The Cultural Jordanian "Shammagh" in the Context of Contemporary Product Design

Fadwa Hamdi Barakat[1]

Abstract

Each country has a symbol that defines its specifications within the law or the constitution, an example of which is the flag being the emblem of state. However, the Jordanian *Shammagh* is a national symbol adopted historically by customs and traditions, especially after being worn by the Jordanian forces in 1930.Since then, it has become a source for cultural, historical and emotional connections, for example pride, albeit that it is only distinguished by its red color. The absence of products, though, actually having the pattern of the *Shammagh* symbol is quite noticeable. This lack of reliable, consistent and up-to-date data is problematic in creating an ongoing Jordanian Identity. A key objective of this paper is to offer discussion on using qualitative methods. This study, therefore, intends to develop a contemporary design-related ethos based on grounded insights from participants' fieldwork and using examples of product design to enhance their quality for the future and posterity.

Keywords: Contemporary, culture, Jordanian *Shammagh*, national and product design.

Introduction

The *Shammagh* has become part of the Arab costume since the establishment of the Jordanian Badia forces in 1930 (Shoup, 2006, p.84) and it has therefore become a sacred symbol associated with the past. Heritage and traditional principles have evolved over a long period of time so that it is notable in the Jordanian markets of today that the design of local products ison track with the digital trends whereas at the street culture level it is poorly expanded in order to enhance the possibility that national symbols may be used in order to produce designs that have market appeal. Consequently, cultural features are considered to be of a distinctive character for embedding into a product, both for the purposes of product identity in the global market and the enhancement consumer recognition (Lin, 2005, p 52).This study, therefore, seeks to establish studio-based practices for the modern *Shammagh* model to provide designers with a valuable reference for designing a successful cross-cultural product.

Incorporating Culture with Design

Maintenance of cultural identity is one of the most prominent Arab issues for research and study because cultural heritage can provide a myriad of enriching benefits for regions and peoples. Markets in Jordan tend to concentrate on "globalization," particularly as far as openness is concerned, since it enables the emerging culture to be fed with contemporary innovations. Designs can differ from limited product adaptations to elaborate complex global products (Yang Cai, 2001). This paper describes an attempt to apply a reliable design ethos so as to bring out and highlight the emotional aspects of a product. The *Shammagh* could play a key role in evoking consumers' sensations and multidimensional feelings that reflect information about relationships with a customer's social and physical surroundings, as well as his/her interpretation of these relationships (Lambie & Marcel, 2002, p. 219-259), (Smith & Elisworth, 1985, p. 813-838).

Linking products with the positive effect of the Shammagh image can attract high levels of precipitation towards identity and can create a certain sense of trust amongst the people who support them. The Aaker framework (1994 pp. 78-82) suggested that country of origin could add credibility to a brand.

[1]Department of Graphic design, Faculty of Languages& Literature, Jadara University,Irbid B.O.Box 733, zip code 21110, Jordan, Phone: +962 2 795428456, E-mail myJordan00@gmail.com

He also added that the brand-as-product perspective consisted of aspects such as the link to a country of origin. This was based on a series of human characteristics associated with the brand image(p.12)so that when a person was linked to a realisable positive image this contributed to the development of positive attitudes towards them, thereby helping the product to expand more and in a co-modification culture (p.21).

The Scottish tartan, for example, acts as a fashionable and national symbol of Scotland, where national branding, marketing, and clan identification through the use of both fabrics and colours, (just as with the *Shammagh*) symbolise membership of country. The Scottish government considers it to be "one of most iconic resources" (The Scottish Register of Tartans, 2007). The tartan was used in the label design of IRON-BRU, Scotland's leading carbonated drink (2015), enabling it, within the space of three months, to leap to its highest ever level with sales being 17% higher – lifting their share from 19.1 to 19.9%(DBA Design Effectiveness Awards 2016, p.2)

Another design, this time from India, was for the Godrej Frost Free refrigerator (2016) which, as a result of its efficient cooling system, connected very strongly with its consumers. In addition, the pattern design of spring flowers reflected traditional crafts, modern concepts, natural materials and modern techniques (India Design Mark, p.99).

