

Design Thinking Driven Innovations in Organisations as a Result of the Groundswell Effect

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Abstract: According to the OECD, soft skills and abilities such as analytical and creative thinking, the ability to organize time and manage a stressful situation, working in teams, working with information, critical thinking, communication skills, initiative, programming and technological design, complex problem solving are currently important for employment on the labor market. The need to secure and implement new techniques and methods leading to innovation are becoming a necessity for every organization. It is Design Thinking that provides an approach towards the creation of innovations, and its use and application can be beneficial in the search for effective solutions to problems occurring across different organizations. The contribution focuses on the interpretation of the Design Thinking application in the field of innovation in the university environment as a result of the groundswell effect from the labor market and consumer environment. The interest of every organization is prosperity and offering services and products that best meet the needs of customers. If the organization does not succeed, its reputation and prosperity are at risk. It is the innovations driven by Design Thinking that make it possible to create better solutions that can repair, maintain and continuously improve the reputation of the organization. The first part of the paper focuses on the explanation of the groundswell effect and the Design Thinking concept, its process and phases from problem identification, idea generation, prototyping and testing to the final implementation of the solution, as well as its tools and techniques. The second part of the paper will focus on the concrete examples presentation of the Design Thinking usage in the field of improving university education, as the forms and methods that students use in university education are just as important as the content they acquire through their studies. The paper also presents inspiring examples of innovations in the university environment that arose as a result of design thinking workshops.

Key words: Design Thinking, Innovations, Groundswell, User Experience.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, more and more emphasis is being placed on creative and innovative solutions to the problems that surround us. As technology advances and society evolves, the ability to effectively tackle complex challenges becomes increasingly vital for success. In this regard, the application of Design Thinking is gaining prominence. This approach focuses on creating innovative solutions that prioritize the end user and aim for continuous improvement of the user experience. The method follows a systematic and iterative process that involves understanding user needs, generating ideas, prototyping, and testing. What sets Design Thinking apart from traditional methods is its emphasis on rapid prototyping and addressing specific user requirements. Design Thinking extends beyond corporations and businesses; it is a versatile tool with the potential to be utilized in various domains, including universities, nonprofit organizations, and public administration. In universities, Design Thinking plays a pivotal role in nurturing students' creative thinking and problem-solving abilities. It offers them opportunities to collaborate in teams and enhance their skills through tackling real-world challenges.

This paper delves into the theoretical foundations of Design Thinking and highlights the significance of the groundswell effect within the context of Design Thinking and innovation creation. It also explores the process and tools that can be employed in each phase. In the latter part of the paper, we delve into the advantages of implementing Design Thinking in universities for fostering innovation. Specifically, we focus on its effectiveness in problem-solving and the development of impactful projects that benefit students, educators, and the institution itself. Through the examination of successful workshops at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of St. Cyril and Method in Trnava, we showcase how Design Thinking facilitates the creation of viable prototypes and innovative ventures. The findings of this study offer fresh insights for universities seeking to enhance teaching and promote creative thinking among students. Simultaneously, they shed light on the advantages and challenges associated with implementing Design Thinking on campus.

2. Groundswell Effect and Design Thinking Concept

In the dynamic and competitive business landscape of today, organizations are increasingly becoming aware of the importance of innovation as a driving force for success. Design Thinking has emerged as a powerful methodology that fosters user-centric innovation and enables the development of creative solutions. However,

it is essential to acknowledge that innovation cannot solely rely on internal knowledge and insights. The groundswell effect, which originates and evolves in the external environment of an organization, plays a pivotal role in shaping and catalyzing innovation.

