

Comparative Study of Design Ideas Development Approaches in Fashion Design Course

Prinses Saliang

Department of Fashion Design, Faculty of Art & Design, Universiti Teknologi MARA,
40450 Shah Alam, Malaysia

prinses@uitm.edu.my

Abstract — This study compared three design ideas development approaches implemented in fashion design course through students' artworks and responses. It was observed that various design approaches were implemented within the same course and discipline, has resulting inconsistent outcomes in students' artworks. Creativity may be stimulated in various approaches, nonetheless, the outcome of this study will further justify the ideal approach in fashion design ideas development process, depending on variable of requirements stated on design brief. Understanding the strengths of each approach will be beneficial to lecturers and students in enhancing design process and body of knowledge even further as a whole.

Keywords – Creativity, design course, fashion, silhouette and visual data

I. Introduction

Designing an original design is often the non-verbal requirement in fashion design courses. The question remains, how does fashion design process starts? Designers always claimed it was intuitive and instinctively, as ideas emerged from their own inspirations, lifestyles, or even personal feeling (Lee & Jirousek, 2015). There are many cues from the established brands such as Alexander McQueen, Chanel and Versace, who claimed their inspirations came from their lifestyle alone and even subconscious mind. Donatella Versace, the Creative Director for Versace, stated in one of her interviews with VICE, that she hated the very question on where her inspirations came from. Despite all the vague and individual explanations by established designers, a fashion design course was a great platform to structurally train fashion students, who will eventually become a fashion designer. Design ideas development was one of the most important stages in idea development, and in a structurally-designed fashion design course, its implementation differs accordingly, to lecturer's experience, sources and also the brief itself. These variables often lead to inconsistency in the outcomes. Hence, this study aimed to identify the justified idea design approaches by comparing three design approaches, or models, in design ideas development used in fashion design courses.

II. Related Literature

Design Process in Fashion Design Course

Design researchers claim that design process is a specific type of problem-solving containing a sequence of small steps (Schön, 1983) which can be traced, explained, and researched (Cross, 2001). So far, this cognitive process research perspective in design process had been studied in the product, architectural, and engineering design fields (Akin, 1994; Goldschmidt, 1991; Oxman, 2002). In the field of apparel or fashion design, however, much of the research had concentrated on observing end products: for instance, how culture affects designs, how historical garments influenced their respective periods, fashion trends, size issues, and the social meaning of apparel (Lee & Jirousek, 2015). Current practice in design education depended so much on trial-and-error practice in a studio setting, based on student's psychomotor capability, and inclined to work through the simple repetition of a series of design problems (Lee & Jirousek, 2015). This too, led to local design schools were seen prone to adopt rather vague approach in hiring fashion design tutor (Shahriman & Shaari, 2016).

This way of learning was indeed flexible and effective to a certain point but it was crucial to develop an understanding of creative design process that could better lead students to really understand the design ideas development process. Therefore, this study primarily focuses on the design idea development process using three models of design idea approaches, in comparing the significances of each model.

Design Variables in Fashion Design Course

Creating aesthetically pleasing garments by manipulating design elements conditionally based on design principles in the main goal of a designer (Davis, 1996). Elements and principles of designs were basic guidelines for designers in all fields. The characteristics of each element and principle were explained based on their own domain and categorisation in various fields (Pipes, 2003; Wong, 1972). Davis (1996) characterised the theory of basic design elements for apparel design as space, line, shape, form, light, colour, texture, and pattern; and design principles as harmony, rhythm, contrast, emphasis, and proportion. These design elements and principles which acquired from specific subject matter were applied on croquis on the early stage of designing would then evolved as design details. Sometimes it is difficult to interpret the elements and principles of design used due to their complex interaction within the design process. Furthermore, these changes of design elements in a clothing design process are also affected by all other design variables. Design variables inclusive fabric study, design detail study, forecast study, demographic study, and the list may goes on. In this study, the variables included were market study, which included the colour trend, muse of the collection and also design details that correlated to the design concept as stated in the effective brief.

Design Concept

A 'design concept' represented a designer's abstract ideas of final entities, or garments in the case of fashion design (Lee & Jirousek, 2015). A design concept played the important role of establishing the vision of a final product (Aspelund, 2010). Whether derived from a conscious intention or as simple as subconscious sequential doodling, design concepts were developed through a process in which the designer perceptually and conceptually proceeds by processing information (Newell & Simon, 1972). Accordingly, the close observation of how concepts were formed in a designer's mind (or a designer's idea sketches) throughout the actual design process is necessary to understand the design process. In this study, concrete documentation of research prior to the design idea development were the evidents in understanding the design concept further.

