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Ethic Conscience in Product Design

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Abstract

Design is a phenomenon that supplies continuity; starting from the existence of mankind up to the present has been passing and constant change is ongoing. People, starting out with a sense of needed products have begun to design. Designing stage throughout time, starting with the abstract and the concrete from the area as we get product designs in line with the changing human needs is composed of. People are starting to occur in accordance with the needs and requests of ethical theories in product design that is a subject of discussion within in this area. In this subject, product design shaped by ethical and in the framework of product design concepts are explored through the designer's social responsibility.

Keywords: Design, Product Design, Ethic, Social Responsibility.

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1. Introduction

Design is basic activity of mankind and it is not only an area comprising of visualize and form as usually accepted but it is also a multidisciplinary area that covers the understanding of system design that requires complicated engineering calculations, recognizing the material and its effective use and ergonomics and needs of users. Product design, which is a part of design planning, is one of the major of design. It is defined by the TPE that ornaments on a whole or a part of product or an ornament on the product itself is a whole consisting of various kinds of components or characteristics perceived by the human senses such as line, shape, form, color, tissue, material or elasticity (Decree Law Pertaining Protection of Industrial Design Rights, 1995).

Design or designing a product is a practice that drives our lives. According to Marzano (1993), design improves and contributes to the future of our world in which we live and social values in a positive way and leads our lives; and a political activity that a designer make statement about the direction the world will move in. Product designs lie on the axis which shape human life according to different needs and demands and the designer awareness of design, in a sense, is the reflection of life today and the future.

Product designer concretizes the opinion considering it outside an abstract concept. In this regard some products are introduced in order to meet the needs and requirements of the human being. It is a discussion that to what extent product designs produced can meet the needs or direct the people to buy products they actually don't need by creating a need concept. In this regard, product designer is expected to have being sense of responsibility within the frame of ethical theories during design process by attributing them some characteristics. On the one side, design is a phenomenon that shows a continuous development however, on the other side the designer must consider and cautiously scrutinize utility concepts that are derived from needs, demands and originally from the product conforming to the development with which the designer has already dealt.

2. Designer's Responsibility in Product Design and Ethical Consciousness

Design shows us how we could shape the world, meet our needs and finally cope with the problems revealed. One of the most important decisions made during the product design process is to determine the cost of the product to be produced and a product design created within effective and ethical considerations. In this sense, the responsibility of product designer could be presented within the frame of ethical concepts.

2.1. Explanation of Ethics and Utilitarianism Concepts

Like many words commonly used, the term of ethics has also different meanings. In the most popular one, ethics means a system or set of principles in which human beings adapts their behaviours according to themselves (Turkeri, 2014a). Ethics, also known as moral philosophy, is an area which examines and analyses the approaches revealing that how individuals and societies should act in a better world.

Ethics means moral philosophy. Ethics, in general, means an area that covers everything that is evaluated as good or bad. It is observed that there have been three elements in ethics in terms of definitions made throughout history. Firstly, it is related to the human's nature. Secondly, it means a whole life philosophy. Thirdly, it means principles and rules of behaviour management (Turkeri, 2014b). These all elements are included in the moral philosophy and ethics here reveals ethics theories by means of consistent and realistic investigations related these three areas.

Utilitarianism' theory which is one of the theories of ethics has a long history as a moral theory. One of its defenders is Francis Hutcheson, who is known as the supporter of this theory in 1725. Hume's moral theory was also considered as a kind of Utilitarianism. The most popular defenders of

this theory were Jeremy Bentham (1748 – 1832) and John Stuart Mill (1808 – 1873) (Turkeri, 2014a). Also, John Dewey (1859 – 1952) is accepted as one of the founders of the theory with Sanders Pierce and William James (Wakkary, 2009).

