Northumbria Research Link

ENGAGING DESIGN PITCHES: STORYTELLING APPROACHES AND THEIR IMPACTS

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Abstract

This paper discusses the findings of a doctoral research study that builds an understanding of the relationship between storytelling approaches and their impacts at the design pitch. Determined through a literature review, the following desirable impacts were used to focus conversation during a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with employees from Unilever and Accenture: 'Delivering Understanding', 'Demonstrating Value', 'Stimulating Critique', and 'Encouraging more Holistic Thinking'. In discussion of over fifty design pitches, interview participants identified many storytelling approaches used by designers when pitching product and service concepts, and their perceived relationships to the aforementioned impacts. Emergent themes were deciphered through the thematic analysis of the interview transcriptions, where four impacts were found to have significant relationships with the following storytelling approaches: 'Acknowledging Cultural Perspectives and Beliefs', 'Diversity/Difference', 'Detailing Concept Development', and 'Imagery, in particular Analogy'. A summary of the relationships is presented in a framework, entitled 'Design Pitch Storytelling: The Impact-Approach Framework'. Of particular significance for engaging audiences are the illustrations of the following relationships: firstly, detailing concept development can bring both transparency and familiarity to the design process, allowing the audience of the design pitch to have critical discussion and develop more holistic thinking around project territories; secondly, incorporating imagery can awaken a curiosity that leads to abstract and novel thinking, again encouraging more holistic viewpoints to develop around project territories.

Keywords

Storytelling, Design Pitch

Introduction

Storytelling at the Design Pitch

Storytelling is an important phenomenon to acknowledge when examining collaborative processes as the universality of stories in sharing and conveying knowledge is well recognised (Nonaka and Takeushi, 1995, Davenport and Prusak, 1998, Collison and Mackenzie, 1999, McDonnell et al., 2004). Collaborative relationships such as those between designers and their clients provide a platform for storytelling to occur during the conveyance of knowledge from one party to another (Leonardi and Bailey, 2008). One such conveyance of knowledge is the design pitch, where designers present concepts to clients in a formal setting during the conceptual design process. It is the storytelling that occurs in this instance that provides the focus for this paper.

Storytelling occurs in many different contexts, and thus there are many different definitions applied to story. Perhaps the most widely recognised context for storytelling is the storybook, as many look to the written word in order to assemble philosophies on story (Jones, 2006, Ochoa and Osier, 1993). However, with respect to the context of a design pitch, a more relevant perspective on storytelling is that of psychologist Jerome Bruner (1990) who developed a theory of the narrative construction of reality. Bruner (1990) provides the following set of criteria for an occurrence of storytelling:

- *Action directed towards goal*
- *Order established between events and states*
- *Sensitivity towards what is canonical in human interaction*
- *The revealing of a narrator's perspective*

If we relate these criteria to design concepts, the relevance becomes apparent – take for example a concept for a new road bike: the goal of a story about it, told at the design pitch, could be getting from point A to B. An order established between events and states could become the maintenance required, such as putting air in the tyres (events), and/or the various locations on the journey between A and B (states). Sensitivity towards what is canonical in human interaction is central to design as all concepts are created with a user in mind, in this instance a cyclist. The concept itself could be considered the perspective of the designer – their unique interpretation of a road bike.

Further to this, storytelling's specific relationship with design has been considered from a variety of viewpoints. Design researcher Peter Lloyd (2000) examines dialogue between members of design teams in order to extrapolate the stories that they tell during the process of designing. Of particular interest in his research are the criteria he establishes to identify an occurrence of storytelling:

- *It can be interpreted or read*
- *Different narrative viewpoints can be included*
- *There is a sense of closure; a definite ending*
- *A name can be invented that references the complex of action*

A verbal exchange between designers is a different context for storytelling when compared to a more formal presentation at a design pitch. Therefore, to make use of these criteria they have to be viewed critically. The first criterion suggests that a story is interpreted or read. With respect to a design pitch, a story is also heard or watched, both of which also require interpretation. Therefore, when adapting this to the context of a design pitch, the criterion should simply state that '*it can be interpreted*'. The third criterion suggests a sense of closure is required; however, a concept, which by all intentions may require further development, can be told using an open-ended story to stimulate further discussion. Therefore, it is not

necessary to fulfil this criterion at a design pitch. The second and the fourth criteria are wholly relevant. As discussed previously, a viewpoint or range of viewpoints can be represented through a concept or range of concepts. Also, when pitching a design concept, it is likely that a name will be invented to reference the story, which can then act as a recall for the design pitch.