III. Design Framework

Several design process frameworks of various scopes have been examined in the field of apparel design. Watkins (1988) proposed seven design process models adapted from Koberg and Bagnall (1981): accept, analyse, define, ideate, select, implement, and evaluate. Lamb and Kallal (1992) suggested a more general design framework for apparel design students. This framework was developed from the combination of features from other design process models supporting the 'Functional-Expressive-Aesthetic (FEA) model'. LaBat and Sokolowski (1999) reviewed the processes used in various design fields and summarised three steps of the core design process: problem definition and research, creative exploration, and implementation. All this framework have similar stage; ideate and creative exploration; which were the main jist in this study. Ideate or creative exploration was the micro stage in the whole macro frameworks given by Koberg and Bagnall as well as LaBat and Sokolowski. In addition, students were introduced to three approaches often used in the ideate or creative exploration stage within the macro design framework of design idea development process, which were Burke's model, Jones' model and Seivewright's model. Burke's model in her book *Fashion Designer, Concept to Collection*, stated that design process starts with sketching the initial design concept for a dress, top, pant, suit and coat, including several design options for each. (Burke, 2011). Improvisation of each item in terms of design considerations such as style, silhouette, length and fastenings is the key; based on references of existing designs of current market. Silhouette is seen as the first impact of the garment, before the design details can be discerned. Jones's model in her book *Fashion Design*, emphasised that a collection should not have too many variations on silhouette, as this tends to dilute the overall impact and weaken the message (Jones, 2011). The "message" of the design was best represented by muse, which represented the "market" as to illustrate garments on the muse's body type, using poses and attitudes that best express one's design.

Seivewright's model of design process in his book *Research and Design 2nd Edition*, comprised of various approaches such as collage, juxtaposition, deconstruction and cross referencing. These approaches inclusive many

primary resources (not referencing existing garment design) such as nature, architecture and other man made artefacts which are few to be mentioned. Subject matter is inclusive in the design process, which leads to the exploration of elements and principles of design based on the subconscious process in image placement via approaches as mentioned above. Students’ artworks in Fashion Design department, Faculty of Art & Design, Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam, proved that all the approaches have been used in fashion design course concurrently for the past three years to say the least. This further justified that all approaches were somehow filled the need and capabilities of students in the design idea development process. The similarities of these approaches were categorised and thus used in the analysis part.

IV. Methodology

Design Ideas Development Study

A constructive creative design experiment was conducted for four weeks of design process. Chosen students were given the freedom to commence with the documentation of the design idea development process on their own time and preferred settings. There participating students (identified as Student A, Student B and Student C in this paper) were all second year students, by means embraced sufficient psychomotor skills in the understanding of basic design process. Student A, B and C were briefed on Burke, Jones and Seivewright’s model each for them to embark with the design process. They were required to document their progress on A3 paper for the analysis part in later stage.

Discussion of Methods

The main point in data collection of this research was to compare the outcomes produced by each student, given that they were brief using three different models in design idea development. To authentically acquire the underlying information in the idea design development process, if any, new and multiple data collection methods were often proposed to penetrate the designer’s thinking process (Petre, Sharp, & Johnson, 2006; Pedgley, 2007). To reduce interruption during the idea design development process, this study used not only visual data and sketches, but also verbal data through interview during review session in order to better comprehend the students’ thinking.

Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis procedure started with the analysis of the visual data. The visual data was broken down into two; preliminary stage and creative process stage. Then the interview was reviewed in relation to each of the model. The following questions were questioned after conducting the idea design development, as to reflect the process to better understand the students’ thinking: (a) How does the idea design development begin, and what is the starting point? (b) How does the idea design development evolve from the first idea to the next ones? (c) What are the pros and cons of the idea design development model? Throughout these questions, the researcher categorised the answer to understand better the strengths of each model in developing ideas in design development. The categorisation was stated in the Table 1.

Table 1. Categorization of Similar Requirements in Burke, Jones and Seivewrights’ models

Design Approach or Model	Element and Principle of design	Subject Matter or Source of Inspiration	Concept and Market Study	Design details and Fabric Studies
Burke’s model	Yes	None	Yes	Yes
Jones’s model	Yes	None	Yes	Yes

Seivewright's model	Yes	Yes	None	None
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V. Findings

Upon reviewing the outcomes, Student A, who adopted Burke's model, opted to embark with observing three existing market levels; high end, moderate and staple market of the intended design, which was 'bikers jacket'. His documentation of findings showed a vast amount of design details in form of visual data. The student decipher each visual data into technical drawing as these data acted as his 'big data' prior to the design idea development process. Student B, who adopted Jones's model, opted to embark with basic ethnographic study on the source of inspiration. Prior to the design idea development process, the student mapped out his idea on the vibe or mood of the intended design, which was 'travellers'. This led to the accidental association of color scheme and silhouette of design. The student proposed the keyword 'spontaneity' as his main concept of the collection. This concept further adapted into the design idea development process. Student C, who adopted Seivewright's model, opted to look into the primary reference for original ideas. She embarked with analytical drawing and color study of the subject matter without articulating any specific concept. The documentation in form of drawings acted as her 'blueprint' prior the design idea development process.

