POSITIONING OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM IN CREATIVE ARTS THESIS

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Abstract

The content structuring of creative arts thesis is still evolving and has been mainly based on the social science thesis structure. However, the diversity of creative works encompassing music compositions, novels, art works, dance, and painting makes it difficult for the thesis to fit into the conventional content structure. There is also the description of intellectual property and the final product validation which are distinctly different components of creative arts research which need to be documented. In addition, the impetus for the creative arts research may not arise from a gap of knowledge in the field but from ergonomical problems of certain products or designs. The present study examined the positioning of the research problem in creative arts theses. Eleven creative arts theses written by undergraduate and postgraduate students in two Malaysian universities were analysed to identify the impetus or entry point for the research. The results indicate that the research problem in creative arts theses is inclined towards researcher observation of ergonomic problems with existing products or designs although some students strengthen their case by citing related research findings on the weaknesses of existing products or design to carve a niche for their study. The study suggests that patent search offers useful information that can be used to justify the novelty of innovations and inventions.

Keywords: research problem, creative arts, thesis, ergonomics, product design

Introduction

In Malaysia, creative arts was given recognition as a discipline by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (2011) a decade ago, and industrial design was categorised as a sub-discipline within the creative arts discipline. In the larger context, creative arts research falls into the soft sciences, along with the social sciences, and arts and humanities research. Applications for research grants in creative arts offered by the Ministry of Higher Education are usually in the Arts and Applied Arts (*Sastera dan Sastera Ikhtisas*) research domain but certain research proposals may fall into the Natural and Cultural Heritage (*Warisan Alam dan Budaya*) research domain (Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi, 2021). In this paper, the term "social science" will be used to refer to the soft sciences, as opposed to the hard sciences (e.g., engineering, information technology, biological sciences).

Generally, a research is deemed significant if the research problem is pertinent and still not well understood due to the lack of research in the area. In other words, the value of the research is argued based on the existing knowledge in the research area, and researchers need to demonstrate familarity with available findings and theories in the research area to carve a niche