Utilitarianism approach has influenced many fields primarily social, politics and education to date. The utilitarian's were considered their philosophical work as an effort to reveal an objective rule which determines an action as right or wrong. They were called this rule as Utility Principle. This principle means that; an action is true to the extent that the more it reaches to the people the more it can reveal happiness (Turkeri, 2014a). Utilitarianism in fact highlights the results of an action and this theory is based on society not the individual. It is said that if an action causes harmful results rather than beneficial results, this action is not right; in case of vice versa it is right.

However, Utilitarianism defines the action which is most useful to the society 'right'; it also brings about some critical thinking about the subject. An action that is made in good will may cause bad results or vice versa. Therefore, some philosophers stressed that not only a result of an action itself but also the motivation produced along with this action should be considered important. This view could be explained with the "duty" sense of the ethics, the view of the Immanuel Kant (Turkeri, 2014a). Human being can evaluate his place in the world and the meaning he gives to the world from different perspectives with awareness of his self-consciousness. An individual with the sense of responsibility could produce an action worth by motivation it makes the individual raise his awareness and his meaning to life.

Human being is a creature seeking its value and meaning in life and that is aware of his responsibilities. Today the need is greater than ever for an explanation or developing an attitude – a philosophical attitude- that makes the individual aware of his self- conscience and responsibility in which human being himself, his values and the globe are all united (Koc, 2013). When an individual evaluates himself according to the value of his own, then he must also do the same for other people. Self-value of a person and ethics gives him a global point of view (Gursoy, 2007 as cited in Koc, 2013). In this regard, one has to get an understanding of human related problems and act sensitively to others as being aware of these problems.

Awareness of ethics is based upon both understanding of the individual himself and the others that surrounds him in unity. Thus ethics is actually universal and it directs people to include in global and universal ethics. A person, who acts in accordance with his own values, acts for others at the same time. J.P Sartre (2007), the popular French philosopher of existentialism argues that;" When we say that man chooses himself, not only do we mean that each of us must choose himself, but also that in choosing himself, he is choosing for all men. In fact, in creating the man each of us wills ourselves to be, there is not a single one of our actions that does not at the same time create an image of man as we think he ought to… Our responsibility is thus much greater than we might have supposed, because it concerns all mankind… I am therefore responsible for myself and for everyone else, and I am fashioning a certain image of man as I choose him to be. In choosing myself, I choose man."

When one becomes aware of his responsibility and creates the most beneficial designs for themselves it is an attempt to influence the others. In this context, in the product designs examined, ethics of designer becomes useful to themselves first then to society.

2.2. Designer's Responsibility in Product Design

Human being is an important factor for two reasons in terms of design. First of them is the human being himself who creates design. Second of them is that design is an activity produced in favor of humankind (Guneş, 2010a). Human who creates design aims to gain maximum benefit from it. The product which is the most beneficial to human, society and the environment is the most useful

product however, the features of product keeping the human at the centre are important in terms of increasing social awareness.

In this mass production age, everything is designed and planned for the society and the individual. Design is shaped by human being as a tool and it became most powerful instrument which identifies the environment. This brings about an increase in the social and ethical responsibilities of the designer. Design should be produced for needs of people rather than their demands. Today designers are of different opinions either to meet needs or demands. In this consumption age, people try to buy products they don't need, to spend money they don't have and to create superficial world where they tend to exist by trying to influence others having no interest in this field (Papanek, 1992). For whom the designer is responsible and whether the products created by the designer serve a better world or not is a matter of debate.

Responsibility conception in design contains a lot variances and complicated areas from ethics and human safety to environmental sustainability and social problems. Today, how many products designed are created as a result of awareness of responsibility is the question of debate. In this context, product designer is expected to have sense of responsibility throughout the process of production useful to him and to society.

