

Design manager versus Marketing manager: are they similar ?

Toward two jobs identity better comprehension

Nabil EL HILALI*, Jean Pierre MATHIEU**

* ISTE Business School, n.elhilali@istec.fr

** Audencia Business School, jpmathieu@audencia.com

Abstract: Within design and marketing interaction bounds, in house designer and marketer plays a key role. Our narrative qualitative investigation focused on understanding designer and marketer self-identity shows that a basic corporate managerial perception of the two is biased. Designer identity is radically different from the marketer at a deep level even both jobs appears as a common human resource in management perspective. Designer and a marketer story show that designer self-identity is radically different from that of the marketer. When designer self-identity appears as a fusion with a creative work driven by his work on artifacts, the marketer self-identity by the other hand appears oriented toward a labor work guided by career path performance.

Key words: *Designer, Marketer, Design, Marketing, Self identity, Design management, job perception, Human resources management*

1. Introduction

At the heart of design and marketing interaction within design management field, design and marketing plays a strategic role in terms of organization performance. (Hetzel 1993); (De Mozota 2003) ; (Bruce and Cooper 1997), however this interaction presents signs of complexity in terms of rivalry, conflict and collaboration. (Beverland 2005); (Holm and Johansson 2005). (El Hilali 2012) Thus, we believe that in design management, research must focus primarily on understanding, under comparative basis, the self-identity of designers and marketers in an idea of consilience.

If we can observe that literature has upon different backgrounds studied widely self-identity related to work and organizations, as we can observe it for example in Osty (2002) devoted to employee recognition, in Erez and Earley (1993) studying self identity link to culture, or in Dubar (2010) ; Watson (2008) developing self-identity interaction with social identity and in Fisher (2002) showing that designers holds a pragmatic attitude to their creativity. This literature remains not particularly useful under the comparative perspective chosen here, especially when we observe that none of them, exception made on Fisher (2002) took a designer as a study field.

Therefore, we believe in a perspective embedded in design management that designer identity is a particular issue as it deals with several fields as art, engineering, R&d and management in liminoïd way (El Hilali & Mathieu 2011). In this idea and under our knowledge, there is no research that takes under analysis comparatively designer and marketer self-identity in its link to the way they represent their specific link to their work.

To investigate the issue, we made a qualitative approach focused on a sample of ten companies that recognizes design as a strategic function by implementing in house design as a human resource as it occurs for the marketing function. The principle of heterogeneity was respected by various sectors in SMEs and large groups. Interviews

with both designers and marketers were conducted upon narrative methodology investigation. For codification, choice was made under fragments notion as a performance made by designers and marketers in their workplace and for analysis we used semiotic as a tool to highlight specific meanings.

2. Self-identity and design job as a fusion:

One aspect meaningful specific to designer, when he relates his career path in narrative way, lies in its capacity to merge his self-identity with his job identity. In other words, being a designer is the result of a personal quest constantly searching for coherence that goes over sense of belonging to one company.

When the designer T.L.M. from a company producing utility vehicle constructed his story, he relates it as following: "... So my itinerary I do not know how far I go back (laughs), but I always wanted to do design, I'll not go back to childhood ... at the time in the early 80's.... 90's design education was much more difficult to obtain, and I was living in the east of France, I was very interested in design, I drew as many other cars and therefore it was difficult to adjust my profile: this kind of profile, and I was advised at the time to have a technical background to be able to do design, so I spent a two year getting diploma in Mechanical Engineering and Production and then I went to Paris afterwards where I got support from design school known today as "Créapole" ... "

In this fragment, we can observe the emergence of a narrative seeking in distant past, a commitment to the designer job. The expression "I'm not going back to childhood" itself through a humor sense means to us within the context of the interview, that the aim which is being a designer, certainly dates at the tender age of childhood. Right here, we can identify job design anchoring in the self-identity of the designer since his childhood.

Being a designer is therefore a quest that does not appear as a straight line, but is built through trial and error. T.L.M. detects as an opponent some difficulty with the identification of design education structure. This fact will lead him to construct in certain way his own curriculum in order to achieve his goal namely being a designer.