When comparing these criteria to Bruner's (1990), it can be seen that there are some similarities: both agree that a story must reveal a perspective or viewpoint; Bruner (1990) suggests that there must be an order of either events or states and Lloyd (2000) proposes that there must be a definite ending suggesting an order of events or states. However, in addition to Bruner's (1990) criteria, Lloyd (2000) also suggests that a story must be interpretable, meaning that an understanding of something can be gained from it and that a name can constitute a reference to the story's meaning. It is this combination of these theorists' models for storytelling, adapted to the context of the design pitch, which define the storytelling that this paper examines and the specific criteria it fulfils.

Impacts of Designers' Storytelling

Designers tell stories in many different modes (verbally, visually, implicitly in what they produce, and explicitly in how they discuss it), and with many different methods (persona scenarios, characterisations, metaphors and so on). Many specific impacts have been claimed from such modes and methods of storytelling. The following summary introduces a range of approaches to storytelling and their related impacts investigated in the research landscape relevant to this study. These summaries are used in the next section to help consider which impacts are desirable during a design pitch, and establish which are explored in this paper.

Concerning the artefacts produced whilst designing, it has been established that many different impacts can be achieved through interpretations of the stories embedded within them. Cross (2006) discusses how sketches and renderings can disclose an understanding of how a concept is used or how a concept is made. For example: an architect's blueprint could help an engineer tell a story about how to make a building, or help an interior designer tell a story about how people may use a space. Perhaps less obvious is Schön and Wiggins' (2006) proposition that a series of artefacts can deliver a story of the critical dialogue that ensues between a team of designers. They suggest that the changes throughout iterative sketch work and prototyping can disclose the outcomes of negotiations within a team of designers. It can therefore be reasoned that during a design pitch, the presentation of artefacts produced throughout the process of designing can reveal these negotiations and consequently invite discussion around how a concept has developed.

When exploring the use of digital storytelling (web-based stories, interactive stories, hypertexts, narrative computer games, audio and video podcasts, etc.) it can be seen that relative to society, it is a phenomenon inferred by the development of technologies, and as a facet of society designers too have begun to employ these technologies and tell digital stories. Currently, the majority of research into digital storytelling's specific impact when used as a presentational tool resides in primary and secondary school education (Signes, 2010). It is suggested that the overarching benefits of digital storytelling in this context are that it develops an individual's digital, global and visual literacy (Robin, 2006). Should it have similar impacts when used in a design pitch, it can be reasoned that there is a potential to: improve communication between designer and client through use of this relatively new medium (digital literacy), allow a more holistic discussion around design concepts (global literacy), and perhaps lead to increased engagement for design consultancies, as the visual language they trade in could become better understood (visual literacy).

As previously mentioned, designers tell stories verbally throughout the process of designing. It has been established that these types of stories are used in design teams to construct a

common language, where particular words and phrases are adopted that have stories attached to them (Lloyd, 2000, Lawson, 2005). For example, a designer working within a team may be inspired to apply a mosaic aesthetic to a product after visiting Gaudi's Cathedral in Barcelona. In their explanation of this thinking, the story of their experience may become attached to the word 'mosaic', and this may become mutually understood by the rest of the team when using the word 'mosaic'. Therefore, such words and phrases may have less meaning to an outsider, or even a more inexperienced designer (Lawson, 2005). It may be crucial to explain these stories during a design pitch, as some subtleties of a design concept's development may become lost. However, it is argued that conversational storytelling operates in this way due to its informal setting (Denning, 2007b). Therefore, it may be difficult to achieve the same benefits from this storytelling when retold during the more formal setting of a design pitch.

