

Integrating Culture in User Experience Design in the Indian context - Thesis Abstract

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Culture is rooted in our history, where we live, and what we value. Design, on the other hand, involves the act of intervention to meet human needs. Culture and purposeful design are inextricably linked and have evolved together from prehistoric times to the present day. **This thesis argues that cultural considerations during the design process may help User Experience (UX) designers to develop culturally suitable products.** This is especially relevant in culturally diverse and technologically emerging nations like India. Incorporation of user culture into the design process using research-based assistance to professionals, such as design guidelines may help in this. For this, eight experimental studies were undertaken, and their combined insights resulted into a theoretical model that proposes how to integrate culture in the user experience design process.

- The first study in this thesis developed **an assessment framework** based on prevalent literature that helps to assess the cultural disposition of a website design.
- Second study has **identified culturally distinct regions within India** based on previous research and identified cultural dimensions of each region through a psychometric survey.
- Third study has investigated ramifications of Indian cultural diversity on website designs via **content analysis of websites** from different Indian regions.
- Fourth study has examined prevalent cultural models together with Garrett's model of UX design, to **develop design guidelines for cultural suitability within India.**
- In the fifth study, these guidelines were used to develop culturally suitable website design concepts and **their efficacy is tested using a preference test** with users from distinct cultural regions in India.
- Sixth study was a **neuro-physiological experiment to observe the design thinking process** by comparing differences in brain activities of UX- designers while they designed website concepts for given user personas with and without guidelines.
- Seventh study has investigated design processes of the Indian UX industry and identified its affordances, challenges and prospects through **interviews of 73 Indian UX design leaders.** This study also noted the industry's expectations from fresh design graduates.
- Eighth study of this thesis presents a **longitudinal investigation with novice designers** to explore how introducing the idea of culture in design affects their design process. It also examined how cultural background of designers affected their design process.

The cumulative understanding the above eight studies led to development of **a theoretical model** that proposes how to integrate culture throughout the user experience design process. This thesis argues that using this model would lead to inclusion of **cultural sensitivity** into the design process, resulting in development of **culturally sensitive products**, leading to **enhanced user experiences.**