As stated by renowned authors Li and Bernoff (2008), groundswell embodies the convergence of users who come together to exchange experiences, opinions, and acquire what they seek, such as information, support, ideas, and even products. The groundswell effect encapsulates a collective intelligence, ideas, and knowledge that originate from external stakeholders, including customers, consumers, employees, industry experts, and the general public. In the realm of innovation, it signifies a bottom-up approach where the perspectives and attitudes of diverse individuals and communities contribute to the generation of novel solutions. Organizations must proactively engage with users and foster an innovative mindset, as the ideas originating from this environment can enhance the efficiency and creativity of the resulting solutions (Sahaym et al., 2021). According to Murár and Kubovics (2022), the groundswell embodies a fundamental paradigm that often influences sales fluctuations and even impacts the scope of organizations. Therefore, harnessing the power of the groundswell effect becomes crucial for organizations striving to tackle diverse challenges and adapt to dynamic market conditions. Considering its significance as a source of innovation within the context of Design Thinking, the following characterization emerges:

- Facilitates diverse insights: The groundswell effect fosters the integration of diverse perspectives from various stakeholders. It is widely acknowledged that diverse teams are more inclined to generate innovative ideas and solutions. Similarly, the groundswell effect broadens the spectrum of viewpoints beyond the organization, allowing for a more diverse exchange of ideas and a deeper comprehension of the core challenge at hand.
- Focuses on user-centric outcomes: Design Thinking strengthens the user-centric approach to innovation. In a similar vein, the groundswell effect acts as a valuable resource of knowledge regarding customer preferences, limitations, and emerging trends. By incorporating the outcomes of the bottom wave effect from users into subsequent Design Thinking processes, organizations can create solutions that better cater to customer needs, leading to heightened customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- Facilitates iterative feedback: The groundswell effect allows for ongoing feedback and iterative refinement. By engaging external stakeholders in the prototyping and testing stages of the Design Thinking process, organizations can obtain valuable feedback early on in the solution and innovation creation process. This iterative approach helps enhance and optimize solutions based on user feedback, resulting in more efficient and user-centric outcomes.

3. Theoretical Background of Design Thinking and Design Thinking Process

The pioneers of Design Thinking can be traced back to the 1960s, with John E. Arnold's "Creative Engineering" and L. Bruce Archer's "Systematic Method for Designers." However, it was Tim Brown, the CEO of IDEO, a prominent consulting company, who played a key role in popularizing this method. Today, Design Thinking is not only embraced by companies and universities worldwide but also by individuals in their everyday lives.

According to Koh et al. (2015) Design Thinking is an activity that is implicit in the process of design. Lookwood (2009) defines Design Thinking as: "applying a designer's sensibility and methods to problems solving, no matter what the problem is. It is not a substitute for professional design or the art and craft of designing but rather a methodology for innovation and enablement."

With a user-centric approach, Design Thinking is a dynamic methodology that fosters creative problem-solving and strives for continuous enhancement of the user experience. By immersing ourselves in the user's perspective and understanding their needs, we embark on a journey to discover effective solutions. Through iterative ideation, prototyping, and real-world validation, Design Thinking ensures that the end result consistently improves the user experience.

What sets Design Thinking apart from other methods is its focus on rapid prototyping and real-world testing, bypassing lengthy research and development phases. Its primary objective is to gauge how well the designed solution aligns with the user's and target group's ideas, emphasizing the importance of practical implementation.

In Brown's (2021) perspective, Design Thinking is an innovation method that revolves around human-centeredness. It harnesses the resources available to designers to integrate people's needs, technological possibilities, and business success requirements. Design Thinking is commonly employed to tackle complex

problems, which can vary greatly in complexity and challenge depending on the organization, customer, or technology involved. Each individual customer or user approaches situations uniquely, influenced by their personal experiences and perspectives. However, a shared preference among users, especially those who are not technologically proficient, is for simple, elegant, and intuitive solutions.

Pinheiro (2014) emphasizes that design methodologies prioritize the customer. The foundation of every challenge lies in understanding the customer. By engaging in conversations and gaining insights into their challenges, goals, pains, gains, and tasks, we gain a deeper understanding of their lives and perspectives. This understanding allows us to develop solutions that are tailored to their specific context. Unfortunately, many companies mistakenly believe that their product is at the center of a customer's life, disregarding the true customer-centric approach.