Madsen and Nielsen (2010) believe that persona scenarios can be used to aid conceptualisation within a design process. A predominant claim in their work is that the characterisation of a protagonist placed in a problem scenario provides the understanding required to begin conceptualisation. This belief parallels philosophies outside the remit of design. Turner (2008) suggests that demonstrating the trials and tribulations of a central character encourages critical reflection in the audience in his examination of historical examples of transformative learning. Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) suggest that basing characters on archetypal personas, such as the protagonist, can foster an emotional connection when constructing brand stories. However, in their quest of best practice when it comes to the construction of persona scenarios, Madsen and Nielsen (2010) profess inconclusive results.

With respect to achieving a mutual understanding of an idea, there appears to be conflicting strategies to adopt when storytelling. When discussing change management and how to encourage staff with disparate views to share mutual understandings of new ideas, Denning (2007a, 2007b) proposes that telling exemplar stories based on real life situations is more effective than using abstract notions. However, Adamson et al. (2006) demonstrate how abstract analogies can in some instances alter disparate perspectives and unite employees thinking, providing examples of storytelling exercises where employees roles are likened to the roles undertaken by characters in popular films. Using universally understood contexts (popular films) to present analogous parallels to real life situations provided the catalyst in changing (and aligning) employees' perceptions in the examples they provide. With respect to the context of a design pitch it is possible that both 'real life' and 'abstract' notions in storytelling could provide mutual understandings of a design concept.

Finally, it is apparent that there are also conflicting ideas regarding consistency within stories. In this instance, consistency refers to the brand story (should one exist) that belongs to the organisation exploring the development of a new product or service. With respect to the context of a design pitch, the implications of this conflict are best demonstrated when contrasting the viewpoints of: Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) who propose that a story consistent with a brand is effective in engaging employees; and Quesenbery and Brookes (2010) who propose that unfinished stories, or stories that are inconsistent with others, are more likely to challenge perceptions. When telling a story to challenge perceptions it appears there is an element of risk attached to either approach: a story consistent with a brand may fail to challenge perceptions, whereas a story inconsistent with a brand may disengage the audience.

The Impacts Explored at the Design Pitch

Now that the parameters for storytelling have been set, and an overview of what is already known about the relevant impacts of storytelling has been given, more specific impacts that are desirable during a design pitch are established. In terms of the wider research study this

paper examines, the impacts 'Delivering Understanding' and 'Demonstrating Value' received focus. However, as this paper is preoccupied with how the design pitch engages its audience in the design process, only the impacts 'Stimulating Critique' and 'Encouraging More Holistic Thinking' will be described, as the findings that relate to these areas of focus uncovered more relevant information.

Stimulating Critique

Firstly, as mentioned previously, Schön and Wiggins (2006) propose that a series of artefacts demonstrate the evolution between each iteration of the design concept, and in effect communicate the critical dialogue that occurred between the design team developing the concept. Therefore, should a series of design artefacts be presented during the storytelling that occurs at the design pitch, the audience can gain an awareness of the critical dialogue that ensued between designers during the design concept's development. It can be reasoned that this awareness will allow the audience of a design pitch to access these critical dialogues and therefore engage in them. As Schön and Wiggins (2006) propose, this type of communication is beneficial for the development of a design concept, and it can therefore be inferred that 'Stimulating Critique' should be a preoccupation when examining the impacts of a design pitch, as the organisation employing the designer(s) are also charged with the design concept's development. It is important to note that in this context critique is not negative as it is intended to contribute towards concept development.

Secondly, as stated before, Madsen and Neilsen (2010) propose using persona scenarios during a design project in order to develop design concepts, and as alluded to previously, persona scenarios can form part of the storytelling that occurs at a design pitch. Constructing a persona scenario involves defining the characteristics of a typical user (persona). Building a character with a set of traits and then sharing this with audiences can create empathy for that character, but it also invites critique around how to affect behaviour with intervention (through product or service with respect to a design project) (Turner, 2008). It can be reasoned that critique stimulated in this way enables a decision making process that allows a concept to develop. Therefore, as Madsen and Neilsen (2010) suggest, persona scenarios are useful in the development of a design concept partly due to the fact that they stimulate critical thinking. Again, this claim supports the idea that 'Stimulating Critique' should become a focus when examining the impact of a design pitch.

