

VANI BHATNAGAR

Research Assistant at United Nations, MS Strategic Design and Management graduate at Parsons School of Design

EXPERIENCE

United Nations Executive Office of the Secretary-General (*UN Behavioural Science Group*)
Research Assistant (Previously Behavioural Science Intern)

New York, USA
July 2024 - June 2025

Design research-driven brand strategy for improved digital experiences

- Led website redesign by A/B testing 4 mockups and conducting user interviews with 15+ stakeholders (UN, government, academia, and private sector), reporting increased brand credibility and website usability.
- Integrated UN's first searchable repository dashboard for behavioural science featuring 150 case studies with actionable insights and trackable impact metrics.

Driving growth through strategic communication and community engagement

- Strategized end-to-end virtual event campaigns (planning, outreach, design, content and data analysis), including the Summit of the Future during the UN General Assembly 2024 (800+ unique attendees, highest engagement across UN 2.0 communities), STI Forum 2025, UN Behavioural Science Week 2025 (10k+ attendees) and UN 2.0 Week 2025.
- Redesigned targeted email marketing strategy for UN BeSci Group members, achieving 100% increase in open rates, contributing 18% growth in community membership, directly supporting the organization's primary growth objectives.
- Facilitated co-creation workshops with 60+ group members to identify yearly priorities and pain points to align projects across regions and roles.

Enabling delivery of UN2.0/UN80 through senior leadership and government buy-in for strategic alignment

- Collaborated cross-functionally with 14+ UN Entities to strengthen design capacity for the UN2.0 initiative, publishing 5+ strategic briefs/reports for senior leadership.
- Translated executive vision into comprehensive pitch decks and strategic alignment reports for government and private partners (Australia, Basque, The Agency Fund, etc) to raise funding for operational execution.

The Forest Collective (*Biodesign initiative to reduce Himalayan forest fires*)
Co-Founder

Uttarakhand, India
May 2021 - Aug 2023

- Invented zero-waste biocomposite alternative to wood and pioneered cost-effective manufacturing through DIY machinery system and localized sourcing strategies, reducing production cost by 50%.
- Piloted consumer products made from production waste with 100+ users, receiving 80% interest for conversion from beta consumers; analyzed market trends and created user personas, devising D2C and commercial retail plans.
- Developed and open-sourced risk-free decentralized manufacturing business plan requiring capital as low as \$500 boosting entrepreneurship in 7 targeted villages.
- Partnered with SMEs and government agencies to conduct root cause analysis and conduct 50+ grassroots workshops for stakeholder capacity building on rehabilitation of 400 acres affected by 300,00 yearly forest fires.
- Raised \$20,000+ in equity-free grants in addition to soliciting incubation at India's premier tech and business institutes (IIT Mandi and IIM Bengaluru).

Kamellia (*Sustainable apparel startup pioneering use of Supima cotton*)
Strategic Designer

New Delhi, India
Nov 2020 - Apr 2021

- Led in-depth user interviews with 50+ high-value clients and performed market analysis of competing products; performed user requirements research to facilitate strategic product advancements for corporate applications.
- Collaborated with sales and marketing team to prepare product roadmap and go-to-market strategy cultivating revenue streams of \$10,000 and a 50% increase in customer acquisition in first quarter.
- Increased brand awareness, overseeing daily execution of social media plans to enable influencer partnerships.

Khara Kapas (*Sustainable apparel startup that commercialized use of Kala cotton*)
Design Manager (Previously Design Intern)

Haryana, India
Jan 2019 - Oct 2020

- Optimized digital retail experience by integrating omnichannel branding and communication, and streamlining purchase process, leading to a growth of 30% in conversion rate and 14% in average order value.
- Introduced pivot in dead stock management through new category creation saving \$25,000+.
- Translated sustainability trends including made-to-order inventory management and production waste upcycling into actionable operations reducing brand's carbon footprint by 22% in a year.
- Expanded into Europe and Middle East securing 4 accounts generating \$40,000 in export sales. Led creative engagements for NEONYT: Messe Frankfurt (world's largest sustainability trade show) in 2019.
- Launched 5 digital marketing campaigns overseeing photoshoots, graphics, copyrighting and user interactions, improving Instagram presence with 100k+ followers and 60% engagement growth in 6 months.

EDUCATION

Parsons School of Design

Master of Science in Strategic Design and Management

New York City, USA

Aug 2023 - May 2025

CGPA: 3.93 | Provost Merit Scholarship Recipient | Impact Entrepreneurship Initiative Fellow

- Design strategist for Harlem Standard (NY whiskey brand), Workomics (consultancy), PortSide NY (non-profit) and International Space Station (NASA/government).
- Teaching Assistant for BBA Strategic Design and Management course "Capstone: Senior Project 1" under course leader Prof. Rhea Alexander.

National Institute of Fashion Technology

Bachelor of Design in Fashion Design

Karnataka, India

Jul 2015 - Jun 2019

- Authored research report to inform policy intervention by Ministry of Textile, Govt. of India on craft cluster initiatives.
- Awarded 'Best Graduating Project' for innovating sustainable block printing methodology for a pret design collection.

FELLOWSHIPS

Naropa Fellowship (*Entrepreneurial Leadership for the Development of the Himalayan Region*)

Sept 2021 - Aug 2022

- **SECMOL** (*alternate education school*): Formulated Design 101 curriculum for batch of 50+ K-12 students, workshopping social entrepreneurship ideas; reported increase in subject interest in 4 out of 5 students.
- **Human Edge** (*health-tech MNC*): Prototyped last-mile healthcare SaaS platform for high-altitude regions; researched user pain points and needs through 150 surveys and usability testing with 20 participants.
- **Siachen Naturals** (*nutrition equality startup*): Piloted microgreens lab comparing viability with cold storage and dehydrated food solutions for year-round serviceability in sub zero climates; formulated packaged superfoods for brand's 40k+ customers attaining 25% repeat customer rate.

IUIF Fellowship (*Communication for Social Change funded by UNESCO & Ford Foundation*)

Apr 2021 - Sept 2021

- Conducted participatory research through interviews with 87 individuals belonging to under-represented communities to capture intersection problems of internet usage and marginalization during COVID-19.
- Co-directed and released 45 minute documentary on streaming platforms, attaining viewership of 100k+ globally.

SKILLS

Tools: ChatGPT, Perplexity, Dovetail, Maze, Claude, Gemini, Google Stitch, Framer, Midjourney, Sora, Dall-E, Cursor, Lovable, Copilot, Loom, Wix, p5.js, Adobe (Photoshop, InDesign, Illustrator, Premiere Pro, Aero, Express, Firefly), Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint), Figma, Miro, Mural, Canva, Notion, Trello

Technical: Design Thinking, Systems Thinking, Creative Problem Solving, Service Design, UI/UX, Design Research Methodologies, Behavioral Design, CX Design, Human-Computer Interaction, Vibe Coding, Information Architecture & Wireframing, Web Design, User-Centered Design, Biodesign, Entrepreneurship, Lean & Sustainable Business Modelling, Storytelling, Fundraising & Planning, Impact Data Analysis