The importance of turning culture into modern design has been shown in many studies. One notable example was made by the Department of Industrial Design, Eindhoven University of Technology (2012)describing the importance of learning from traditional crafts and the value of craftsmanship in textiles and how they led to societal sustainability for the waste-oriented fashion industry (Kuusk et al., p.7).Engaging and developing old crafts into the possibilities of new technologies create a link between the (QR)code and the textiles, in that they both have common interpretations containing information about the items to which they are attached. For example, in folklore, textile colour, placing and ornaments contain the story about the family on which they're based, and that this information can be taught and learned in the community because the (QR) code can be composed in patterns that are present in the electronic input of the script. The design process can drive cultural development forward (Ho, M.C., Lin, et al., 1996)in the same way that this study attempts to turn the *Shammagh* culture into a modern product evoking a country's value.

Methodology

A qualitative approach is chosen and implemented through communicating the idea of 'nested' methods within research processes (Theory and Practice). This paper reports on a series of design activities run and based on Jordan. The process itself is open and responsive where co-design uses a series of dialogues and activities that generate new, shared meanings based on expert knowledge and lived experience. Themes can be extracted, and used as the basis for co-designed solutions (The Australian Centre for Social Innovation, 2017. P.3), by graphics-design students in the development of the meaning of user-centred approaches within co-design processes. Theoretical knowledge has served as the basis for our empirical work and will lead to a research model from which an interview guide will be formed within the following criteria

Figure (1) Design method

The above diagram shows the development process being a combination of methods of collaboration, where designers guide users to create an experience and create solutions for themselves.

The author has also worked with other designers to develop insight with Jordanians who often use the *Shammagh, based on* custom, as a head cover or drop-down to the shoulders. Participation of citizens has been core to many designs created from these frameworks and adds both new approaches and a new imperative for engaging citizens in the design process.

Co-design principles: These are related to a process involving customers and users of products. It is also known as 'generative 'because it develops potential solutions(Burkett, 2012, p.3)as part of the process of engaging users for getting a wider perspective from, or with, the intended audience(Lee,2008, p.31-50).However, limited research exists on how participation in design influences end-users in the context of graphic design. The following are some examples of a variety of materials and research tools used in co-design sessions that uncover a variety of insights:

Workshop: The designers have held three sessions and most of the workshops had a duration of one to two hours, although they could have been longer if experts were involved. Each workshop started with a briefing and went on to examine the results from the self-reflection exercises completed in stage one. Participants were then asked to develop and define what they wanted to say using different tools as follows:

Collages: Collages allow people to express themselves through images and words that relate to how they envision current or future experiences. The materials used are generally composed from two major images of those who typically wear the *Shammagh.* One should be of an older man and another for young people, both being carefully chosen and defined by a maximum of fifty words by the development team and printed on sticker sheets. The images and words chosen should be abstract enough to elicit communication without guiding the participants in any way.

Figure (2) Collage boxes Design Practice

Storyboards

The narrative on storyboards is used to describe a series of events for the purpose of pre-visualizing perception of design (Law, 2009, p.1). Some materials for storyboarding in co-design sessions include photos and videos. Other materials include additional collections of icons, images and symbols. Some storyboards are presented to the participants with some pre-defined elements. For example, the designers might recreate a collective memory of facts and events from Jordanian products in relation to the *Shammagh.*

Futuring

This is the process of creating mind maps of abstract concepts incorporating materials such as symbolic arrows, regular and irregular shapes, and some distinctive icons or words. These tools should help the designers to respond to the following questions:

- - What is the main context?
- - Who are the characters involved?
- - What do those characters tell us?
- - Who is the major character?
- - What is the principal message?

Sketching & Prototyping

Throughout most sessions the results should be assessed on the following elements: dialogued sequences, actions, places and characters. Once the research cycle is finalized, the qualitative nature of the data allows the results of the co-design processes to be analyzed with methods such as affinity diagramming, which helps to gather large amounts of data. It turns out that the most noticeable points related to connections with the participants who wore the *Shammagh* and the Jordanian customs such as serving Arabic coffee, or women's and younger persons generating adornments. Designers linked a set of contemporary design examples and the Jordanian person, whether they were male or female. The following examples reflect local products such as Dead Sea mud, Arabic coffee for fast preparation and local soap. The visual identity is designed for flexibility. It comprises three key elements- message, colour and imagery.

Figure (2) Prototyping models of Shammagh Identity

Test

Engaging identity is vital to increasing memory through purchasing choices and the brand experience to lure and keep customers. Every customer contacted provided a chance to reinforce an emotional connection (Wheeler, 2009, p.19).

Conclusion

The data obtained from sessions yielded multiple insights that were generally visual and tangible. It opened the concept of using traditional identity that can aid the presentation of direct connections with users' ideas and feelings in more engaging forms.

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