Finally, as outlined earlier, there exists a school of thought that being inconsistent with existing brand stories (should they exist) when pitching design concepts can be a useful way to stimulate debate and discussion through challenging the status quo (Quesenbery and Brooks, 2010). However, it can be seen that this may come at the price of devaluing the design concepts credibility (Herskovitz and Crystal, 2010). Therefore, this provides further vindication for focusing on 'Stimulating Critique' when examining the impact of a design pitch, as current literature suggests disparate ideas on how to achieve it.

Encouraging more Holistic Thinking

As mentioned previously, organisational management strategist Denning (2007b: 110-111) suggests that storytelling is a vehicle for eliciting cultural change as it can be used to help employees acieve a more holistic view of their organisation, and consequently think differently about their role, mentioning specifically that:

- *Narratives are more likely to be effective than abstract communications, because this is how human beings think and make decisions, and because it simulates the emotional significance of experiential learning.*

- *Indirect Methods are more likely to be effective than direct methods, because indirect methods leave it up to the audience to make up their own minds rather than having opinions forced upon them.*

When considering the context of this research study, these declarations have some interesting implications. Firstly, the design pitch of a proposed product or service may require abstract communication on some level, as real human narrative surrounding the product or service will not yet exist. This therefore may pose a difficulty in challenging a belief of an audience member about a particular aspect of a design concept, such as what its primary purpose should be. Secondly, a design pitch is an organised gathering where storytelling is pre-empted and therefore direct, again a quality that Denning (2007b) professes to inhibit the chances of getting people to think in alternative ways.

Contrary to this are Adamson et al. (2006) observations of storytelling in healthcare organisations, and in particular how it helped to positively impact the San Juan Regional Medical Centre. In this instance, an abstract analogy of the medical centre's infrastructure helped to stimulate a change in employees' attitudes towards their job roles, consequently improving internal relationships. Each role within the medical centre was likened to the roles characters play in Indiana Jones films. Using this abstract analogy, employees began to see their roles, and others, in a different light.

Considering the context of this research study, abstract communication, in particular analogies, are often used during a design pitch to represent qualities of the design concept that are not yet apparent as the product or service does not yet exist. This would seem to suggest that storytelling at the design pitch is well placed for encouraging people to think in alternative ways.

As demonstrated, the capacity that stories have in encouraging more holistic thinking is acknowledged by organisational management strategists such as Denning (2007b) and Adamson et al. (2006), in spite of presenting different viewpoints. Therefore, it is justifiable to consider 'Encouraging More Holistic Thinking' when examining the impact of the design pitch, as designers tell stories in organisations whilst pitching designs with an agenda to influence thinking and often challenge the status quo, however conflicting strategies exist for achieving this.

The Case Study Sites

Now that the specific focuses of the study described in this paper have been established, the method and some of the cases used to explore them will be introduced.

Unilever

Unilever is a multi-national organisation that houses over four hundred brands. Essentially, their brands promote health and wellbeing, providing products in the food and hygiene market sectors. Their brands include Lipton, Knorr, Persil and Dove amongst other household names. They have six research and development centres distributed throughout the world helping them to innovate and remain competitive.

Unilever's Household Care department and Laundry department, in their Port Sunlight based Research and Development Centre, have long standing relationships with Northumbria University, continually employing designers from their various courses and in-house consultancy to work on different design projects. During these projects, designers from Northumbria University (both student and professional) have used storytelling as a way to communicate their design concepts in various formats to employees at Unilever's Household Care department and Laundry department during design pitches. The first two case studies of

the research discussed in this paper comprise of semi-structured interviews with groups of employees from each of these departments. During the interviews, recordings of the stories told during design pitches (where the interview participants had been present) were shown to refresh memory, and then discussion was prompted around their impacts with specific focus on the impacts described in the previous section (should they have been achieved). In the first two cases, over six employees were interviewed and approximately thirty-five design pitches were discussed.