Design Thinking eludes a singular definition, for it represents a novel way of perceiving the world and the problems it poses. It can be conceptualized as an idea, a method, or a strategy. Its influence transcends individuals, reaching into the realm of companies and organizations, whether they belong to the private or public sector. Adopting a Design Thinking approach can revolutionize these entities by merging human desirability, technological feasibility, and economic viability.

Lewrick M. (2020) presents an overview of the six distinct phases of Design Thinking: Understand, Observe, Define Point of View, Ideate, Develop Prototype, and Test. These phases align with the double diamond model introduced by the British Design Council, which delves into both problem space and solution space. The initial three stages emphasize gaining a deep understanding of the problem, while the subsequent three concentrate on generating and refining solutions. Finally, a reflection phase follows these six stages.

- Understand: During the initial phase, the primary objective is to develop a thorough comprehension of the potential user, their needs, and the tasks they need to accomplish. By asking thought-provoking "WHY" and "HOW" questions, we expand the design challenge and establish a clear creative framework. Employing the 5W+H approach enables us to gather comprehensive information about our potential users.
- Observe: The reality itself holds the key to confirming or challenging our assumptions. That is why it is crucial to venture into the environments where our potential customers reside. We actively seek them out and explore the places where they are present. The insights gained from this phase serve as valuable inputs for the subsequent stages, aiding in the development or refinement of the persona and the point of view. When engaging with potential customers or users, it is essential to follow a predetermined script for interviews, employing open-ended questions as much as possible. This approach allows our potential users or customers to freely express their needs and jobs-to-be-done. During the interview, it is important to create a comfortable atmosphere, enabling the respondent to openly discuss their challenges and requirements, as the questions may touch upon personal matters.
- Define Point of View: During this phase, our attention turns to evaluating and synthesizing the information we have gathered. The goal is to distill our findings into descriptive statements, utilizing techniques such as storytelling or mapping. These statements should address key questions about the user, their needs, and the triggers that prompt those needs. By crafting a clear and concise point of view, we lay the foundation for generating innovative solutions that directly address the identified user needs.
- Ideate: This phase is dedicated to generating a multitude of potential solutions for the identified problem. Utilizing tools such as brainstorming and analogies, we explore diverse avenues and unlock a wide range of ideas. During this creative process, it is common to group and cluster these ideas, allowing for further exploration and refinement. Techniques like dot voting can be employed to facilitate the selection and prioritization of the most promising concepts.
- Prototype - The creation of prototypes plays a crucial role in the testing phase, allowing us to evaluate and validate our proposed solutions. To effectively conduct these tests, it is important to develop prototypes that are clear and understandable to our potential users or customers. For instance, digital solutions can be prototyped using simple paper models or mock-ups. It is essential to view ideation, prototype development, and testing as interconnected stages within the design process, collectively addressing the solution space we previously discussed.
- Test - Following the development of each prototype, this phase involves engaging with potential users and recording the outcomes. Interacting with users and gathering feedback becomes a

crucial aspect of this phase, as it informs future improvements and iterations of our solutions. Learning from previous phases is imperative in this process. Modern digital solutions offer opportunities like A/B testing, enabling us to test functionalities quickly with a large user base. These valuable insights guide further development until we achieve an optimal product or service for our customers. In cases where our idea falls short, it is important to consider discarding or modifying it.

- Reflection - Although not explicitly identified as one of the primary phases in the Design Thinking micro-cycle or double diamond model, continuous reflection is an ever-present companion throughout the process as it forms the basis for our learning. This phase is characterized by the use of tools and feedback mechanisms that facilitate our mindset of constant reflection, enabling us to gain valuable insights and make continuous improvements.

Another author, Müller-Roterberg (2020), outlines the following stages of the Design Thinking process: empathy, observation, and problem understanding; problem definition; ideation and idea development; prototyping; and testing.

