

Student name: Jordan Higham

Student number: 2003738

Programme of Study: Product and furniture Design

Module: ADAD5004 Research in Practise

Three Keywords: Form, Colour and Sustainability

Tutor Name: Julia Lockheart

Word Count: 2527

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Introduction

Within the process of designing, there are a few keywords that have a great effect on the success of a product. As such, the research shall be conducted as to how these words affect the designing process and the success of a product. This essay will focus on three keywords that will be critically analysed and how they contribute to product design and their influence on designers. The three keywords that have been selected for analysis are “structure”, “colour” and “sustainability”. This essay will delve into how designers use these words and their meanings to contribute to their designs for products and why. Using this analysis will enable a question to be formulated that can then be researched further as a dissertation.

Form

The first word that shall be analysed is form. The definition of form is ‘to begin to exist or make something begin to exist’ (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). This helps us get an understanding of what it means and how it can be used. Within design, there is a famous saying ‘form over function’ which comes from Louis Sullivan, an American architect. There can be a lot of debate about which should have the highest priority between form over function or function over form. Both are as important as each other but serve different meanings. Form can be seen as a ‘result of human or natural activity’ (Bowers, 1999), the result of a product is the result of a human who has designed something.

If we look at Daan Mulder’s chair shown overleaf in figure 2 (Mulder, n.d.), he created this sofa which shows ‘form allows function’. The sofa is created from one continuous line with the idea of showing functions that arise out of the one continuous line. So although form follows function, Mulder has changed that by making form follow the line. An example of form over function is a TV. Consumers first learn how to operate a TV by experimenting with the remote and learning what each button does or reading the user guide. At first look, the consumer would have no clue. A bed is a product whose function follows form. The main premise of a bed is the same – to sleep. This means the colour, design and style can be different to fit customers’ needs whilst retaining the same function needs. However, as discussed by Wu (2018), the function of a product can be ‘complex’. So although a bed has the same primary function of providing the consumer space to sleep, some beds are required to have special features such as the ability to aid less mobile people to sit up and get out of bed such as hospital beds.

There needs to be a suitable balance between the two or the highest priority given to form or function depending on the application of the product. An example of this would be the use of steel products within aerospace applications. Although the form of the product can be achieved using steel, steel is considerably denser than other materials which may prevent the product from being a viable option for performing its function due to the increased weight.

Overall, as much as function is really important it can be a way of freedom of design. You can make something so unique it has no function but has form. If you look at figure 1 (Spring, 2021), it is a bamboo chair with PVC joints with added emu feet and fur. Although it looks funny and is very unique you are unable to sit on it. You can mix product design and art here. You can create a product that has no function other than to sit as an accessory or ornament.



Figure 1: The Unusable Chair (Spring, n.d.)



Figure 2: Form Follows Function Sofa (Mulder, n.d.)

As stated by Wu (2018), 'Form is the outer surface of an object' so when designing you are constantly thinking of the final product which includes the surface of the object. The surface of the product is the primary part with which consumers interact. So from looking at both images although one has function and one has both, it means you can have the freedom to follow form as a designer more and be creative. Form is a keyword that can contribute to how as a designer you dictate your work and what matters, form over function or function over form?

Colour

The second word that shall be analysed is colour. 'The colour of something is the appearance that it has as a result of how it reflects light. Red, blue, and green are colours' (Collins, n.d.) this is the online definition. When looking at colour at its face value, only the actual colour of an object is taken into consideration and does not allow for any consideration of any emotive response that colours may invoke. If we take into account what Feisner said 'We often use expressions that include color to describe our feelings.' (Feisner, 2006). As a designer, we can use this idea and help gauge certain emotions from customers, it can be used to our advantage.



Figure 3: The Emotions of Colour (Gard,2021)

As discussed by Simmons (2011), we perceive red as angry, annoyed or love, green as envy and blue as sad. These can have impacts on the colours you decide to use within the designing process when making a colour scheme for a product. Although colour can be just a colour to match a room or a theme it can express or influence emotions. If we analyse the word black, it has emotive connections but then also has positive connotations. Black as a colour could be seen regarding death and depression. But if we look at it positively then black could make you feel sophisticated, and professional. Another colour that can be considered is white as it is perceived as light, happy and pure.

As can be seen in figure 3 (Gard, 2021), colours have been associated with emotions for a long time and can be implemented to help gauge an audience. Knowing how the different colours invoke different emotions, this should be a key part of the final design as the colour of the product will depend on the type of emotion that the designer wants to invoke as the product is used. In addition to this, depending on the type of product being designed, the designer has to ensure that they are setting the right mood and sending the right message along with it.

With regards to designing and making products, you always want the customer to have an emotional response or connection to the product. Consequently, careful consideration of the colour used within a product can impact the success of the marketing process and the strategy that is used and as a result, the success of the product. It is important to have an emotional connection with certain products, as it can make it more about the connection between something and also how this new thing will fit in within the consumers' life. An example of this would be a sofa, this is the main piece of a living room and the consumer may have different aesthetical and practical requirements, but to be included within a home, it needs to feel like it is part of the home. Some people may want something simple and minimalistic to fit in within a minimalist home. However, some people may want an extravagant sofa as it catches the eye and would fit in well within a home of an extrovert that likes their furniture to make a statement. Nonetheless, this product is required to invoke an emotional response in its owners to make them want to own it.

