My Reflective Essay:

My vision:

The concepts of Design Thinking have provided me with a fresh, critical perspective towards the process of innovation and thus has also given me a more sophisticated understanding of innovation itself (Brown and Katz, 2009). I believe the practices that can be drawn from Design Thinking can be applicable to various prospects, weather that be career or other types of disciplines. For myself personally, the idea of being fitness- based online entrepreneur has always been appealing and I think the implications of Design Thinking may be able to allow me to achieve this in a more innovative way. From what started as just a hobby as a teenager, keeping fit, going to the gym around 5 to 6 times a week and ultimately adopting this entire lifestyle overhaul has stuck with me and integrated itself into my everyday routine. It is something I thoroughly enjoy yet had only considered as a hobby for a long time. However, seeing how nowadays there are numerous amounts of online personal trainers who have been able to utilize the tools such as the internet and social media to develop a very sustainable form of income, the idea seems a lot less farfetched as I recognize I too have the tools available. However, there are a few constraints that I have recognized which could inhibit and discourage me from pursuing such a venture. Firstly, with today’s current gym phenomenon the market has become highly saturated with many other fitness entrepreneurs trying to expand their business. Additionally, with many having access to social media and a gym facility, the barriers of entry to creating an online profile based around producing and promoting fitness-based content is seemingly next to none. Finally, another hurdle that I have recognized is the nature of the content of many of these fitness entrepreneurs is very similar. The fundamental content of a ‘fitness influencer’ would include uploading workout videos, topless photos and perhaps the occasional food picture. The issue with this that I have recognized is that the majority of the content I see online is very monotonous and for personal reasons I would not want to just regurgitate what has been done before and also from a point of innovation, as I believe standing out in such a saturated market is essential to gain traction. This is where the implications of Design Theory can be applied in order to be more innovative within an industry which already seems well established regarding how it operates. Drawing inspiration particularly from the ideas of Tim Brown as well as emphatic design, I think these approaches will allow me to stand out among many others with the same goals of becoming a fitness entrepreneur. 445

Design Thinking:

With the concepts expressed by Tim Brown in mind, working within the inspiration, ideation and implementation spaces could be a method of taking a more innovative approach in comparison to many other aspiring fitness entrepreneurs (Brown, 2008). Beginning in the inspiration phase, there is an immediate problem that I recognise among many of the influencers that I see online today, particularly on Instagram. A popular format that I see is that many fitness influencers will post their workout regimes but with little explanation as to why they are choosing these specific exercises and how to accurately perform these exercises as well. Typically, with the caption ‘My Favourite Exercises’ or ‘Must try Exercises’ many influencers will post workouts that I myself would consider difficult or more advanced and therefore I don’t think this is appropriate for the average consumer who is looking for advice on Instagram and I don’t think these influencers take this into consideration. Thus, in the ideation phase, I would address this issue by taking a more human- based emphatic approach by considering the perspective of the average consumer (Leonard, 1997).

Considering myself as quite well informed, much of the content that I see online seems impractical for just the average gym-goer so my theory is that many influencers produce this sort of content to stand out by performing extreme exercises in order to gain traction, which as I mentioned is essential in gaining popularity in such an already saturated industry but I don’t think this is very informative for the average consumer. Drawing upon the concepts of emphatic design, I would put emphasis in developing something based on observation and gathering information from consumers who are situated in their own environment (Leonard, 1997). For instance, does the customer know why they are choosing a certain exercise, and do they know the actual benefit of it or are they just copying it from a post they saw on Instagram. I think this method may help produce possible innovations and solutions that customers themselves may not have even recognised, like being more well informed before applying these exercises in the gym. Many influencers try to stand out by trying to produce seemingly innovative content whereas I in contrast would try to apply Design Thinking concepts in order to stand out which I think would be more beneficial to the consumer.