		
Student A adapting Burke's model	Student B adapting Jones's model	Student C adapting Seivewright's model

Fig. 1. Samples of documentation of each student based on referred model prior design idea process

Student A started the design idea development with exploration of design details, such as hemlines, fastenings and fittings. The design idea development started with sketching the main components of the design on croquis with ratio consideration. The process continued with technical drawing exploration to further explore the placement and versatility of the design details placement. The design evolved with improvisation of details around the body. He described that having many visual data provided him with vast design details ideas on the same jacket design. Nonetheless, constraints came in a form of hesitance to explore further as he reflected on the technical aspects of the design. There were needs to test the ratio of design on human body as drawing did not provide enough realistic information apart from conceptual ideas. Completely immersed in his 'spontaneity', Student B embarked on exploring the silhouette on the dress form. Jones's model encouraged the initial idea of silhouette and its consistency. Using used denim jeans (reflecting on his prior research), Student B explored the form or silhouette on the dressform while using digital camera to capture the accidental design. The exploration further evolved in sketches to further understand the construction of the 'spontaneous design'. The mixing of methods between draping and drawing offered freedom in creating the form, but, it was easy to get carried away. Screening the idea would be the challenge as all accidental idea appeared to be unique but subjected to technical aspect.

Student C stood on the implementation and consideration of fundamental components in design; the elements and principles. Exploration evolved around the elements of design, such as colours and textures. The design idea development started with exploration of design elements on the body. The idea developed by stages; starting with initiation of silhouette, ratio and final colours and details. She mentioned the stages are structured but took too long to decipher each idea. The outcome nonetheless original, but need to be tested in terms of toile making and 3D realisation.

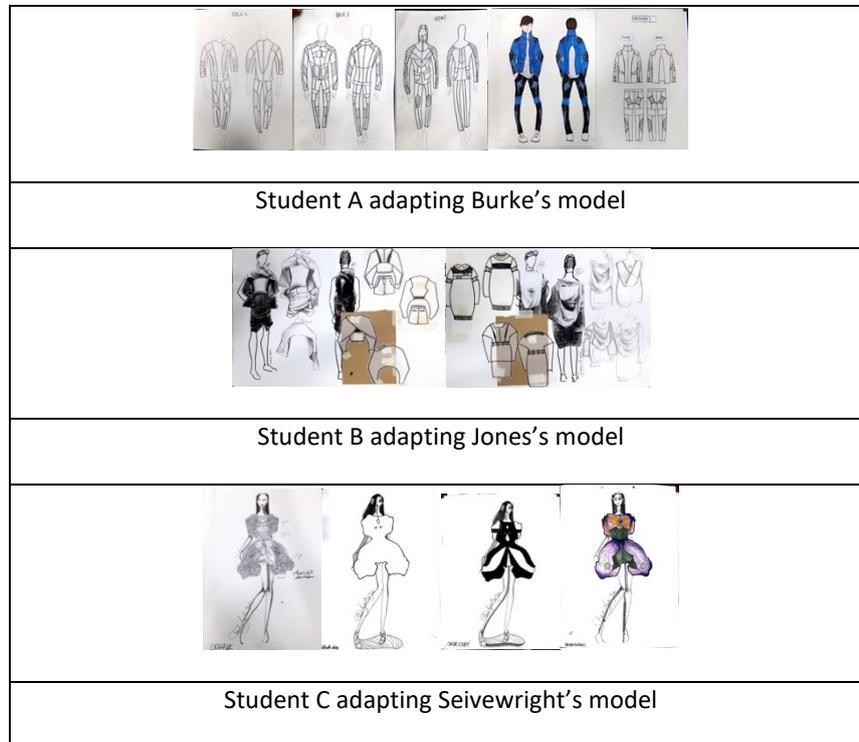


Fig. 2. Samples of documentation of design idea development by each student based on referred model

VI. Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

All three approaches implemented the understanding of design elements and principles in the design idea development. As subject matter was only implemented in Seivewright's model, design idea development was very smooth and structured, which gave student some idea on the systematic flow of design. The implementation of subject matter as starting point in design too, proved that it produced original design ideas in terms of design lines. However, Burke's model appeared to be more flexible in creating 3D form, bypassed a stage in Seivewright's model. Jones' model, on the other hand provided technical appearance on the design straightaway, but using existing design in the market, which may provoke originality attributes in design as a whole. Concept of design was very visible in Burke and Jones' models. This proved that students were able to decipher a concept by understanding the market needs and audience prior to design. This correlates to the design details and fabric study, which was lacked in Seivewright's model. Seivewright's model offered ideas for further design detail and fabrication studies, but did not reflect to the audience need and lifestyle.

Conclusion

In conclusion, all three models were indeed useful and fulfilled the need of design idea development, with varies emphasises. Seivewright's model was more suitable for exploring new look, fabrication ideas and even silhouette. Burke's model was suitable to further address the understanding of market needs, especially ready to wear or mass market, as it emphasised on market study prior to embark on design process. This approach suited industry-driven brief, with current look and market needs. Jones's model offered the freedom to explore from all aspects of fashion design considerations. This approach appeared to be more suitable for problem-solving or case-study inclined design, with mixture of Burke's model, especially on the market study. These outcomes were presented to students in which provided them with better understanding of various approaches in design idea development, in fashion design courses.

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