# Significance of sketch in creativity process related to graphic design education

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## Abstract

Sketching holds significance for graphic design as well as it does in any other design process. The contribution of sketching to graphic design process comes in the form of generating new ideas and developing concepts. The solution of a design problem will not be the best one, if the designer uses technological tools, such as computers, directly in order to solve the design problem. The significance of sketching includes also the graphic design education. Even though computers are the mostly used tools in today's graphic design education, students should grasp the benefits of sketching. In this study, the role played in creative process by sketches that students do related to their projects during a course that is in the curriculum of a university's Graphics Department will be discussed.

Keywords: Design, graphic design, sketch, design process, creativity.

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## 1. Introduction

A desire to create exists in human beings from very early ages. Children's drive to create becomes manifest while playing games. If their toys are ready-made, this drive of theirs may not be satisfied. What one can do with ready-made toys is limited since such toys are no more than what they seem with no further functionality or any aspect triggering creativity. If the toy is a plush cat, it is highly probable that children will not imagine anything beyond the living version of the cat. On the other hand, children can create a different world every time through the link they establish between their hands, eyes and imagination by playing with toys such as play-doh, enabling them to create different forms, thus triggering their creativity. As the world they create is a product of their very hands and brain, they feel free about their choices and this strengthens their productivity. In this context, one can argue that designs of students generated as a result of their sketches drawn on paper and pencil is very much like the worlds created by children using play-doh. They both come out through the link established between hands, eyes and imagination. The freehand drawing is the reflection of perception, expression, observation and all these realized in different steps depending on the stimuli in same time (Polatoglu, Vural, 2012). In this case, students headed to a computer before sketching can be likened to children playing with ready-made toys. Designs to emanate from computers will always be confined to software tools and students' literacy to use those tools as it is exactly the same case with limited number of plays children can play with ready-made toys. Contrary to common belief, computers are not magic design machines, they are just tools. From a simply functional point of view, computers are no different than pencil or painting brush. Works can be created to the extent of sensitivity, knowledge and education of the person sitting in front of a computer (Uçar, 2004). Even if students have a solution to a design problem in their mind without drawing any sketch, it is not possible for them to visualize their idea in the best way when they start to work directly on a computer as the first step in design process. Trying to visualize their ideas, students will have great difficulty in doing so particularly if they do not have a perfect command on the software. They consume their time thinking that what they can create is limited to software tools and how they can come up with the visual they want by using those tools. Finally, students give up and the result is usually below average design solutions. Instead of focusing on right design solution, students are stuck in technical obstacles. To solve this problem, it is essential to go back to the very beginning of design process. First of all, students should define design problem, and then think about solutions to the problem by using paper and pencil, and imagination. Sketching on paper and pencil supports ambiguity, imprecision, and incremental formalization of ideas as well as rapid exploration of alternatives (Do, Gross, 1996). Paper sketches help students generate and visualize ideas and these general, basic and rough ideas become the starting point of their design (Pan, Kuo, Strobel, 2013). In his research Schütze found out that designers who were allowed to sketch while coming up with a design produced a higher quality solution than those who were deprived of the opportunity to sketch (Schütze, 2003). After sketching and finding a solution, students should move on with the design process on a computer. This study shows results of design processes of students starting with or without sketching on occasion of a course involving advertising campaigns with an inherently high degree of creativity required.

## 2. Scope of the studio

One should not abstain from making dozens of sketches if necessary to get a new font or a different color. Each new solution found this way will continuously evolve, develop and become richer (Becer, 2009).

Advertising Graphics is a compulsory course delivered consecutively in two semesters (spring and fall) for 3rd and 4th year students in Graphics Department. Learning outcomes of the courses are exploring a variety of examples of national and international advertising campaign and to discuss the review and evaluation; creating the most appropriate strategy for the given brief; producing ideas for the brief; applying the most impressive idea in the most suitable medium in a most remarkable way; presenting the work in a clean, tidy and an impressive format and finally solving the problems which may occur during the advertising campaign. During the spring semester, students get some general information about advertising. Already knowledgeable about market research, advertising goods and services, and media types, they learn how to develop relevant concepts and choose the right medium in line with the brief they receive about advertising goods and services. Expected to benefit from sketching during concept development stage, students explain the concepts they develop by communicating with their project advisor through their sketches. Thus they use their sketches both during the process of finding ideas, and as a tool of communication. During the fall semester, they dive deeper into what they learn during the first semester. They have a closer look at subjects such as preparatory process for a launching campaign, brand positioning, conventional and unconventional advertising media. As it is the case during the first semester, they start to develop concept by sketching as the first step to design based on the brief about the launching campaign under preparation. Sketches drawn are once again used as a tool of communication, the concept developed is shared with concept project advisor and computerized design process starts following approval of the advisor.
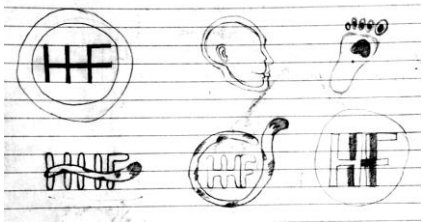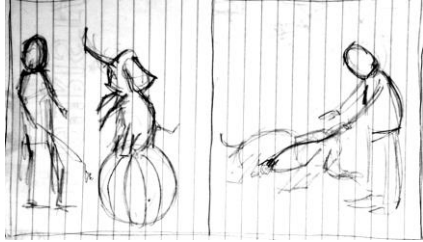
## 3. Procedure and development

Drawing design plays an important role in the process of designing and application of the idea. Because drawing and designing create a natural unity. Day by day, due to the fact that the usage of the mouse has increased and that the usage of pencil has decreased as a result of the facilities that technology has presented, drawing that have been ignored in terms of time and value have been thought to be an important point to be regarded and not to be left out (Bulduk, 2010).