- Empathy - During this phase, it is crucial to gain a deep understanding of the user, customer, or consumer by viewing the problem from their perspective and examining their mindset and needs with empathy. This can be achieved through various methods such as focus groups, questionnaires, feedback, studies, and surveys, although these methods can be costly. Sometimes, a simple empathic conversation with the customer can provide valuable insights.
- Defining the problem - In this phase, the insights gathered from the empathic phase are evaluated. Based on observations and surveys, the focus is narrowed down to selected user groups, and their problems and needs are summarized in a clearly defined question or problem statement. This phase may also involve creating personas, which are fictitious representations of different types of users. Accurately defining the problems is crucial for the next phase of the process.
- Search and development of ideas - Following the problem definition, the next phase involves generating ideas for potential solutions. This is done through the application of various creative techniques such as brainstorming or brainwriting. All ideas and thoughts that emerge from these techniques should be visually represented using drawings, mind maps, mood boards, or various diagrams. This visual representation helps to capture and explore the breadth of possibilities for the solution.
- Prototyping - In this crucial phase, the focus is on transforming the selected idea into a tangible representation that can be visually and physically experienced. The aim is to create a prototype, which may involve designing, modeling, or simulating the solution. The prototype serves as a means to convey the essence of the idea to potential customers, allowing them to understand and interact with it. It is important to note that the prototype is not the final product but rather the initial version of the solution. Through prototyping, the feasibility of the solution can be explored and evaluated.
- Testing - The final stage of the process involves conducting tests to gather user feedback on the design of the prototype. The main objective of testing is to assess the user's interaction with the product or service, evaluate the performance of the prototype in a digital environment, and obtain valuable insights. It is crucial to carefully observe the user's experience, collect data, and gather feedback to inform further iterations and improvements.

4. Selected Design Thinking Tools

During the different phases of the Design Thinking process, there are numerous techniques and tools at your disposal that assist in tackling problems and resolving challenge. Tools and techniques for the Understand phase: To gain deeper insights and understanding in the Understand phase, practitioners commonly rely on techniques and tools such as formulating a problem statement, conducting empathetic interviews, engaging in exploratory interviews, using the 5x why method, employing the 5 WH questions approach, conducting jobs-to-be-done analysis, exploring extreme or lead users, creating stakeholder maps, and utilizing emotional response cards. During the ideation phase, commonly employed methods include brainstorming, 2x2 matrix analysis, dot voting, brainwriting, and drawing inspiration from analogies and benchmarking. Additional techniques such as choice ideas, the blue ocean tool, and the buyer utility map are often used to facilitate the generation of innovative concepts. During the testing phase, common methods employed include testing with users, using testing sheets,

utilizing feedback capture grids, asking powerful questions for experience testing, conducting solution interviews, performing structured usability testing, and conducting A/B testing. (Lewrick, 2020).

In our paper, we will describe selected Design Thinking tools. The most commonly employed methods in Design Thinking are: Brainstorming, Persona, Who – What – Where – When – Why – How (Filo et al., 2017).

4.1 Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a widely utilized technique for group decision-making, particularly for generating ideas and solutions collectively. It encourages a free flow of ideas and associations related to the problem at hand. The key to successful brainstorming lies in the synergy of the team, where inspiration sparks from one another, resulting in a multitude of creative concepts. Even seemingly non-feasible ideas can act as a springboard for generating further innovative solutions (Seeber, I., 2017).

The essential principles of brainstorming underscore the importance of generating a large number of ideas, prioritizing quantity over immediate assessment of their quality. It is essential to create a separation between idea generation and critical evaluation. Consequently, brainstorming typically consists of two phases: an initial creative phase, fostering inventive and spontaneous ideas, and a subsequent phase that engages more logical and rational thinking. Several brainstorming variations, such as written, picture, or ping pong brainstorming, the Hobo method, Gordon's method, and Right Braining, are widely utilized to facilitate the process.

4.2 Persona

The characters known as personas are hypothetical representations of potential customers, crafted based on surveys and collected data. This data encompasses specific details such as goals, purchasing preferences, work background, decision-making processes, and thought patterns in both professional and personal spheres (Sirichareon, WV 2021). Despite their fictitious nature, personas are founded on real data and are enriched with attributes like names, photos, age, gender, marital status, education, employment, hobbies, and location. Utilizing these created personas, organizations can better grasp the needs of their customers or users during the ideation phase. Visualizing personas offers insights into the target audience's goals, interests, preferences, purchasing behavior, and intricate priorities.

