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The Mutual Relationship of Applied Products and Lifestyle (Case Study: Scissors in the 18th and 19th centuries AD and Contemporary Period)

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Abstract

There is a causality relation between applied products and human life, as products have been affected by human's lifestyle, and meanwhile it has gradually gone out of the form of a pure consumer item and consequently it has influenced the user and has been changed into a phenomenon with social-cultural dimensions and finally it influences the user's lifestyle. The concept of lifestyle is also affected by some factors like value, belief, attitude and identity as well as consumer culture. Thus, one of the influential components on lifestyle is 'product design' which has a close relationship with consumer culture of the society. Investigation of this issue as a case study is considered to be the aim of this paper, which has been conducted through comparing the lifestyle of two periods of "contemporary" and "18th and 19th" centuries, regarding the case study of scissors. To do so, different kinds of scissors with some special functions were selected (e.g. haircut scissors, snips, shears, snuffer, carpet weaving scissors) and the three different functions of "functionality", "aesthetic" and "symbolic" aspects have been investigated within adjacent diagrams. Analysis of the relationship between lifestyle and the design type indicates that the presence of semiotic and aesthetic elements in the previous periods has played an important role in the structure of the objects, especially calligraphy. The aesthetic values and the concepts beyond every writings represent the style and the structure of the Iranians' life. Interestingly, in some cases, the aesthetic elements in a functional product such as scissors appear so prominently, to the extent that they make it difficult to demonstrate its particular functions (usages): like snips. The present study shows that how Aristotelian quadruple causes, including material, superficial, subjective and final causes bear some distinct and similar aspects in designing and manufacturing scissors during two studied periods. "Subjective cause" – which is the representative of beliefs, habits, creeds and totally the world view of that age – has played more important role in making the form and state of the scissors. Moreover, the final cause has been different and much more influential in these periods, for example some cases – such as snuffer - have not been repeated again and replaced with other products. Nowadays, semantics is one of the discussions in the scope of designing and universal production, but what is observable in the current system of contemporary planning and production refers to lack of concept and semantics – similar to its past form in Iranian designing. In some limited domains which the production has continued its existence according to the traditional form, the presence of aesthetic and semantic elements have been faded away. Now, this kind of lack of semantics, in competition with universal products and some imported products of equal grades, can be regarded as a catastrophe for designing and producing Iranian products which consequently results in interrupting the meaningful relationship between products and lifestyle.

Keywords: Lifestyle, Product design, Scissors, 18th and 19th centuries, Contemporary period.