Accenture

Accenture is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company, with approximately 275,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries. Combining unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world's most successful companies, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments. The company generated net revenues of US$28.6 billion for the fiscal year ended Aug. 31, 2013.

(accenture.com, 2013)

The Innovation Centre based in Accenture's Fenchurch Street offices opened in 2012, serving as a venue for Accenture employees to host workshops aimed at teaching their clients how to innovate to meet the changing needs of the consumer. For each workshop or series of workshops that are run, Accenture employs design consultancies to provide them with brand identities; this can include commissioning products, films, illustrations or a whole series of touch points throughout a client workshop experience. Many of the design consultancies Accenture has worked with have presented design pitches using storytelling that meets the criteria outlined in the introduction of this paper. Consultancies that have pitched in this format include: Someone, Engage, Replay Films and Tag Worldwide to name but a few. Approximately 15 design pitches were discussed with interview participants from this case.

Discussion

Interview transcriptions were analysed using a thematic analysis, to establish the more significant relationships between storytelling approach and impact in the cases examined. The following discussion details these relationships providing superlative examples from each case.

Detailing Concept Development

'Detailing Concept Development' proved to be an approach to storytelling that was central in stimulating the critique of a design concept in the research study this paper examines, with participants from all three cases emphasising its importance.

During the Unilever Household Care case study, an interview participant explained that when a design concept is discussed in terms of its evolution a critical dialogue could flow. They explained that this was because insights made by a design team surrounding the territory of a product are often related to particular features of a design concept, providing a set of judgements he could agree or disagree with. For example, during one pitch designers discussed the evolution of the packaging design, they explained that the colour red had been chosen due to the fact that red symbolises good fortune and joy in Chinese culture. Another interview participant from this case reinforced this idea by suggesting that in order to discuss something critically *'the life journey of the product'* had to be known, including: the evolution of the concepts development, how it might be used once produced, and even how it might be disposed of. It would appear that in this case, the more that is known about a design concept,

in particular its origin, the more comfortable participants felt about discussing it critically. Familiarity with the design process appears central in allowing critical discussion.

When comparing this to the Accenture case study, a similar observation was made. When discussing a project where designers had been asked to develop a concept for an invitation, an interview participant explained that they were more able to think critically about a design concept when evolutionary stages were presented as well, no matter how unrealistic. For example, at one stage a design consultancy was considering a wooden box with hidden compartments proposed as a concept for the invitation. Although this was unrealistic in terms of cost, the interview participant felt that the presentation of this evolutionary stage effectively communicated an understanding of what the intention of the finalised concept had been. Therefore it would appear that familiarity with the design process, in particular the evolution of ideas, was central in allowing critical discussion in this case as well.

In the Unilever Laundry case study, details of concept development were not shown as frequently in the stories told at the design pitches. However, when discussing the ability to critique design concepts, interview participants suggested that the inclusion of 'cuts that didn't make it', or in other words: earlier ideas during the evolution of the design concept, would have helped to stimulate critique.

Literature exploring the critique surrounding design concepts places an importance on the production of artefacts throughout a design process. Schön and Wiggins (2006) describe multiple artefacts such as a series of sketches or models as a representation of the critical reflective dialogue shared by the design team. It would appear that the presentation of these artefacts during a design pitch invites clients to engage in the critical dialogue surrounding these design concepts, which the design team had during their development. Previously, approaches to storytelling concentrating on a design concept's development have been suggested to enhance the process of designing (Demian and Fruchter, 2009, Garcia et al., 2002), now it can also be appreciated that they too have the ability to engage clients in a critical dialogue.

Imagery, in particular Analogy for Stimulating Critique

'Imagery, in particular Analogy' also proved to be an approach to storytelling that was useful in stimulating the critique of a design concept in the research study this paper examines, with participants from two cases emphasising its importance.