4.3 5W 1H

Among the different analytical methods, one of the notable ones is the 5W 1H method (who, what, where, when, why, how). This method is often applied when dealing with linear problem-solving situations where a singular root cause of the selected problem needs to be determined. The primary advantage of using this tool is its simplicity. In conjunction with the 5W 1H method, brainstorming is also employed to explore a wide array of potential answers to the fundamental questions (who, what, where, when, why, how). These ideas are systematically grouped and labeled for each question (5W+1H). Subsequently, after generating a comprehensive set of ideas for all the basic questions, the most suitable idea is chosen to represent the root cause of the identified problem.

This tool or technique can also be connected with the method of mind maps, where a word or phrase representing the root cause (the problem) is positioned in the center of the paper. The questions (5W1H) are placed around it, and the answers extend outward. The key is to establish the connections between them and identify their levels of importance (Colombo, S. et al., 2017). The 5W 1H tool allows for the use of verbal expressions, pictures, numbers, or a combination of these elements. By combining these tools, it becomes easier to link information concerning the primary problem and identify their interconnections. Implementing the 5W 1H tool effectively fosters the development of creative thinking, provides a broader perspective on context and connections, aids in planning, and enhances the organization of thoughts and ideas within a Design Thinking problem-solving team.

5. University Education through Design Thinking vs. Traditional Education

The methods and formats used in university education are as crucial as the knowledge students gain from their studies. In the contemporary era, various technologies present several opportunities to enhance interactive learning and foster the development of essential soft skills and problem-solving abilities. Innovative educational approaches, like Design Thinking, play a significant role in achieving these goals. Shifting away from passive teaching methods hinges on the preparation, motivation, and adaptability of educators in tailoring their

approach to meet students' requirements, ensuring their readiness for the professional world and successful integration into the job market. At the Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, we have embraced Design Thinking tools and processes across various subjects within the program. Our primary objective is to nurture students' creative talents and their ability to apply these skills in different domains of marketing communication, such as digital marketing, graphic design, branding, web design, photography, and others.

Design Thinking is founded on a problem-centered and solution-oriented approach. Contrasting traditional education, its utilization in teaching involves students working collaboratively in teams, emphasizing problem-solving, and cultivating their innovative and critical thinking skills. The role of the teacher transforms into that of a mentor and partner, encouraging discussions and providing pertinent feedback to propel students forward. Unlike memorization-focused learning, this method encourages students to generate fresh ideas and solutions. Filo et al. (2017) highlight several distinctions between classical education and contemporary teaching approaches like Design Thinking:

- In the traditional form of teaching, the student is passive, listens to the explanation and takes notes, learns more slowly and uses mechanical reproduction; in Design Thinking the student is active, solves problems, learns faster based on his own experiences and decisions.
- In the conventional approach to teaching, a hierarchical dynamic prevails, with the teacher assuming an authoritative position over the student. Conversely, Design Thinking fosters an equitable relationship between teacher and student, with the teacher serving as a mentor to the student.
- In the traditional form of teaching, the teacher fulfills his duties, relying on certainty and habit, while in Design Thinking the teacher is creative, brings ideas and looks for solutions.
- The conventional education system often falls short in preparing students for the job market, as it neglects to address the market's specific needs. As a consequence, students may lack confidence in applying their knowledge practically and face challenges in securing employment. Additionally, student attitudes may remain unchanged throughout their educational journey. In contrast, Design Thinking empowers students to actively navigate the job market. It bolsters their self-confidence, facilitates the application of knowledge in real-world scenarios, and brings about positive shifts in student attitudes during the learning process.
- In the traditional teaching setup, the teacher tends to adopt a directive stance, and the student's interaction primarily revolves around understanding the teacher. In contrast, Design Thinking fosters an empathetic teacher-student dynamic, encouraging the student to explore their own identity, uncovering their strengths and areas for improvement.

