

The Impact of Slow Design Method on Designer *in Indonesia*

Dita Apriliani^{1*}, Adhi Nugraha²

¹ *Institut Teknologi Bandung, Indonesia*

² *Institut Teknologi Bandung, Indonesia*

*Corresponding author. Email: ditaaprln@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The fast-paced living practiced by modern society has proven to negatively impact various aspects of life, ranging from economy, environment, to psychology. Therefore, a good strategy is needed to minimize these negative impacts. The emergence of slow movement appears to compensate for fast-paced living. In the world of design, this movement manifested itself as Slow Design. This study aims to observe the situation of Slow Design in Indonesia and the impacts of its implementation in the design process of Indonesian designers, especially product designer. This research is expected to generate a strategy for the development of the creative process and design practice for Indonesia in the future. In terms of methodology, this research uses a qualitative approach consisting of an in-depth interview method and descriptive narrative in the analysis. This study shows the positive impact of adopting Slow Design as a method in designers and society, especially in Indonesia where the people's character is in line with the values of Slow Design. This supports the idea that Slow Design may be the right approach to bridge Indonesian designers with their surrounding society and improve the condition of the environment. Based on these findings, the topic of Slow Design in Indonesia has wide opportunities for further research.

Keywords: *Slow Design, Role of Designer, Lifestyle*

1. INTRODUCTION

Lifestyle is an inherent and inseparable aspect of human life because it helps to define a person's attitude, values, wealth, and social position [1]. Nowadays people rush through their activities until this behavior slowly becomes a lifestyle, known as fast-paced living. People who adopt this lifestyle have beliefs, attitudes, and understandings that romanticize an impulsive act in pursuing instant recognition and success. These attitudes slowly become an addiction that offers a negative impact on society [2]. This shows on various aspects of life, such as the economic, environmental, and psychological aspect. From an economic and environmental aspect perspective, a fast-paced lifestyle can result in consumerism behavior [3], which can cause the accumulation of waste from disposable items that may eventually pollute the environment. From a human psychological perspective, a fast-paced lifestyle that is carried out for a long time can trigger chronic stress [2].

Slow movement emerged as a reaction to fast-paced living, serving as a counter to the pressures that

are given to each individual by encouraging the enjoyment of going through the process and appreciation for the activities they do. Moreover, slow movement can be a bridge between people and their initial independence. Compared to the attitude of fast-paced living that feeds off a rigid way of living, slow movement encourages people to take responsibility of their choices without losing liberty. Slow movement then develops into various fields, including Design where it is manifested into Slow Design.

Slow Design is a belief that questions the original purpose of product creation in consideration of three main aspects: individual, environmental and socio-cultural. Slow Design benefits individuals in returning to the right pace that allows them to be more aware and appreciative of the design process and in using the products [4]. Slow Design has the potential to be applied in Indonesia because the character of the people is in line with its values. This study aims to identify the advantages and benefits felt by designers when the three aspects of Slow Design is used as the basis of the method for creative process. The research

also aims to determine the impact of slow design in Indonesia.

2. SLOW MOVEMENT AND SLOW DESIGN

The slow movement is an action that emerged as a reaction to the fast-paced and instant lifestyle of modern society. Fast-paced living develops quickly because of the existence of urbanization and industrialization that demands people to fulfill their needs quickly and instantaneously [5]. Furthermore, many people are obsessed with the acceleration that occurs, because modern society believes that this speed is the key to success. It makes 24 hours a day always seems not enough. When these are combined, it will only lead to an individual's prolonged fatigue and addiction [6].

The emergence of the Slow movement was kick-started by the success of Slow Food in Italy in 1986. Slow Food is a countermovement to Fast Food that is considered to be reducing the essence of the cooking process and eating activities. Fast cooking processes are also considered to be reducing nutrients from food as well as causing diseases, such as diabetes. Slow Food succeeds and evolves into Slow Movement that encourages society to act with full awareness, prudence, and a sense of calm. Its purpose is for humans to enjoy activities more and avoid stress caused by a fast-paced lifestyle [5]. Slow Movement can be used as an alternative lifestyle in society to create prosperity [7].