In the pursuit of its object, the designer feels the need for coherence between self-identity and his job, being in-house designer in his company appears then as a logical consequence, the result of self-identity aspiration in the quest to be a designer. Thus, the fragment of narrative emphasizes a search for identity coherence over a career path. In this situation, a design work realized within the framework of a dissertation study is far from trivial, it acts as a milestone of great importance for T.L.M. when he was student and he memorizes this issue in detail:

"I worked on an interactive object, I really wanted to work in the field of childhood, it was a bit early video games era, with Nintendo, Sega etc. and I wanted to create a digital stuff, but mentally played, that is not a reflex game, arcade game, but that really is a mental construction of space, so I went on a kind of consciousness of the child that was growing with the child that recorded images and sound and so I was closer to Sony at the time.... They were interested, I was entitled to an engineer who had taken my degree was based on mini disc and in fact it is a mixture of digital camera associated with the image and its interpretation and possible and without going into details, we could put keys, add decorations, it was a sort of staging for the creativity of the child.... just after that I left the army, it would be worth it to do something more, especially since we did not speak digital camera at the time, this is a kind of digital multimedia object ... "

What arouses the astonishment here and built analysis lies in the construction length of this narrative fragment with specific details about a student dissertation study. Except that this discourse does not come from a freshly graduated designer holding his first job, but from a designer cumulating 15 years experience within a leading company in its field!

The discourse tone very enthusiastic produces for us the sign that the designer we were interviewing was talking about a design work in progress in his company and that he was working on it in the next room, just before we interrupted him with our interview request, while it's an idea old by more than 15 years.

We place so this narrative fragments in a logical way as illustration of coherent identity in a career path and kind of osmosis research pursued in the practice of design job. The timing of military service obligation in the story is the event that will force the designer to suspend its project, but not to abandon the pursuit of what constitutes the final quest: being a designer.

Now by spotting the analysis on the experience of another designer M.A.B., we will discover in a way quite similar from narrative fragment that what seems to be chaotic career path, presents a strong quest toward the pursuit of being designer:

"After my scientific diploma, I lost a year in the Faculty of Science in biology and chemistry, then I did 2 year industrial production degree qualification, then I found a design school, I started to work for a company but for a while... I made urban furniture design, telecommunication towers, graphical design for advertising, I made the outdoor games for kids..."

What we can highlight here lies in the idea that narrative action is guided by a creative act in a link to design rather than the name of a company identity or brand, in other words it's designing artefacts that structure the career path and not belonging to specific companies.

M.A.B. later will highlight the fact that he was poached by another company, but it wasn't enough to retain him: "After 5 years, I quit the company and then I took almost 2 years off to recharge my batteries a little bit, but I worked part-time for art direction for a small company "

The designer M.A.B. as a subject discusses the need for deliberate break in his career and the need to recharge batteries, which in this context means that he develops a requirement to get multiple inspirations in order not dry up as a designer before he joined his actual company.

This idea, we can observe it similarly in M.G.A. experience as a designer operating in the furnishing sector, the designer highlights the importance of overseas immersion that he injected in his career path:

"I had a school of applied arts before making a design school, I went then abroad in London for 2 years and a half, I did not want to work in Paris just after my graduation and being there a kind of number inside a common design agency, so after the experience of London ... I came back to France and I am designer right now in this company"

We can observe here that being a designer is a kind of a hard test to live before fully experiencing design identity job. In this context, what seems to be a chaotic career path in surface is rather a self-identity construction in his relation to a specific job: being a designer.

Now, let's take a close look to an other variation in pursuing a design job as a self identity construction in Y.N.D. story:

"My carrer path oh la la! (Expression in a humorous tone meaning the difficulty of tracing a path), I'll try to track it, I have a special path as many designers, I have mechanical engineering background, I started to work with

a two year degree in Mechanical Design, I have worked in various sectors, medical machinery, etc., I sketched, I designed products, special machines, beds for hospitals, robots and different things and then I took various positions in different companies ... "

In a surprisingly quite similar manner to M.A.B. narrative fragments, we can observe here that Y.N.D. narrative action progression is done through the creative act of designer in his link to his design outputs rather than through the corporate identity. Being a designer prevails here corporate identities. In another point, we observe that the designer in his need to achieve his job quest, has to express the need for additional design skills:

"I went back on the benches of the university, I prepared a master in mechanical technology and then a master in design [...] I knew how to speak the technician, the engineer, I wasn't speaking well the designer and making this education has allowed me to be a sort of translator between design services and mechanical services"

By using conceptual metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) in this narrative fragment, we can observe that the different fields interacting with design become spoken languages and designer strives therefore to control these languages in order to optimize its skills toward the quest of his object in a link to design job.