In the Unilever Household care case study, an interview participant describes a situation where an internal team at Unilever revisited the design pitch from one project in order to think critically about each design concept in order to further develop them. In their description they explain how the analogy of an eagle, used to represent the trigger application of a cleaner, had significant impact. However, they were unable to articulate clearly why this was the case, they were just aware that this imagery had been useful in getting the internal team to start thinking critically about the design concept. When trying to bring reason to this insight it seems logical to suggest that when you are presented with imagery, there is a natural curiosity to work out why it has been used. So for example, the members of the interview participant's team may have looked at the eagle with this curiosity and for example: likened the shape of its beak to the nozzle of the trigger, or the way it flies to the spray emitted from the trigger, or simply it's poise to the shape of the bottle and its presence on the supermarket shelf. In doing this, the brain had begun to think in abstract terms to make sense of the analogy and in turn, critical dialogue had ensued about its apparent relevance.

This idea is reinforced in the Unliever Laundry case study where an interview participant highlights an example of an analogy in a design pitch and explains that it was useful in stimulating the critique of a design concept. In this particular example, the design pitch used

footage of a shoal of fish to demonstrate the way a laundry detergent moves through a wash cycle, and an internal marketing team watched this in order to aid them in a critical dialogue geared towards developing a concept for a television advert.

When looking at literature relative to the research study's context, analogy is not specifically linked to critical dialogue surrounding design concepts. However, in the more general remit of storytelling in society, many examples exist of stories told using analogy to inspire critical reflection, particularly in religion (Bleyl, 2007).

Being Diverse/Different

'Being Diverse/Different' when storytelling during a design pitch was believed to encourage more holistic thinking around design concepts and design projects in the research study this paper examines, with participants from all three cases discussing examples of this.

In the Unilever Household Care case study, an interview participant discusses how a designer's approach in terms of presentation was vastly different to theirs, or indeed any other employee at Unilever. They believe that being involved in collaborative design projects where designers implement their diverse/different ways of communicating concepts expands their mind, allowing them to think more holistically about design concepts and projects on a continual basis, simply because they had not previously seen things done in this way before. Another interview participant reinforces this idea by highlighting a specific example where a group of designers presented a design concept using non-traditional advertising techniques that were entirely new to them (guerrilla advertising). It seems that the element of surprise in viewing something entirely novel can result in the encouragement of more holistic thinking with regards to design concepts and projects.

When looking at the Accenture case study, this situation repeated itself. In their description of one particular design pitch, an interview participant explained that it was revealed that the designer's way of interpreting information was vastly different to their own. They proclaimed that the presentation of the designer's interpretation of the brief as an introduction to the design pitch was when this difference became most apparent, and it was this alternative beginning of the designer's story that triggered more holistic thinking around the design project.

In the Unilever Laundry case study an interview participant's comparison of two design pitches supports the idea that being diverse/different can encourage new ways of thinking. During each pitch, designers used multimedia to demonstrate the science behind laundry detergent, telling the stories of particles moving through the clothes in a washing cycle. Upon viewing these pitches, the interview participant explained they were 'unmoved' by the pitch that was within the capability of her own internal team to produce. However, the pitch that used stop-frame animation (a technique unfamiliar to the interview participant), 'expanded their mind'. They proclaimed that using this technique encouraged them to view the product in an entirely different light.

As mentioned previously, a prime example of how a diverse story changed the thinking of an organisation was presented by Adamson et al. (2006) in their observations of a storytelling exercise at the San Juan Regional Healthcare Centre. Through examining the case evidence, it would appear that the novelty and diversity of a design pitch could also stimulate more holistic thinking, around design concepts and projects. However, with more organisations being exposed to design consultancy pitching continually, remaining novel could represent a challenge for future design practice.

Imagery, in particular Analogy for Holistic Thinking

'Imagery, in particular Analogy' also proved to be an approach to storytelling that closely related to encouraging more holistic thinking around a design concept or project in the research study Examined in this paper, with participants from two cases discussing its role.

As mentioned previously, in the Unilever Laundry case study, an interview participant discusses how one design pitch in particular 'expanded her mind' due to its diversity. Alternative reasoning for this encouragement of more holistic thinking, other than the fact that they had been exposed to something novel (stop-frame animation), could be that they were presented with imagery of the laundry cycle that provided an analogy of the particle science.

