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Improving collaborations between brand managers and experience designers within the pressures of globalisation. A case study about nostalgic experiences in modern spatial design in Bahrain.

A key pressure that globalisation provides for global brands is the need for the integration of local identities. In addition, there is a growing demand for taking a more holistic approach to the cultural, environmental and societal impact of how global brands drive their work. Experience design is proposed as a solution for both pressures.

One of the main challenges faced by global brands is managing these relationships and using experience design to successfully deal with solving contemporary world challenges. Therefore, the aim of this PhD is to explore how brand managers and experience designers within global brand management teams work towards integrating local identities. In order to respond to this question, the researcher will work with global leaders, such as Starbucks, IKEA and more. Then to develop a set of tools that those teams could use to enhance their practices of addressing globalisation and the creation of local identities within spaces.

Keywords: brand management, experience design, tools, global brands

Introduction

Some suggest that the world is shrinking and that local customs will disappear overtime as globalisation homogenises how business is conducted. However, many globalisation pressures are accentuating local customs, conventions, and business practices (Dogerlioglu-Demir & Tansuhaj, 2011; Labes, 2014, Dutta, 2012), which suggests the opposite: that local customs will likely be around for a long time. Therefore, the first pressure offered by globalisation is the need to integrate local identities within global brand. Moreover, wise brand managers should prepare themselves to capitalise on these differences, not ignore them.

Second, globalisation has encouraged a growing demand for taking a more holistic approach to the cultural, environmental, political and societal impact of how commercial and other organisations conduct business. Best (2010) proposes that design is the solution, since design, by its very nature, takes a people-centred approach to problem-solving, it is well situated to integrate a more holistic approach to solving contemporary 'world' challenges.

Observing how experience design can have a positive effect and how it can operate comprehensively in relation to all of the internal and external contexts, disciplines and associations, relationships and connections, is one of the main challenges faced by anyone working for global brands today (Best, 2010; Hands, 2008; Clark et al, 2006). In this endeavour, managers have a responsibility to outperform their rivals using what is available to them. According to Steers et al. (2012), the better the toolkit, the better the chance of success. In particular, as managers begin to understand more about the environment in which they work, they increase their chances of success.

Therefore, the aim of this PhD is to explore how brand managers and experience designers within global teams relate and are influenced by local identities.

Subsequently, this PhD seeks to develop a set of tools that such teams can use in practice when addressing globalisation and the creation of local identities within spaces.

Background

Aligned organisations work across all functional boundaries as Kalback (2016) suggests, and they have to do whatever it takes to ensure their constituents have a great experience. Which establishes the need to design those experiences, and in order to do so, teams are needed. As Marks et al. (2001) explain much of the work in organisations is completed through teamwork; people working together to achieve something beyond the capabilities of individuals working alone. In this study the term experience design is used to sum up all the elements within spatial environments that connects to a visitor, viewing the visitor as a complex emotional being rather than just looking for a materialistic reward.

Managing all of the elements to achieve a successful experiential design has become an increasingly complex task. Thus, the need for brand management – which is the job of ensuring that the brand insights remain constant across all touchpoints – has become crucial. Brand managers ensure that the designers create spaces that match the brand identity. The designer's contributions to a given project may be made as an individual, as part of a multidisciplinary team, or as part of a larger collaborative or collective process enabled by new technologies.

Literature Review

According to Hands (2008), it has become widely accepted that a successful organisation will no longer emphasise low cost, but will attempt to provide value-rich products and services that are unique and pleasing. Therefore, companies need to get ahead, react to and, more importantly, surpass customers' expectations. Design can be used for intangible and tangible benefits, as Clark (2009) explains; Design can be

utilised to differentiate between the cultural and the commercial. She explains how design can give traditional cultural objects, that already exist, a new identity with more global resonance. The realisation of the intangible benefits of design creates a new challenge for the design professional: design should not only offer physical benefits, but also positive emotional associations. Currently, many designers use experiential design in spatial environments, on the web, and in campaigns to evoke the right side of consumers' brains (Hands, 2008).