In the world of design, this movement manifested itself as Slow Design, introduced by Alastair Fuad-Luke in 2002. It is a new paradigm whose presence is motivated by the current design situation, which is too oriented toward economic gain and tends to lead people to develop consumptive behavior [8]. Slow Design focuses on a holistic approach to design that considers factors such as material, social, and the generated impact resulting from design. This term recommends the philosophy of returning to traditions, methods, and appreciation of processes that are sometimes forgotten by users and designers [4].

Slow Design has three main aspects, namely individual, environmental, and socio-cultural. It is also oriented to meet economic needs, but this aspect does not dominate. Through the considerations of these aspects, Slow Design is expected to control the production rate, economy, and natural resources. In addition to the three main aspects, slow design also has 6 principles regarding products, namely reveal, expand, reflect, engage, participate, and evolve. Slow

design in Indonesia is still relatively new, but the values of this concept themselves have been embraced in Indonesian traditional products, as in the Sundanese eating culture, which still maintains a system that allows coexistence with nature and has meaningful processes [4].

3. ROLE OF DESIGNER FOR SOCIETY

A designer is someone who creates and designs something [9]. Through their design they can deliver meaning in various ways. This is especially useful as designing is a profession that is at the heart of modern industry. They can form perceptions and persuade users to make decisions between what is needed and desired [10], and ultimately control consumers and build lifestyles in society. This shows that designers have a role in regulating the social order. With this in mind, both the industry and designers need to remember that their original goal of becoming an expert is to fulfill people's needs, not desires [11]. Therefore, a designer needs to recognize the impact of their work on the user holistically and be aware of the said role. This can be achieved by understanding the socio-cultural context so that they may aim to create a more responsible society [10].

4. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with an in-depth interview approach. The research begins by conducting a literature study on previous researches that correlate with the research objectives. The literature study was conducted to understand the basis and development of the current research topic situation so that the research carried out was effective. Literature study also helped in the process of preparing interview questions and interviewee criteria. The primary data is collected using in-depth interviews with four expert design practitioners. The interviewees were selected based on several predetermined criteria:

- Design experts who prioritize environmental and socio-cultural aspects in the design process.
- Design experts who employ one or more Slow Design principles in their work and are still productive.
- Design experts who have a place to market their product or artwork and have marketed their work for at least one year. With this, they are expected to have understood the character of their targeted community or market.

The design experts considered to meet the criteria and are invited as interviewees in this study are:

1. Mr. Singgih Susilo Kartono, owner of Magno and Spedagi (Product: wooden radio, lifestyle product and bamboo bicycle)
2. Mrs. Suriawati Qiu, co-founder of Cushcush, Cushcush Gallery, and Lagilagi (Produce various type of product such as furniture, homeware, toys etc)
3. Mr. Budiman Ong, owner of Ong Cen Kuang and co-founder of Jia by OCK (Product: conceptual lighting and homeware)
4. Mrs. Eva Natasa, owner of EVA NATASA (Product: Furniture)

The products designed by the interviewees are varied, but they have a similar design approach and meets the research criteria. The data analysis process is based on Slow Design theory that focuses on the three main aspects of Slow Design.

5. RESULTS

The in-depth interviews were conducted with a semi-structured approach, which took 50 to 60 minutes. Interviewees were asked to explain matters within their design process which are related to the three main aspects of Slow Design: individual, environmental, and socio-cultural. The interview includes questions about the interviewees' points of view on their respective Slow Design methods, chosen materials, economic situation, duration of work, and the impact of their held values in their design practice. The following are the results obtained through in-depth interviews.

5.1 *The Understanding of Slow Design*

The result of the interviews shows that there are not many product designers who are familiar with Slow Design, even though they understand the intent and purpose of Slow Design. They believed Slow Design to be a counter-reaction to the fast-paced living situation and that it is regarded as one of the methods that can be used by designers to overcome fast-paced living. Although they do not explicitly state that they are practitioners of Slow Design, they do embrace the values of Slow Design and employ them in their creative processes.

