceived status of local and Western fashion brands, their research produced ratings of attractiveness, fashionability, masculinity and purchase motivation. The results indicate a preference for the design aesthetics of local labels, and a marked difference in the perceived masculinity of local and overseas brands – pointing to a potentially rich area for future study.

This issue concludes with reviews of three books that look at design theory, design context and design practice. Kevin Smith reviews Digital Blur: Creative Practice at the Boundaries of Architecture, Design and Art by Paul Rodgers and Michael Smyth; I review The Secret Lives of Objects by Jane Graves; and Martyn Evans reviews Design Thinking: Understanding How Designers Think and Work by Nigel Cross. All three works are concerned in their own way with issues around the complexity, subtlety and multi-disciplinary nature of design.