However, for designers to deliver, competitive organizations need all employees working together to achieve the organization's goals and aims, not just the individuals at the top. As Marks et al. (2001) explain, much of the work in organisations is completed through teamwork — people working together to achieve something beyond the capabilities of individuals working alone. There is extensive research on teams in organisations which has been approached from socio-psychological, socio-technical theory and organisational psychology perspectives, to name a few (Marks et al., 2001; Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Kirkman et al., 2004; Donnellon, 1993). Within those teams designers may comprehend, shape and communicate new innovative products and visualise brands, but design often needs to be harmonised and carefully associated with the firm's approach and core capabilities, as Hands (2008) has emphasized; This exactly describes the design or brand manager's job.

In the global era, increasing pressures need to be taken into consideration before developing the brief that is given to the designers. For example, there has been increasing pressure from consumers, who were having trouble relating to standardized products, to eliminate the one-size-fits-all model. Rather, differentiation is the new goal. Therefore, successful global brands need to create a balance between sending a coherent message, while considering the different cultural local and global customs (Hands,

2008; Holt et al, 2004; Eldemenery, 2009; Boutros, 2009). Another since a holistic approach is required, there is a need for extensive input and support from a wide range of different people, with different areas of expertise, capabilities and skills. The way in which people, processes and projects are managed can have an enormous impact on the overall success, or failure, of the design. The study of design management is concerned with how to connect all these people, projects and processes together, in an interdisciplinary and collaborative framework, within a wider business, environmental, political and societal context, to form a coherent, financially viable and pleasantly crafted brand experience (Hands, 2008; Best, 2010).

Design is available in tangible way – in the people, the products and the services which we come into contact each day. As Best (2010) explains; these are referred to as 'touchpoints' of design, and design is a critical part of how designer and design managers consider, for instance, the manner in which individuals experience a brand.

Considering the increasing pressure faced by designers and brand managers, the scope of this PhD project includes developing tools to improve synergies between brand management and experience designers, to help with the translating process. Tools are significant within the field of management. Furthermore, University of Cambridge (2016) suggest that the tools developed for that purpose can improve the design process, improve user focused design, improve design for manufacture and assembly and achieve a more socially responsible future by design.

Research Questions and Methods

To achieve the objectives of the research, a number of methods can be applied. This chapter presents the possible research approaches adopted to achieve the aims and objectives presented in the introduction.

Aim: The aim of this research is to explore how - brand managers and experience designers of global brands teams work together toward integrating local identities. Then, it aims to develop a set of tools that can be used in practice when addressing the representation of global brands in local territories and/or the integration of local identities within spaces. The outcome will be validated by using a case study in Bahrain, where the suggested tools will be tested in terms of how they can be used to best generate a sense of nostalgia in the experiences they create.

Questions	Objectives	Methods
Within the context of globalisation and local brand identities integration, what are the interrelations between brand management and experience design?	- To explore how global brands could be best represented in local spaces, and how they are influenced by global brands management guidelines.	Literature Review (especially important for this topic as an interdisciplinary subject, since brand management, interior design, global brands representation, global teams and globalization need to be understood)
	- To examine contemporary developments in brand management and experience design, and their interrelations in detail.	Literature Review (design archives, global brands in the news, etc.) Case Studies of Starbucks and one other global company (secondary research and interviews with specific questions based on the knowledge from previous methods)

How could organisations enhance their synergies by developing and using a practical tool kit for experience designers and brand management teams?	- To develop tools that could enhance the design process when designing for brands, and improve consumers' experiences.	Review interviews with the global teams, mainly brand managers, marketers and designers. (specific questions for each role within the team)
	- To test these tools within the context of the Bahrain case study, to determine in which specific ways could enhance the synergies between branding and experience design.	Validation through the use of co-creative workshops with willing participants. The co-creative workshops will include activities such as brainstorming and cultural probes to encourage teams to use the tools created and to receive feedback to further develop the tools.

Table 1. An explanation of how the chosen methods address the questions, aim and objectives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- THE FIRST STEP IS TO REVIEW THE EXISTING KNOWLEDGE, LITERATURE AND AVAILABLE SECONDARY SOURCES. THIS SERVES TO IDENTIFY ANY GAPS IN THE KNOWLEDGE WITHIN THE EXTANT RESEARCH, EXPLAIN THE CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND OF THE INVESTIGATION, AND COLLECT DATA.

PHASE 1: SECONDARY RESEARCH

DEVELOPING TOOLS

- DEVELOPING DESIGN AND BRAND MANAGEMENT TOOLS TO ENHANCE SYNERGIES BETWEEN BRAND MANAGEMENT AND EXPERIENCE DESIGN .

