The Impact of New Digital Media on Graphic Designer in Jordan

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The Impact of New Digital Media
on Graphic Designer in Jordan

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Abstract— **Graphic design has relied on print since its emergence. Like most of life aspects, graphic design has been affected by technological development and the usage of digital media for visual communication, which was reflected in the role of the graphic designer and his job duties. This study aims to identify required competencies for the traditional graphic designer in order to transit them into digital "new media" graphic design in Jordan. The study will use qualitative and quantitative methods to achieve the objectives. The study will also use modified Delphi method to obtain consensus and validation on the significant competencies for 'digital' graphic design in Jordan from a panel of experts. Moreover, the study will identify the competency gap between undergraduate graphic design schools and the field of 'digital' graphic design to determine the needed competencies for traditional graphic designer for the purpose of transition into 'digital' graphic design.**

Keywords-graphic design; competencies; digital media; new media; Jordan; transition; Delphi method.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Digital World is an amazing development of our era based on the convergence of the computer and communication technologies. The traditional constraints of space and time are no more existing, and the whole world is becoming a global electronic village. The developments in computer and communication technologies have made a significant impact on all life aspect in visual communication.

The Internet-based resources and services, such as e-mail, ftp, http, bulletin boards, mailing lists, scholarly discussion lists, computer conferences, electronic journals, digital databases, various browsers and search engines have a strong potential to provide massive access to one and all. In fact, the interactivity and interpretability of many of these digital media and services have witnessed a great transformation.

In graphic design changes have taken place, it has transformed from a hand-made to a digital machine process, from paper to different shapes and forms of the digital media. This transformation creates a new challenge for traditional graphic designers to get involved in new digital media design.

This study will contribute to help in bridging the gap between education and labor needs, In addition to determine the needed competencies for traditional graphic designer in transition into 'digital' graphic design.

II. PRINT AND GRAPHIC DESIGN

Printing was one of the most important media of mass communication, which also includes radio, television and film [1]. Printing is the basis of many aspects of our education. Commercial regulations depend on printing in many deliberations like receipts, bank notes, and investment certifications. Similarly, advertising partly depends on printing to promote goods and services.

Graphic Design has closely related to paper and printing development. It is widely spread because of the evolution of printing technique. In the early 20th century, graphic design was largely inspired by technological advancements in printing and also in photography. In the last quarter of the same century, technology played a similar role, but this time it was the computer [1]. Many computer applications emerged quickly for computer graphics, which became alternatives to the traditional production methods in television, film and print [2].

III. INTERNET AND GRAPHIC DESIGN

The emergence of the World Wide Web and its rapid development during the nineties contributed significantly to changing the way people communicate with each other and how they get information. With the beginning of the twenty-first century, many people became dependent on the Internet in many aspects of everyday life. This technology has enabled companies to communicate to its audience individually with many control options for the target audience selection [1].

After transforming graphic design process from hand-made to computers, the computer started a new revolution by transforming the visual communications at a deeper level from using computers and electronics as composition and production tools for graphic design to communication delivery medium [3].

Graphical User Interface (GUI) design has been the graphic designer's responsibility since the early days of software within an interdisciplinary design team [4]. This

was the first challenge for graphic designer whereby designing for the screen has different processes than designing for print [5].

Before the Internet emergence, the print-based were the main parents of a small sub-discipline of interface design. Later, the inventions of smart phones and PDAs have forced many graphic designers to get involved with interactive design [4].

IV. DIGITAL MEDIA AND GRAPHIC DESIGN

In the nineties, graphic design expanded in digital world away from print [4]. The new digital media has changed the structure of people's concerns and their contents, the tools used to obtain the knowledge and cooperation among each other as well as the social environment nature that suits them to innovate and develop ideas, and mindsets [6]. At the same time, new digital media has transformed graphic design from linear and two-dimensional to flexible and six-dimensional; traditional XY coordinates in addition to the dimensional of real time, motion, sound and interactivity [3, 7].

Portable technology has forced graphic designers to present information to their audience in a new non-linear way and to be part of a team of information architects. It is quite similar to the Internet; users interact with information and manipulate it according to their interests [1].

New digital media have extremely affected printing production, which led some authors and researcher to predict the ending of the printing era by using the digital alternatives. As many images, designs and words are transmitted electronically, graphic design should not be limited solely to physical products [8]. Traditional graphic designers are now required to design online campaigns, animated logo and digital art works that suit new digital media [9]. Dubberly warned that the printing dying, mass-customization ink-jet and other digital printing techniques will replace mass production lithography, and printed newspaper, magazines and books may vanish [10].

Nowadays, graphic design intersects with many other disciplines, some of them are considered under graphic design and others offer opportunities for graphic designers to collaborate with other broader design activities [6]. While traditional graphic designer are trained to design fix content, new digital media designer must develop open-ended systems with dynamic and interactive content, which requires totally different mindset [11, 12].

V. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Higher Education Accreditation Commission (HEAC), which is an accredited government authority for organizing the public and private higher education institutions workflow in Jordan since 2007. HEAC is the responsible authority to develop the accreditation standards for different disciplines in Jordanian universities and colleges and monitor universities' commitment to these standards for quality assurance of higher education in Jordan. According to HEAC, there are thirteen universities offering a Bachelor degree in graphic design and related disciplines; nine of these universities have graphic design, other four universities offer: design and visual communication, design

and applied arts, visual arts, and computer graphics and animation [13]. At most of these universities, a degree of graphic design requires 132 credit hours of combined theoretical and practical courses. The curricula in these universities still focus on print productions as the main traditional medium for visual communication [14]. However, Jordan, like other countries, witnesses the rapid growth in the new digital media, which is considered as alternative competitor media to print.