6. Benefits of Design Thinking Driven Innovations at University

Beyond its application in education, Design Thinking takes on a pivotal role in fostering innovations within universities. The noteworthy impact of bottom-up innovations generated by employees and students significantly contributes to the university's growth and advancement:

- **User-Centric Approach:** Design Thinking puts the user at the center of the innovation process. By empathizing with users, understanding their needs, and observing their experiences, universities can develop solutions that truly address their pain points. This approach ensures that innovations are human-centered, resulting in products, services, or systems that better meet the needs and preferences of users.
- **Iterative and Collaborative Process:** Design Thinking encourages an iterative and collaborative approach to innovation. It involves rapid prototyping, testing, and feedback loops, allowing for continuous improvement and refinement. By involving misc stakeholders, such as students, faculty, researchers, and external partners, universities can harness collective intelligence and diversity prospects to drive innovation forward.
- **Multidisciplinary Collaboration:** Design Thinking promote collaboration across disciplines and departments. Universities are rich ecosystems with experts in various fields. By bringing together professionals from different backgrounds, such as design, engineering, social sciences, business, and more, universities can foster interdisciplinary collaborations that lead to innovation solutions. This multidisciplinary approach can tackle complex challenges that require misc expertise.

- **A problem Solving and Creative Thinking:** Design Thinking nurtures a mindset of problem-solving and creativity thinking. It encourages individuals to challenge assumptions, explore unconventional ideas, and so on risks. This mindset is particularly valuable in an academic setting, as it promotes a culture of innovation and encourages students and faculty to approach problems from fresh perspectives, leading to breakthrough innovations.
- **Entrepreneurial Mindset:** Design Thinking encourages an entrepreneurial mindset, fostering an environment where new ideas can flourish and potentially be transformed into viable ventures. By combining Design Thinking with entrepreneurship education, universities can equip students with the skills and mindset needed to identify opportunities, prototype innovative solutions, and launch new ventures.
- **Real Application:** Design Thinking emphasizes the practical application of ideas and solutions. Universities can leverage Design Thinking to bridge the gap between academia and the real world. By encouraging students to work on real challenges, engage with industries partners, and create tangible prototypes or projects, universities enable students to gain hands -on experience and development skills that are highly valued in the job market.

7. Good Practices - University Innovations as a result of Design Thinking Workshops

To catalyze innovations in the university environment, it is imperative to offer continuous education to teachers in Design Thinking. Notably, the Faculty of Mass Media Communication at the University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava orchestrated a series of workshops centered around the step-by-step approach to Design Thinking. These workshops encompassed diverse aspects, including challenge definition, customer segmentation, persona creation, customer journey mapping, empathic interviews, data interpretation, and ideation.

The workshops took place in purpose-built team work laboratories, the educators actively participated in the entire Design Thinking process, a practice accessible to students throughout the semester. These workshops were mentored by experienced service designers from the professional innovation studio and were divided into six parts, reflecting on the different parts of the design thinking process, which are empathising, defining, ideating, prototyping, testing and implementing. Thus, educators were taken through all phases of the design thinking process in the workshops. A separate day was set aside for each part of the workshop, i.e., it was six separate sessions organized at intervals of several weeks so that the participants, who worked in teams, had enough time to process the ideas and tasks arising from each session. During the empathy workshop, two target groups with opposing characteristics were defined – extremely motivated and extremely demotivated students. Subsequently, the different working teams divided these groups and subjected them to a deeper investigation in order to obtain relevant information for the problem definition phase. This exploration took the form of empathic interviews with a number of respondents who represented the target group. The qualitative research was then further supported by quantitative research in the form of a questionnaire. The data collected was then subjected to analysis, first in a single-team setting and later in a group setting. Interpretation of these findings allowed a thorough understanding of the target groups and thus to define their problem. Subsequently, the working teams started with an ideation phase during which they generated ideas for solutions. For the prototyping phase, the most relevant solutions that had the potential to solve the defined problem were selected. The workshops yielded two prototypes that were put to the test by both educators and students. The first one, the "Ad Agency Safari" project, enables students to visit advertising and digital agencies. The second prototype, the "Handbook for Young Teachers," is a valuable resource intended to aid new colleagues in their work and adjustment to the university setting.