Drawing further upon innovation that is more centred around being empathetic and the consumer’s needs, I would also consider another notion expressed by Brown, in which ‘once a person’s basic needs are met, he will look instead for meaningful or emotionally satisfying experiences. From a design perspective, a great customer experience is one that fulfils these higher- order needs’ (Brown and Katz, 2009). The basic need expressed by a client of a personal trainer will typically revolve around wanting to lose fat or wanting to gain muscle. There are a vast number of personal trainers who can facilitate this need with great succession, but this raises the question as to why a customer would choose me as their personal trainer when there are so many others who are also able to fulfil this need. In other words, how can I stand out against everyone else? This is where Design Theory can be applied, not only in order to stand out but to also facilitate more than just the basic need and provide an additional satisfying customer experience.

In order to achieve this, employing storytelling could be a method to make the service more engaging and relatable to the consumer (Brown and Katz, 2009). The results shown from clients typically consist of a side by side ‘transformation’ picture or just a difference in numbers on the scale. Although the results are clear and evident it is predominantly visual and matter of fact. What I would want to do is use storytelling as a focal aspect of documenting the progression of the customer. I think by treating the whole process as more of a journey, recording the entire process and how the client felt at the beginning, during and at the end could be an innovative way of showcasing the results. If the client feels happier, more confident or proud of their achievement I think this aspect should be celebrated just as much as the number on the scale. Hopefully this would be inspiring to others and provoke for a ‘more meaningful or emotionally satisfying experience’ (Brown and Katz, 2009).

Developing Capabilities:

I think one of the main capabilities I have developed from Design Theory is the benefits of an interdisciplinary team. The capabilities were developed through the Design Challenges as we were put into teams and set the task of being innovative which really highlighted the potential benefits as each member was able to make an individual contribution as a result of being from different disciplines. I think the aspects of an interdisciplinary team is something I would try and implement into ‘My vision’. Perhaps by creating an online platform in which clients could submit any questions or concerns by which other fitness-based experts could also answer and offer their own advice in order to formulate a more informed solution.

Additionally, the main ideas forwarded through emphatic design techniques have been a major takeaway and are concepts I would try and emulate in any future prospects. The idea of developing a product or service based around customer needs is a method that has been developed through Design Challenges and is a concept I would implement into my potential entrepreneurial venture as an online personal trainer in order to stand out.

Another Design Theory concept that has particularly resonated with me was the notion of questioning and asking ‘why?’. The questioning of ideas and established practices is an idea that has been forwarded throughout the module in order to help is understand constraints and be more innovative (Brown and Katz, 2009). I myself am not entirely satisfied with the methods practiced by other fitness influencers and would want to try and improve these already established practices. 264

Final reflections:

To summarise, many of the concepts that encapsulate Design Theory have allowed for a new perspective as to what it means to be innovative. The module has provided me with various ideas and takeaways that can be applicable to many different types of prospects, weather that be within my home discipline or any future career ventures, I believe the fundamental principles of Design Theory philosophy will help to improve the process. 71

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Change by Design

* Online personal training- oversaturated,
* in order to stand out, apply concepts of Design Thinking to be more innovative in a industry that is already established.
* 3 spaces: inspiration- oversaturated? Want to offer a more emphatic experience? A lot of other fitness influencers I have noticed, particularly on Instagram post their workouts but lack how/ why. Easy to just say ‘do these particular exercises’ but some are more difficult than others. Don’t take this into consideration.
* Try to balance feasibility, viability, desirability.
* Observation (emphatic design)- convert need into demand. To provide meaningful insight into pressing needs. Once basic needs are met, look for a meaningful or emotionally satisfying experience, try and provide this. Fat loss/ gain muscle.
* Prototype early on to see its limitations/ try and generate better results. Occupies all 3 spaces of innovation.
* Utilize storytelling to make it more relatable to customers. Use myself as an example. Track the progress of the customer as the storytelling aspect. Many just use a side by side ‘transformation pic’. Customers engaging themselves in product. Inspiring. **Provoke meaningful/ emotionally satisfying experience.**
* Use of disciplinary team? Someone who specialises in that etc. Create online platform to offer advice from other fitness experts to get a wide more informed opinion/ solution.
* **‘why**?’ – is it so fixed? Could it be improved? Not satisfied with traditional methods.
* Encourage consumers to adopt more sustainable behaviours: need that they don’t recognise. Majority just want to lose weight for vanity purposes- put emphasise on health benefits and its importance.
* Emphatic design

Bibliography

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