The result of the interviews shows that the application of Slow Design has the potential to thrive in Indonesia, because the culture, natural resources, and character of Indonesian people are very much in line with Slow Design in the way that they respect nature and care for the ecosystem. Raw materials for

creating products can be acquired from the abundance of natural resources available so long as it is done with consideration and wisdom regarding the environment. Moreover, Indonesia's diverse traditional culture can also be a source of design inspiration.

The interviewees believe that the collaboration between traditional society and Slow Design method can help designers in Indonesia to produce design works that are suited with both their character and Indonesian culture. They also stated that the opportunity to apply Slow Design concept in Indonesia also increases due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation that makes people rethink the current system and their roles in the development of the environment and society.

5.2 *The Impact of Slow Design*

The following describes the impact and interesting phenomena that arise when designers implement Slow Design aspects in their creative processes.

Impacts and phenomena on the Individual aspect:

- High spiritual and role awareness
It is known that the interviewees expressed similar motivations behind their works, namely their awareness of their own humanity and their responsibility as designers.
- High adaptability
Based on the interviews, it is seen that the interviewees showed an adaptive attitude toward the community and the surrounding environment. Most of the interviewees come from outside of the communities. In the beginning they tried to adapt to local conditions and available materials to come up with appropriate works that answer to the specific characteristic of each local resources. This adaptive attitude is still related to the point of role awareness.
- Self-actualization
The new finding derived from the interviews was the designer's high level of self-actualization. They stated that they got inner peace and satisfaction from their respective works using a slow design process.

Impacts on the environmental aspect:

- Effective raw material processing system
By being aware of their roles as both human and designer, the interviewees feel a sense of responsibility towards the raw materials that

they used. This motivates them to create a working system that ensures those raw materials are used efficiently and produce less waste.

- **Material and durability considerations**
The materials used are good quality materials that are environmentally friendly and have distinctive character that makes them unique. This material selection is intended to produce a high durability product that might indirectly suppresses user's consumptive attitude.
- **Production waste management system**
Although the production waste number is small due to an efficient material processing system, the interviewees are still trying to process waste into functional products that have economic value. This further increases the effectiveness of the process and the value of the material.

Impacts on socio-cultural aspects:

- **Altruistic view on work**
All the interviewees unintentionally admitted the same thing as each other regarding the impacts of their work on society. They always strive to achieve favorable situations in their work environments and the surrounding communities.
- **The eagerness to share with the community**
The attitude of sharing is the most interesting phenomenon that arises because of the application of slow design. Almost all of the interviewees created a place to gather and share activities, either with fellow designers, artists, or the local community. The purpose of creating this gathering place is to deliver values and messages to the community or society with ease.
- **Strong product values and background**
In Slow Design, designers have plenty of time to do research and learn something that may add more values to their work. The interviewees believe that products made with consideration of the environment where they will belong can establish a stronger bond with their user that results from familiarity.
- **The desire to educate users**
Referring to the previous point, because of the strong product background, the interviewees always try to educate users about their product.

This ensures that the meanings and values of the products are received properly.

6. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis, the application of Slow Design proves to have positive impacts on designers. The most interesting is the feeling of fully realizing their potential or self-actualization, which then encourage them to create authentic works as they have found their purpose in creating. This shows that the positive impacts felt by designer indirectly benefit the society. Another value that Slow Design brings to designers in respect to the social cultural aspect is their eagerness in spreading knowledge. The public forums that Indonesian Slow Design practitioners create for other designers and the community allow them to share, collaborate, and have fun. This interesting and friendly approach attracts people easily.

It is recommended that formal learning institutions teach Slow Design as an approach to designing for young designers. The Slow Design method is proven to be beneficial for producing designs with character and encouraging self-actualization in designers. Self-actualization and role awareness attitude is considered to be able to encourage designers to produce original works that are suitable to the character of the surrounding community and society. If this attitude is widely applied, it can encourage designers to create original works that translate as a strong design identity for Indonesia in the future.

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