Another narrative fragment significant in his expression on design job and coherence research with self-identity that concludes the point discussed here is related to Y.K.R. as a designer operating in transport services.

To capture in better idea the sense from where he will develop his story, it should be noted that Y.K.R. has not joined the company as a designer. The design department will be created later when design was recognized within the company at the strategic level:

"Surprisingly, I am a civil engineer ... but I think that from my childhood, I imagined that the work, I'll do later would be in a link to design management without knowing that the job exists at all, because when I finished my undergraduate studies and I went in scientific studies, I made the bridges after, I did not even know that design schools existed and when I joined the company in marketing department, I do not even used the word "design" "

The use of the word "surprisingly" means here the dimension of a heterogeneous path. This fragment has a specific meaning especially when the tone used in narrating was under the register of gravity, seriousness and emotion. We are here in front of a design manager who intuitively knows deeply in his self-identity that he will be required to be design manager, even though he wasn't aware about design education existence when he was young. Comparatively when earlier, the designer T.L.M. covered by some modesty the idea that since his childhood he wanted to be designer, Y.K.R. in the opposite side, expresses the same idea in assumed manner with strength and conviction.

The narration here shows that design is anchored in heart and soul and nothing will separate the design manager from his goal destiny specific to design. Moreover, it is noted here that the initial recruitment was made in the marketing department, Y.K.R. leaves then marketing as soon as the design was institutionalized in his company.

Again here, the designer self-identity is rooted in a logical quest regarding design, even though the designer has gone through an education focused on urban engineering, this education is mentioned under regret tinged with nostalgia feelings:

"I could be a designer directly, I have not done these studies unfortunately, I still love the graphics, I love letters design, typography, I was doing a lot myself for my hobby association in music, I made posters, it was no computer at this times, I pasted letters with the so-called ultra-set system, so I had letter prototypes, so the graphics and presentation visual is something in which I was very comfortable "

This narrative fragments mentions here how Y.K.R. expresses his pathway to design: a strong conjunction between self-identity oriented to design since childhood, personal practices listed in the "hobby" and a situation in which the design was recognized within his company.

Being a designer is therefore the object who guides the search of the subject matching largely with the self-identity of the designer at work. Therefore, we hold as a synthesis correlated with designer self-identity that design is:

1. A search conducted by the absolute subject under the sign of heroism that nothing stops, the opponents are fought and helpers mobilized towards achieving the object that is the design practice profession.
2. A merge between self-identity and design as work.
3. Construction of a strong link with artefacts regardless belonging as in house designer to a particular company.

3. Self-identity and marketer job as a labor performance

Now by exploring in the similar way, marketer self-identity toward his job, marketer perception generates the opposite result of what we have developed above, the saturation qualitative principle is reached fairly quickly essentially through the brevity of the narrative story regarding the marketer career path.

In this context, a marketing director in the area of utilitarian vehicle sector develops this idea: " Basically I got education as an engineer, by the way, I also did an M.B.A. in industrial marketing, I am in the company since 2004 and my mission here, among others, is to evolve the company from an approach too much product oriented to an approach more market-oriented "

The significant idea we can highlight here lies in the fact that marketer compresses his past experience in narrative short mode, after mentioning the education received specific to marketing and engineering, he underline the principal goal assigned to him as a marketer related to marketing concepts in a specific reference to market orientation concept (Narver and Slater 1990). In a similar track P.G.A., another marketing manager in the furniture industry narrates his trajectory as following:

“ I am graduated from business school XXX in Nantes City, for me it was difficult to find my first job especially as I wanted it in the west small city rather than Paris for a personal concerns, I made 6 months to find the job that I wanted, I worked in retail industry at “Boulangier” and now I am marketing manager here since last march, where it's almost one year since I applied, I am running both marketing and communication here, that's it !”

The narrative fragment carries here a focus on job opportunity, graduation, and the difficulty employment access due to personal concerns before specifying the job occupation as a marketer combined with communication management.

The past experience is developed on the basis of a specific education business school and the experience hold in a French branded retail chain. The specific tone used shows a kind of hurry that wants to drive the narration quickly to the present time.