Figure 1: Design Thinking Workshops

Source: Linda Barborková Photo, 2022

The "Agency Safari" project enables marketing communication students to gain a deeper understanding of the working atmosphere within Slovak advertising agencies affiliated with ADMA, ADC, and KRAS. By participating in this project, students gain valuable insights into agency dynamics. The idea for this endeavor arose from the students' desire to be better equipped for practical endeavors, appreciating the power of direct observation.

With a decreasing number of professionals joining the advertising industry each year, agencies encounter challenges in filling open positions. The "Agency Safari" aims to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the alluring opportunities in the advertising sector. The concept for the safari was crafted by FMK teachers during workshops that focused on Design Thinking.

Developed in partnership with the Association of Digital and Marketing Agencies and Art Directors Club Slovakia, the project introduces a one-day "Agency Safari" for students. This unique opportunity allows them to visit approximately three agencies, offering a firsthand understanding of how these agencies function. During the visits, students can tour agency premises, engage in brainstorming activities, and observe the process of filming advertising spots. The event also proves advantageous for advertising agencies, as it enables them to identify and engage with the top talents from our universities.

In May 2023, a group of eight students from the marketing communication study program embarked on an exciting journey into the advertising world. They visited prominent agencies like This is Locco, MUW Saatchi & Saatchi, and Zaraguza, where they were warmly welcomed by some of the biggest names in Slovak advertising, including many graduates from our own faculty. During their visit, the students had the unique opportunity to step into the workspaces of creative professionals. Each agency hosted an inspiring talk, sharing insights into successful campaigns and the creative process.

Starting from September 2023, the Ad Agency Safari project will be in full swing, offering students a fascinating opportunity to explore the vibrant creative world of advertising agencies. Participants can choose from various editions, including PR safari, UX safari, Media safari, and Safari in game studios. The project's positive impact is evident in the field of employment, as advertising agencies often struggle to fill vacant positions. The agency safari aims to provide students with valuable information and hands-on experience, potentially alleviating this

challenge and making the advertising industry more appealing. Notably, four students who took part in the initial safari year were directly employed by the three aforementioned agencies.



Figure 2: Ad Agency Safari

Source: Linda Barborková Photography, 2023

8. Conclusion

Thinking is a powerful method employed for creative problem-solving, prioritizing the needs of end users and continuously enhancing their experience. This process involves comprehending user requirements, brainstorming ideas, building prototypes, and conducting thorough testing. What sets Design Thinking apart from conventional approaches is its emphasis on rapid prototyping, iterative testing, and addressing specific user needs. It's a versatile method applicable not only in businesses but also within non-profit organizations and educational institutions.

Implementing Design Thinking in university education is vital, as it nurtures students' creative thinking, problem-solving abilities, and teamwork capabilities. This approach encourages cross-disciplinary collaboration, ignites innovation, and enhances students' readiness to navigate the labor market effectively. Through Design Thinking, students actively participate in the creation of innovations, enabling them to experiment with fresh ideas and solutions while gaining hands-on experience.

Design Thinking presents several advantages within the university context, particularly concerning innovation development. Prioritizing user needs ensures the creation of solutions and innovations that cater to them effectively. The adoption of Design Thinking at universities fosters the generation of innovative solutions and projects. For instance, the workshops conducted at the Faculty of Mass Media Communication of the University of St. Cyril and Method in Trnava showcased how Design Thinking can lead to the development of practical prototypes and innovative projects. These initiatives, like the Safari Agency and the Young Educator's Handbook, positively impact both students and educators by equipping them with practical experience and valuable tools for their future careers. By implementing Design Thinking, universities can uncover viable ideas and innovations that might not have emerged through conventional approaches.

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