When relating this to the Accenture case study, a similar example can be found that supports this idea. One interview participant explains that they are more likely to think differently and more holistically about a design concept, if non-literal ideas are presented in stories (or in other words, analogies). They appreciate that when you are forced to think in abstract terms about something, you are encouraged to 'see it in a different way'. Specifically, they refer to a pitch where a design team used the style of popular comic/film 'Sin City', to provide analogies representing phases of a concept for a digital justice service. In doing this, elements of the design concept they had not previously considered were exposed, encouraging them to think more holistically about what should be encompassed in a more holistic digital justice service.

Analogy may not always be an appropriate way to present a design concept, particularly if it is a product. However, if a service or experience, and indeed an experience surrounding a product, is being presented, an analogy may prove to encourage more holistic thinking. Analogy, if original, can be viewed as diverse or different as it is an alternative way of representing something. Therefore, it stands to reason that an analogy can represent a diverse or different approach to telling a story, encouraging more holistic thinking in the ways discussed previously. Again, with a prime example being Adamson et al. (2006) observations made at the San Juan Regional Healthcare Centre.

Summary

To summarise, it appears that two key approaches to storytelling equipped the design pitches with characteristics indispensable for stimulating critique around the design concepts.

Firstly, storytelling approaches that bring 'Familiarity' to the design process allowed interview participants from all cases to think more critically around the design concepts. This 'Familiarity' was achieved through 'Detailing Concept Development'. Traditionally a design pitch will demonstrate a proposed design concept in use, however it appears that it's own evolutionary back story is just as important in terms of thinking critically around it.

Secondly, 'Curiosity' stimulated by the use of 'Imagery, in particular Analogy' can also result in critical dialogue surrounding a design concept. In trying to make sense of an analogy due to a naturally curious disposition, 'Abstracted Thought' is required, which in turn alludes to a critical dialogue surrounding the design concept that the analogy represents.

It also appears that two key approaches to storytelling equipped the design pitches with characteristics indispensable for encouraging more holistic thinking around design concepts and projects.

Firstly, stories that encompass 'Novelty' for their audience can encourage more holistic thinking. 'Novelty' is of course achieved through being deliberately 'Diverse/Different' in your approach, such as using stop-frame animation in the context of an environment where only PowerPoint is used, or using an original analogy for the purposes of presenting a design concept. However, maintaining originality presents a challenge for designers, especially in terms of presentational techniques that are finite.

Secondly, stories that elicit 'Abstracted Thought' encourage thinking more holistically and can be achieved in a design pitch through utilising analogies. A natural 'Curiosity' provokes the audience to relate the analogy to the design concept, which requires 'Abstracted Thought'; in turn this can uncover aspects of the design concept previously discarded, such as in the example provided by the Accenture case study.

The following figure illustrates the findings of the research study this paper explores, including the relationships described in this summary.
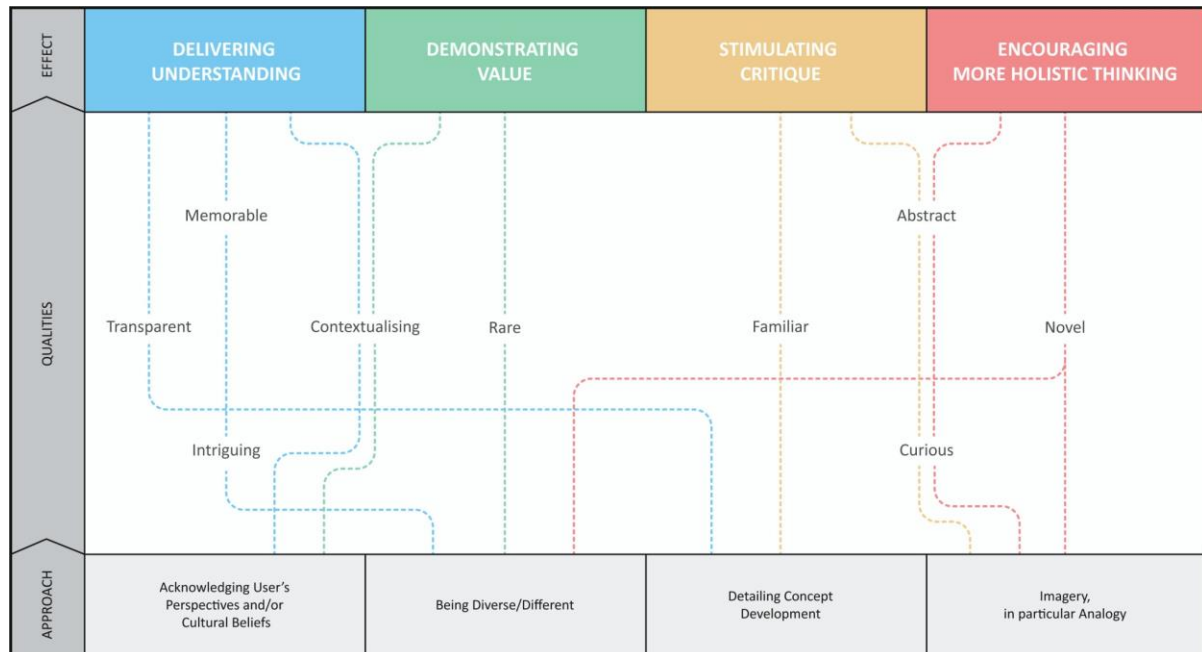