REVIEW INTERVIEWS

- TO VALIDATE THAT THE INFORMATION FROM THE CASE STUDIES SMALLER INDEPENDENT INTERVIEWS WILL BE DONE WITH MEMBERS OF OTHER COMPANIES.

CASE STUDY 01 – STARBUCKS CASE STUDY 02 – TO BE SPECIFIED

- TO INVESTIGATE TWO SUCCESSFUL CASES IN DETAIL AND WITHIN THEIR REAL-WORLD CONTEXT
- TO COMPREHEND THE METHOD USED INSIDE THESE SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

PHASE 2: PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

CO-CREATIVE WORKSHOP

- TO VALIDATE THE TOOLS BY TESTING THEIR USE WITH MEMBERS OF THE BRANDS TEAMS THAT TRANSLATE BRANDS INTO LOCAL ENVIRONMENTS. ACITIVIES INCLUDE BRAINSTORMING, AND CULTURAL PROBES TO RECORD THE SUITABILITY OF THE TOOLS

REFINING

- DEVELOP THE TOOL BASED ON THE FEEDBACK RECEIVED FROM DESIGNERS FROM THE PREVIOUS METHOD.
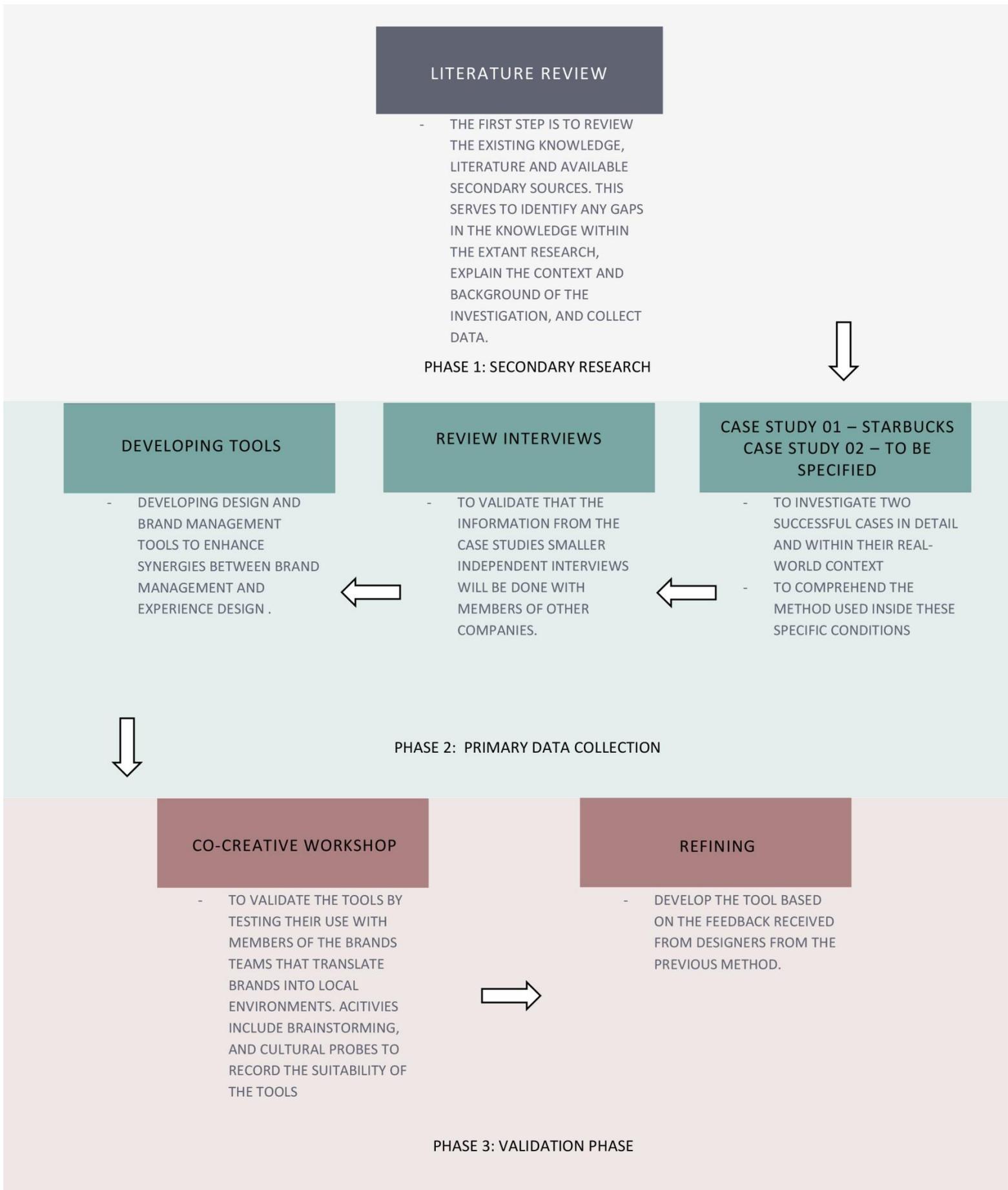
PHASE 3: VALIDATION PHASE