In a similar context, we will find the same idea emerging from another marketing manager “P.A.S.” acting in worldwide leading group in the automotive industry: “So I am in this present company: XXX about 20 years now, I hold various positions since I am here, I was branch manager in Austria, after doing the same job in England, I had to do it approximately seven years, and now I am the marketing and communication manager for two years now”

In a situation of producing narrative story, the author always has to specify a precise time (Ricoeur 1982) as a starting point as it is expressed somehow by the expression “once upon a time”. Related to that idea, what is significant here is that starting point is elaborated inside the marketer company, education background and other professional experiences are totally not expressed. The narrative story mainly focuses on the evolution of a career path within a single firm.

In the same situation developed here, another marketing manager C.H.H. in Bus services industry will develop his idea as following:

“ I am 39 years old, I am graduated from XXX business school in 1994 in marketing major, I started my career in Paris in services in a market research institute: XXX for four years ... Later I hold marketing position in consultancy firm, then I moved to Packard Bell company and now I am for five years now at XXX company holding marketing position since 2004, so today I am in charge for 40% of the company revenue, I am doing my job in more than 30 French districts ”

What is relevant here lies in the narrative performance through the construction of a career path, correlated to marketer age. We can observe that the age mentions the story starting point. Age as a sign is correlated by C.H.C. to what appears as a marketer achievement in an idea of performance. It sounds in some way, as “this is what I achieve at this age” We will find the same idea in the narrative fragment developed by another Marketing Manager L.T.C.:

“So I'm 40 years old, I started in 1992 for 16/17 years now in marketing functions, primarily in the SEB Group, on operational marketing, then I started working on the product in interaction with design since 1990 till 2000 on range of products, I was in charge of the production in Brazil then, and I was on the Iron products to develop strategic marketing for the brands Tefal and Moulinex for four years and right now I am in this present company, I am taking care of some products for three years now in charge of communication, operational marketing and strategic marketing”

We can observe in a comparable way in this narrative fragment that the age initiates the story highlighting past experience with a correlation with companies' branded names. Marketing concepts come later to structure in some manner the career path.

Being a marketer is therefore an object correlated to a job performance oriented to the present as a time of management action. Marketing concepts are mentioned in this way to specify the job identity in his link to one marketer self-identity. Therefore, we hold as a synthesis correlated with marketer self-identity that being a marketer is:

1. Acting job performance, the opponents are fought and helpers mobilized towards achieving a career path success.
2. A distinction between self-identity and being a marketer executive. There is no merge as it occurs for the designer as shown above.

3. A construction of a link associating age, job performance, and education background connected to branded business schools and past experiences highlighted by branded companies names.

Thus, the approach of being a marketer through these fragments of stories, leads us in terms of analysis, observing that man marketing tends to compress any past experience, in order to evacuate it quickly enough to arrive promptly to the situation occurring in the present as a space and territory of its action.

However, when this experience is narrated, a rationalization process builds in a logical enhancement of career, the naming of companies perceived as prestigious as career milestones. On the other hand, as it was observed, marketing concepts tends to structure the narrative action. What establishes then the marketer quest lies in the construction of successful career and his enrichment.

4. Conclusion

Therefore, working as a designer is the result of a personal quest in constant search for consistency beyond the company to whom designer work for. Under heroism metaphor, designer is viewing himself driven by one life goal: to be designer, operating in this context a fusion between his self-identity and design identity as a job.

On the other perspective, far from the designer view, working as a marketer shows that the marketer job is perceived on a marketer career development basis, in terms of success and performance and appreciation of the company that the marketer works for.

Finally, through the narrative performance of marketer and designer self-identity, we can observe that self-perception toward a designer job and marketer job is not similar. In other words, the designer generates a unique connection to the artefacts he designed, the designer self-identity then tends to merge with his job identity, when the marketer thinks his self-identity upon a link to successful career path in an idea of achievement and performance.

Therefore, to conceptualize comparatively the conclusion developed here, Hannah Arendt concept specific to “Work” and “Labour” distinction appears relevant to spot a distinctive interpretation.

Hannah Arendt (1958) distinguishes in his philosophy focused on the human condition in its relationship to human activity a difference between what can be considered as a “labor” and what can be considered as a “work” However, we do not use the concept in its basic state, but in his nuance to work experience as Benarrosh (2001) developed it.

In this conceptualization, designer work experience, in his strong link to artefacts as he designs them, constructs designer activity within Arendt’s “work” paradigm. We observed in this study that designer proximity to artefacts, leads to a specific perception embedded in products creation and this is what explains the narration of past experiences related to artefacts design as the memorization of a content student dissertation. Designer past professional experiences are related through product design, rather than through the company to which the designer has belonged.