After having conducted research into how colour is used within product design, it can be concluded that colour and mixing the options linked with them is a key aspect of the designing process. It also has the additional benefit of making the designer stand out from other designers especially if they can explain why they have done that. The colour wheel can also be brought into the picture. Matching the right colours and mixing them is also key. Some colours just do not look great together so having and following something as simple as the colour wheel can make a change in designs.

Sustainability

The third word that shall be analysed is sustainability. 'causing, or made in a way that causes, little or no damage to the environment and therefore able to continue for a long time' (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) this is the online definition. When designing you should take into consideration how sustainable it is and how it will affect the environment. You could design an amazing product but it could be harmful to the environment. In today's society, this should be taken into account more as it will make the product itself better and stops harming the environment. It is a big word and an even bigger topic in design. Although great designs keep coming out more and more people are looking at whether they are sustainable or are affecting our planet even more so which means that sustainability is becoming something that should be looked into.



Figure 4: Lifecycle Assessment (West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum, 2016)

If we take into consideration raw materials that are used, they are slowing but surely running low. If we continue with distribution at the rate we are with the lack of sustainability control then the world will never become a better place. 'The road to sustainability was paved with the best intentions, but there is a total increase in energy and material flows, and an ever-increasing disparity of wealth.' (Walker, 2013) when taking into consideration what Walker has said it highlights the impact of the material crisis and that sustainability is a road that needs to be taken to help everyone's future. Although most things that are sold these days we prefer and fit into our homes, sustainability should be the key thing that customers look into. As designers, the up most best way to produce a product to the greatest standard should be made. But always taking into consideration the impact that it can create. Sustainability is such a big topic but is the way of the future and is the way all designers should be taking.

Looking at figure 4 (West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum, 2016) it highlights the production of the product and what could be done when it has finished its lifecycle. Why not make a product that can be reused again either for the same or a completely new product?



Figure 5: Plastic Baroque (Shaw, 2020)

Looking at figure 5 (Shaw, 2020) is a designer called James Shaw, he created a chair called the 'Plastic Baroque'. Not only is he creating something that is made from recycled objects but you cannot sit it. This goes back to my first-word form. Shaw has created a piece of furniture which is saving the environment but also breaking a stereotype. 'With an extrusion gun of his own design, Shaw melts down the plastic pellets and squirts the results into Play-Doh-like strands.' (Treggiden, 2020). Not only reusing materials Shaw has come up with his own methods to produce such work. This is only one designer who has taken the sustainability of products into his own hands and made things that stand out and are ethical. Shaw has said;

"I don't really believe in waste – it shouldn't exist, for my generation of designers, this kind of thinking is just implicit. We have so many high-quality waste products and materials that we are currently doing silly things with, like burying them in the ground or letting them escape into the oceans. It just seems logical to use them." (Treggiden, 2020)

Taking into account what Shaw said, he highlights the fact that there are so many options for ethical materials but designers are going for cheap and fast pace materials to keep up with demand. Although this helps out companies it is not ethical. Companies and designers need to think about materials more and consider their ethicalness. Also, when considering the number of new designers coming into play should ethicalness and sustainability be talked about more and pushed in schools, colleges and high education to really highlight the positives that it will create for not only their future but the next generation.

'An eco-design approach can provide designers with a set of design strategies to reduce the environmental impact of a product throughout its whole life cycle' (Daniela C.A. Pigosso, 2013) Pigosso highlights the fact that when you look at sustainability in a product you can incorporate eco-design. Eco-design is 'The main goal of eco-design is to anticipate and minimize negative environmental impacts (of manufacturing, using and disposing of products).' (YouMatter, 2019) so if eco-design is

something that is implemented more than the sustainability of products is far better than they were. It is a big step forward to consider and implement it. From raw material, production, the customer and after use all are the key areas that are needed to be focused on to make sure that the right materials or better materials are chosen. It is manufactured in the safest and most environmentally way possible and after customer, use is either disposed of properly or even reused. Places like IKEA currently have a department where you can bring old goods back and get money to buy a newer replacement. These products are then restored or reused for new items. If the product itself is not as sustainable as it could be then at least more stores could take on the ideas IKEA is already doing. Overall sustainability is a keyword in a designer's mind and is definitely an important one.

Conclusion

In summary, the three words that have been analysed show the importance of their roles in design. Consequently, a designer should be aware of colour and the effects it has, form and its purpose and how you can change the stereotype and how important sustainability is. There are some errors in how ethical designers are. Are they actually taking into consideration the environment and the customer's needs or are they just meeting demands? Society is definitely taking over the real design and ethicalness of true design. A very successful product can be made by also taking into consideration the environment how it is formed and how emotions can be provoked for the right mood. Society itself and designers need to change their ethics and what is truly important, money or our home? There are so many ethical options that provide more of a positive effect, so why not use them?

The research that has been conducted has led to a topic of research; as designers are we thinking ethically or just meeting demands and are emotions still being brought into it? Within this topic of research, there are going to be other topics researched and critically analysed for example, what is ethical these days? These topics will help with the overall research being conducted and understanding of the sustainability of today's design. This research and critically analysis will form a final dissertation.

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