Figure 1. A visual representation of the chosen methodology

To expand on the data obtained from the literature review, two specific cases will be explored using a combination of secondary research from design magazine archives and interviews. This PhD will subsequently focus on two successful examples and investigate them in detail. Specifically, are Starbucks and most possibly IKEA (the second is to be confirmed). Given the nature of the aim, as secondary research several companies will be looked into, and to complement the secondary data, case studies will be conducted. The case study interviews will be conducted with Starbucks and the second company global teams that develop spatial brand experiences, including brand managers and local designers. These collaborations and how they are established need to be better understood by gaining insight from any member of the teams who work on translating global brands into local environments.

Therefore, the literature review complements the semi-structured interviews to successfully investigate how global brands are managed with the integration of local identities.

Based on the knowledge from the case studies, review interviews with the global team members will be conducted. Those interviewed can be from any global brand, and not just from one specific company. The case studies will help build a more specific script regarding questions to be asked in the review interviews which need further clarification.

The tools will then be developed based on the information obtained from the literature review, case studies and interviews. The tools aim to improve synergies between brand managers and experience design within global teams, including how to address globalisation, how to maintain a global impression but relate experiences to local contexts, how to achieve a holistic view of spaces.

Validation

The validation phase is used to challenge and verify the suitability of the tools developed. In this phase, nostalgia is suggested as a way of facilitating an experience within a space. There are many parallels between nostalgia and the key principles of experience design, which indicates that these concepts can work together to ensure a rewarding experience for consumers within commercialised interiors.

Nostalgia in this study refers to yearning for the past. There are many ways to relate design to local environments, and using nostalgia is one such method. A reoccurring idea in the study of globalisation and design is the use of traditional elements. Nostalgia is effective because it not only appeals to people from a specific nation, but also to foreigners who live there or tourists who have visited there, and it can further appear exotic on a global scale.

This can be seen in the case of Shanghai, as Tai (2009) has noted that, for some, embracing traditional symbols is a moral act – an act of resistance against the rapidly changing Shanghai. Although Tai does not explicitly refer to this as nostalgia, it is quite similar to the concept of nostalgia proposed by Huppatz (2009). Huppatz believes that nostalgia asserts a sense of stability within a context of impending change. Norotzy (2009) has also mentioned the concerns over globalisation that lead to renewed interest in the local.

The research will be validated during a co-creative workshop that will take place in Bahrain. The subject nation of the study, Bahrain, is unlike cities such as New York, London or Paris which have been shaped gradually over time. Conversely, instant cities such as Dubai, Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates (UAE)), the island state of Bahrain and Doha (Qatar) are the result of extraordinarily fast urbanisation and global flows (Bagaeen, 2007). Therefore, it is an interesting context within which to study globalisation's influence. The workshop consists of a set of activities primarily based

around group discussions between the teams responsible for translating global brand experiences into local environments. Participants will each receive a package containing the tools and instructions on how to use them, a journal to fill out, a disposable camera. The teams will use the tools provided to create nostalgic design experiences. One of the activities in which teams will be asked to participate is the exploration of cultural probes, which will help validate the benefits and drawbacks of the developed tool kit. The structure of the co-creative workshop will be informed depending on the outcome of the tools and the findings from the previous methods.

Contribution

The main contributions of this PhD are:

- Exploring, recording and commenting on the current practices of two global branding leaders such as Starbucks and (potentially) IKEA,

- Review their reality in order to highlight best practices that are possibly applicable to more corporations and would specifically enhance integration of local identities,

- Develop tools that could specifically enhance the synergies between brand management and experience design.

Acknowledgement

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