On the other hand, marketer past experience, which tends to be quickly evacuated however as it was observed, is significant by the logic of performance that dominates marketer narration. The marketer rooted in business issues appear therefore embedded in action. Then, from the perspective offered by Arendt’s prism, it fits more with “labor” rather than “work” which fits more with the designer.

The marketer as he does not deal with products as the designer do, tend to adopt self-identity oriented to his job as a “labor”, when the designer by dealing closely with the products under creativity thinking, tend to adopt self-identity focused on a “work”. We define then the job self-identity of designer as a “work” and the marketer one as a “labor”.

Thus, as design is gaining more respectability, in house designers tends to be essentials to companies as other functions unit are driving companies toward competitive advantage. However, as a marketing function is concerned with the product as it appears within the well known 4 P’s paradigm (Kotler 2009) and as a design function is concerned obviously with the products, it’s relevant that when design field deals with business side of artefacts, that knowing comparatively the self-identity of the designer versus marketer is important.

The main bias to avoid related to this issue lies when designer and marketer may appear similar under human resource paradigm in management field. And as it’s highlighted in this research, the self-identity of the two is radically different at a deep level. Ignoring this distinction in academic and practitioner way, when one designer wants to deal and interact with one marketer and vice-versa, opens on the basis of our investigation doors to conflict, misunderstanding and lack of collaboration. Considering therefore, comparatively designer and marketer specificity toward their self-identity, is a crucial issue.

5. References

- [1] Arendt, H. (1958) *The Human Condition*. Chicago university press.
- [2] Benarrosh, Y. (2001) *Le Travail: norme et signification*. La Découverte.
- [3] Beverland, M. B. (2005) « Managing the Design Innovation–Brand Marketing Interface: Resolving the Tension between Artistic Creation and Commercial Imperatives. » *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 22(2), 193–207.
- [4] Boje, D. M. (1991) « The storytelling organization: A study of story performance in an office-supply firm. » *Administrative science quarterly*, 106–126.
- [5] Bruce, M., & Cooper, R. (1997). *Marketing and design management*, Thomson Business Press.
- [6] De Mozota, B. B. (2003). *Design management*, Allworth press.
- [7] Dubar, C. (2010) *La socialisation: construction des identités sociales et professionnelles*, Armand Colin.
- [8] El Hilali, N. & Mathieu, J. P. (2009). « Liminoïd design dimension » in *8th European Academy of Design Conference*.
- [9] El Hilali N. (2012) *Design et Marketing, tensions, collaboration et perspectives*, Thèse de doctorat en sciences de gestion. Université de Nantes.
- [10] Erez M. & Earley C. (1993) *Culture, Self-Identity and Work*. Oxford University Press.
- [11] Fisher T. (2002) « The Designer's Self-Identity Myths of Creativity and the Management of Teams. » *Creativity and Innovation Management* 6 (1): 10–18.
- [12] Greimas, A. J. (1966). *Sémantique structurale*. Paris. Seuil.
- [13] Hetzel, P. (1993). *Design management et constitution de l’offre*. Thèse de Doctorat Sciences de Gestion, Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3.

- [14] Holm, L S, and U Johansson. 2005. "Marketing and Design: Rivals or Partners?" *Design Management Review* 16 (2): 36–41.
- [15] Kotler, P., & Rath, G. A. (1984). "Design: a powerful but neglected strategic tool". *Journal of business strategy* 5(2), 16–21.
- [16] Kotler, P. (2009). *Marketing management*. Pearson Education
- [17] Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago London.
- [18] Narver, J. C., & Slater, S. F. (1990). The effect of a market orientation on business profitability. *The Journal of Marketing*, 20-35.
- [19] Osty, F. (2002). *Le désir de métier: engagement, identité et reconnaissance au travail*. Presses universitaires de Rennes.
- [20] Ricœur, P. (1982). *Temps et Récit*, Seuil, Paris.
- [21] Souder, W. E. (1988) « Managing relations between R&D and marketing in new product development projects. » *Journal of product innovation management*, 5(1), 6 -19.
- [22] Urban, G. L., Hauser, J. R., & Urban, G. L. (1980). *Design and marketing of new products*. Prentice-Hall Englewood cliffs.
- [23] Watson, T. J. (2008). "Managing identity: Identity work, personal predicaments and structural circumstances". *Organization*, 15(1), 121-143.