By comparing the Jordanian universities' curricula with the American bureau of labor rules for graphic designer, obviously it appears that the curricula of graphic design in Jordan need to improve [14]. The fresh graduate graphic designers suffer from the big gap between what they have gained from their study and what is required by practice in real life. Therefore, many companies seek designers who are well equipped with the needed skills and training for digital media.

The demand for traditional graphic designers has reduced while demand has increased for all-in-one designers who have the ability to design for print and digital media. Graphic designer role has changed and designers must be prepared for the future tasks [15]. Some clients would prefer hiring a designer to do all their design projects aimed at saving money and time; the all-in-one designer is considered as the best solution to give value for money [16]. Hence, many traditional graphic designers in Jordan struggle in the transition to digital graphic designers.

VI. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of this study is to identify required competencies for the traditional graphic designer in order to transit them into digital "new media" graphic design in Jordan. This has led to the following objectives:

- To understand the evolution of graphic design and its relation to digital media, the transition from printing to digital media, the practice, and its education.
- To obtain consensus and validation from a panel of experts in identifying the significant competencies of 'digital' graphic design in Jordan.
- To identify the competency gap between undergraduate graphic design schools and the field of 'digital' graphic design.
- To determine the needed competencies for traditional graphic designer in transition into 'digital' graphic design.

VII. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The rapid technological development in the field of graphic design and digital media has caused the widening of the gap between graphic design education and the field needs despite technology being widely spread worldwide without boundaries. However, graphic design schools in Jordan still depend on their out-of-date curricula, which mainly focus on old media in visual communication.

Moreover, in Jordan, many traditional graphic designers are stuck in printing production and are unable to cope with

the available job opportunities in the field of digital media due to the lack of training, investigation and research on the needed competencies for design and digital media practice.

VIII. RESEARCH DESIGN

This research aims to identify the needed competencies for graphic designers in Jordan in transition from traditional to digital design. The research had four stages "Fig. 1". Within the first stage a preliminary study was conducted using semi-structured interviews, which aimed to explore the perspective of relevant digital graphic design on the extent that Jordanian universities equips the graphic design graduates with the needed competencies to deal with digital media, as well as to propose suggested competencies which are considered as important for the digital graphic designer.

In the second stage, the proposed competencies from literature review and interviews will be presented to the expert panel using modified Delphi method (Study 1) to obtain consensus and validation on the significant competencies for digital graphic design in Jordan. Delphi method contains questionnaires series in three rounds. After every round, the data will be analyzed and the questionnaire will be reformed to filter the competencies. By the end of the third round, a set of competencies will be considered as the most significant competencies for digital graphic design in Jordan.

Depending on the results of the second stage, a questionnaire will be designed to determine which of these competencies students have gained from their universities in stage 3 (Study 2). The participants of this study will be the expected graduate students majoring in graphic design at Jordanian universities. It is supposed that these students have obtained the planned competencies in the curricula. The results of this questionnaire will show to what extent graphic design schools equip students with the required competencies, identifying the competency gap between what universities offer and profession needs in Jordan.

In the last stage (stage 4), stage 3 questionnaire will be used for the next study (study 3). In this study participants will be the traditional graphic designers who are experts in printing production and have no experience in design for digital media. The objective of this study is to identify the needed competencies for the transition from traditional to 'digital' graphic design in Jordan.

IX. CONCLUSION

This paper is part of in progress PhD study. It is expected that this study will show to what extent is the gap between education and labor needs in the field of graphic design in Jordan, as well as the difference in perception between academics and practitioners to the digital graphic design profession requirements in Jordan. It is also expected that this study will show some cognitive and technical aspects that needed by 'digital' graphic designer and unavailable in traditional graphic designer.

The results of this study can be used in several ways to address study problems. Jordanian universities can utilise the obtained competencies from the first study to develop a new major curriculum in digital graphic design. Furthermore, they can bridge the gap with field requirements by adjusting their existed curriculum to meet the profession needs. Regarding traditional graphic designers in the labor market, training institutes can adopt the study findings to develop specialised courses that encourage designers to get involved with design for digital media.

Figure 1.   Research Design.

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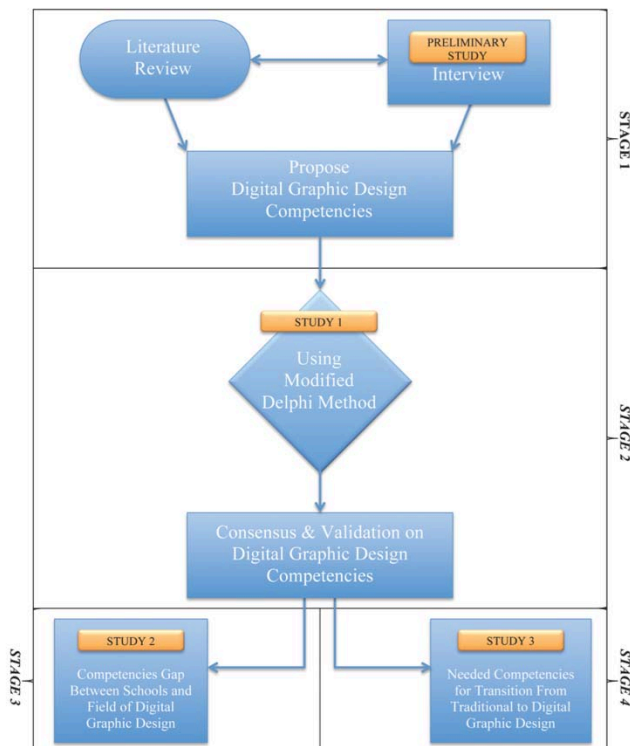
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