

Service Design meets Chinese Culture

Giulia Capriotti

giulia.capriotti@mail.polimi.it

Via Monte Bianco, San Benedetto del Tronto, AP, Italy

Abstract

Service Design (SD) and Design Thinking (DT) share many pillars - both are human-centred, holistic, iterative, real, collaborative - and DT cognitive processes are widely used to design services. Both have Western roots and both are informed by culture (Thoring et al., 2014), therefore, Western culture is mirrored in how these processes are structured, comprehended and applied. With her research, the author aimed at gaining new understandings on the practice of SD outside Western culture. What happens when a Western thinking model and its application into the services sector are “moved” into a different culture? In order to create value, a process should be crafted for its users and their culture (Stickdorn et al., 2017); hence the hypothesis that China needs a Service Design process tailored to its unique way of thinking and context. The outcome is a process that considers the Chinese cultural and contextual characteristics and aims at guiding designers to create valuable services for that context. The key Chinese characteristics: the concepts of “connections” and “human value”, a fluid and flexible structure that reflects the Chinese synchronic perception of time, the pragmatic approach, team alignment moments to enhance teamwork. This aims at being a trigger project; many “Chinese barriers” relate to SD methods and methodologies such as brainstorming and ethnographic research (Ann, 2017). Further explorations could address these topics to widen the just started research.

Interestingly, although the research focused on the Chinese context, this process can adapt to other cultural realities.

Keywords: service design, cultural influence, china, design process

References

- Ann, E. (Host). (2017, March 23). What you need to know about service design in greater China. *Service Design Show* [Video podcast]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAkg299V3Us>
- Collias, K. (2019, February 20). Design thinking and culture, Part II, China. *Knowledge Without Borders*. <https://knowwithoutborders.org/design-thinking-and-culture-part-ii-china>
- de Bont, C., & Xihui Liu, S. (2017). Barriers to Strategic Design: A Perspective from China. *She Ji*, 3(2), 133-145. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sheji.2017.09.003>
- Hofstede, G. (2007). A European in Asia. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 10, 16–21. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-839X.2006.00206.x
- Huang, C. (2017). Driven by Wu Xing, Service Design transforms a Chinese firm. *Touchpoint*, 8(3), 56-61.
- Ip, A. (Host). (2016, November 17). Merging Chinese culture with western philosophy through service design. *Service Design Show* [Video podcast]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rjlwr6yZkbM>
- Nisbett, R. E. (2003). *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently... and Why*. The Free Press.
- Niu, W., & Kaufman, J. (2013). Creativity of Chinese and American Cultures: A Synthetic Analysis. *The Journal of creative behavior*, 47(1), 77-87. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jocb.25>
- Stickdorn, M., Lawrence, A., Hormess, M., & Schneider, J. (2017). *This Is Service Design Doing*. Canada: O'Reilly Media.
- Thoring, K., Luippold, C., & Mueller, R. (2014). The Impact of Cultural Differences in Design Thinking Education. In: Lim, Y ., Niedderer, K ., Redström, J ., et al., X. (Eds.). *Proceedings of DRS 2014: Design's Big Debates. Design Research Society Biennial International Conference 16-19 June 2014, Umeå, Sweden* (pp. 744-756). SE-Umeå: Design Research Society, Umeå Institute of Design.

Wu, Y. (2016). China's services sector: the new engine of economic growth. *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 56(6), 618-634.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2016.1153429>