The following four different student profiles can be concluded from sketching efforts during Advertising Graphics courses delivered in 2013-2014 and 2014-2015: First, there are two different student profiles who sketch; **a)** Students who sketch upon their own will **b)** Students who sketch as they feel obliged. There are two different student profiles who do not sketch; **a)** Students who do not sketch as they think they are not able to draw anything **b)** Students who do not sketch owing to other reasons. As the beginning of and during the Advertising Graphics course both in spring and fall semester, students were advised that design process should start with sketching, which would also be the tool to communicate ideas, and that it would be no good to start with computer generated designs. They were reminded that sketching would be a part of their assessment with regards to the course. It was found during both semesters that there were some students who had a sketchbook, who were used to sketching or who newly had a sketchbook for the course, grasping importance of sketching. It was observed that some other students drew sketches just to get higher grades since sketching would be part of their assessment. Some others did not work with any sketches during

design process as they thought sketches needed to look perfect like a pencil drawing image and they did not find themselves capable of sketching.

Table 1 presents project of the student who got the highest grade from the first project assigned during the first semester among nine students in the course. Subject of the project is a social responsibility campaign aimed at protecting animal rights. The brief received by students highlighted the need to design a corporate identity and develop some advertising concept for the animal rights association. Table 1 exemplifies a student who worked with sketches consciously along with the student's works aiming at analyzing the brief received. The table includes the sketch drawn for the logo besides the computer generated logo in addition to sketch and final computer generated version of the advertising content planned for outdoor display.

Table 1. Student works with the sketching process - First Semester

| Sketch | Computer generated design |
|---|---|
|  |  |

The sketch drawing, which is a method needed by the designer during the production process of the design ideas for developing and transferring them to paper in a fast and fluent way, is an effective way of thinking. By these drawings of thoughts, the designer brings together various ideas (Silav, 2013). The student referred to in Table 1 considered many design alternatives during sketching stage of logo design and shared these with the project advisor. Upon critics and assessments received, the student chose one of the alternatives, and carried the design to computerized environment in a smooth and successful way. Following the same path for the design process of the outdoor advertising content, the student came up with a creative project. Stones' research gives the same result of not only is paper-based sketching more effective in producing more solutions than digital working but is also more effective in supporting one particular synthesis strategy (Stones, 2006). Table 2 shows logo designs of students who received the same brief about the social responsibility campaign for protection of animal rights but worked without sketching at all during the project, started to work directly on computer without full competency about computer software and did not ensure good communication with the project advisor.

Table 2. Student works without the sketching process - First Semester

| Number | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Computer generated design | | | |

During the 2$^{nd}$ semester of the course, as an example of advertisement for goods, students received a brief about launching campaign for a new product, "ayran with fruit". Asked also to find a commercial name for the new product, students developed brand positioning for the product and media planning to promote the concept they developed. Table 3 shows sketches and further final designs of two students who started the design process with sketching. First line of the table includes logo sketches and final computer generated logo designs of the student who gave the name "Meyran" (merging the names meyve-*fruit in Turkish* and ayran). Starting the concept with some illustration sketches, the student chose one of the sketches as the advertising idea for the product. The other student whose logo sketches and computer generated logo designs are given in Table 3 gave the name "Köpükx" (*bubbly in Turkish*). The table also shows the same student's sketch for the idea concept and visualized version of the idea.

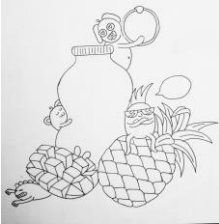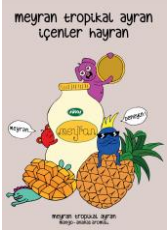Table 3. Student works with the sketching process - Second Semester

| Number | Sketch | Computer generated design | Sketch | Computer generated design |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | | |
| 2 | | | | |

Table 4 gives examples of designs of students receiving the same brief about launching of the same product but who did not draw any sketches and started to work directly on computer without competency about computer software.

Table 4. Student works without the sketching process - Second Semester

| Number | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Computer generated design |  |  |  |  |

## 4. Conclusion

Whether it is a logo, a book cover or a web page that a graphic designer is supposed to design, the outcome should be different from all the previously created works and be generated as a result of comprehensive thinking. The sketching process with imagery is not about drawing something that already exists; instead, the designer is involved in a process of visual thinking, in which there is a mental shifting and an association of information, which can generate design ideas (Huang, 2008).

In conclusion, it was seen that students who worked with the sketching process both established clear communication with their project advisor and carried what they designed in their mind to computer in a more sound and creative way. During the projects it was observed that designs of students who started the creative process by sketching are different from one another, while designs of students who did not sketch lacked creativity and looked much alike as a result of vertical thinking method and due to inadequate software literacy.

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