Responsibility in design has the meaning for the designer to be conscious about re-creation of the world establishing strong ties with design project in each try (Findeli, 2001). Designer must be aware of his responsibility for the society and the environment in each product designed. He, with his own free will, needs to analyze design purposes and what he actually desires to reveal in order to make it appear. In today's world where a serial production has rapidly increased together with consumption; design has become responsible for communication, consumer goods, army materials, furniture, packages, medical equipment's, tools, kitchen utensils and several products. In this regard, having social conscience in all areas where the designer is in charge of is of great importance for the communication and a viable life in the future.

Papanek (1992), mentions about five myths, most of them are the philosophy of industrial designer. Real problems can be made meaningful by analyzing serial production, going out of fashion, people demands, and lack of control and quality myths that are not taken into consideration. With these myths having problems such as excessive serial production, primarily out-dated technological products, demand towards the objects not needed by the people, having been manipulated to buy these products, emergence of the demands of the market and lack of control of designers on this matter; designers in fact have the sense of control than they believe that they have while designing a product.

Product design at least as a principle- is a combination of opinions and activities that will be beneficial to the individual and its society, environment and the quality of life in a positive way (Guneş, 2010b). From the frame of ethics, it is seen that product design is an approach established as a result of decision of the individual. In this regard, design is a humanist phenomenon and exists depending on the decisions of people about life.

Papanek (1992) mentions about six design areas, in which product designer should take form and be analyzed within social responsibility conscience considerations and that have been forgotten. First of them is to make design for third world countries. Due to fast growing of population, most of people cannot meet their basic needs. Most of people have been forced to choose among products where they are manipulated to buy them, whereas the rest of people want to meet their very basic needs. The second is to create designs for devices to educate and help disabled people to improve themselves. The third is to design medicines, surgical, dentist and hospital equipment's. Health Costs has been dramatically increased and most of people cannot meet these costs. Therefore, individuals in the society can easily access to these health services as a result of new innovations of designers. The fourth is to make researches about experimental designs. Several equipments in thousands of laboratories are old and they are missing and their costs are so high. Since several equipments need to

be modernized according to the needs of age by redesigning and to decrease the level of profit rates to an acceptable level, researches on experimental design has an important place in product- design axis. The fifth is system design for a sustainable life under marginal conditions. System designs should be created against environmental effects for a sustainable life due to rapid increasing of environment pollution. The sixth is to reveal ground-breaking conceptual designs. Most of the products reach the death point instead of being improved. Extra devices are added to the product instead of responding with new and innovative ideas and analyzing basic problem. Many of these devices added are costly, non- aesthetic and consuming more water and electricity in use. Thus, analyzing the problem correctly and finding creative and applicable solutions should be needed.

Product designer should try to present products with features that will be useful for the individual and the society taking into consideration the features. Designer's social responsibility and moral awareness are based on ten principles as evidence of a good design, which is defined by Dieter Rams and they cause to create useful products to the individual and the society. According to these rules, a good design is innovative, makes a product useful, aesthetic, helps us to understand a product, unobtrusive, honest, durable, consequent to the last detail, concerned with the environment and as little design as possible (Arndt, Lau & Strehl, 2009).

3. Conclusion

A lot of decisions have been taken in design stage. Making decisions between the effects of design to a secondary design and accepting their risks, choosing among different conceptual designs, deciding on which criteria is acceptable in design and on which requirements and criteria should belong to design reveals the decisions about ethics issue (Devon & Poel, 2004).

Designers should be aware of their decisions they made during product design stages in order to get outcomes from a modern society. Being aware of their purpose in design and the benefits of the products developed and creating product designs are very important to understand of his own values and make a viable world. Social awareness of designers during product design process is vital to help in developing a sense of design where the interests of human are taken into consideration rather than useless and impractical products placed on the market that are obvious just by its shape.

The foundation of industrial design is based on practicable products. Products could be produced to help individuals to lead a more comfortable life, learn and work in a humanist manner. In brief, to create a design is to present more practicable and useful products for individuals and societies. Awareness of ethics and social responsibility of designer ensures the products generated to be the leader for everyone.

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