Figure 1: Design Pitch Storytelling: The Impact-Approach Framework

Conclusion

The original contribution to knowledge that the research study examined in this paper makes is delivered in several ways. Firstly, key findings make up a framework that describe storytelling approaches that have been employed during a design pitch to elicit certain impacts (shown in part in the previous section). Secondly, there is originality in the insights revealed with respect to the specific storytelling approaches adopted by designers in the cases examined (as demonstrated in part in the previous section). Finally, there is a gap in knowledge with respect to understanding the design pitch and the impact that storytelling can have in this context. This gap is apparent for several reasons: firstly, when searching the British Library's online catalogue, there is little published literature about the design pitch, and even less about storytelling and the design pitch. Also, research that explores storytelling and its relationship to design predominantly focuses on storytelling that occurs during the process of designing, theorising ways in which ideas can be developed through the exchange of stories between designers. Further to this, when drawing relevance from theories in other areas of literature, conflicting ideas are implied with respect to the approaches to take when storytelling and the impacts they can have (as described in the introduction of this paper).

As this paper is preoccupied with how the design pitch can engage its audience, specific focus has been placed on the impacts 'Stimulating Critique' and 'Encouraging more Holistic Thinking'. Key pathways illustrated in the framework that relate storytelling approaches taken at the design pitch to these impacts can be summarised as follows:

- Using diverse or different approaches in both mode (such as stop-frame animation) and content (such as including an analogous reference) when telling a story can introduce novel ideas that encourage more holistic thinking around a design concept and its project territory.

- Detailing concept development when telling a story during a design pitch can bring a familiarity to the design process, allowing the audience to engage in critical discussion around the design concept. The transparency that this brings to the design process can also encourage more holistic thinking around the design concept and its project territory.

- Using imagery, in particular analogy, when telling a story during a design pitch stimulates a curiosity to understand the appropriateness of said analogy. Often this requires thinking about the design concept in an abstracted way, stimulating critical discussion and encouraging more holistic thinking around the design concept and its project territory.

When designers are pitching their concepts to clients, it is likely that they will want to engage them in critical discussions around their concepts, and encourage them to take more holistic, and possibly consider alternative, viewpoints. Therefore, of particular importance here is considering ways in which to: bring a diverse or different approach to their storytelling; reveal the stages of concept development in the story, and include imagery, in particular analogy. It is important to state that this paper promotes more strategic consideration when pitching design concepts, with particular focus on storytelling, rather than promoting 'generalisable' rules.

Focusing a storytelling perspective on the design pitch in this way has identified the importance of the role that storytelling at the design pitch has, whilst developing an understanding of the working relationship between a number of designers and their collaborating organisations (in terms of the impact they can have). In doing this, this paper promotes a higher degree of consciousness when pitching design concepts, through encouraging a reflection on the information presented.

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