

some loose notes for emotion and motivation

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Emotional design

An approach to product design that capitalizes on evoking specific emotions in users. Simple products achieve their functional purpose, but don't always elicit an emotional response. Note that lack of a strong emotional response is still a form of an emotional response: a plain mug can bring someone as much contentment as one from a favorite restaurant, or it can please the owner even more as it fits a specific aesthetic.

Don Norman on emotional design

Theoretical framework for how those emotions work and interact with product usage. Norman's take on emotional design is very oversimplified – things that are useful and pretty make me happy, and therefore that's emotional design.

How do I design to enhance either of those emotions?

The most difficult part of emotional design is knowing how to invoke desired emotions; you cannot put an emotion in the product, because emotions are in the users. So the most important part here is designing to invoke those emotions in users, and that often, according to Norman, relies on intuitions. So he does not provide much in terms of guidelines for practice.

Utilitarian vs. hedonic value

Utilitarian Value: derived from a product or service that helps the consumer solve problems and accomplish tasks. When utilitarian value is the primary motive, users offer a rational explanation of why they need a product. Utilitarian value is reflected in improved usability and accessibility of a specific product.

Hedonic Value: the immediate gratification that comes from experiencing some activity. When we talk about hedonic value, we talk about the experience and emotions associated with using a product (regardless of whether there is a goal or not). Hedonic value is simply the joy of doing something.

Emotion

Emotions are different from motives; emotions are typically triggered from the outside, whereas motives are more often activated from within.

Regulation

Some of those strategies also embedded in ACTUAL PRODUCTS like computer games, or informational spots. Not all strategies are equally effective, and we might use more than one at time.

Valence

Valence: the intrinsic attractiveness/"good"-ness (positive valence) or averseness/"bad"-ness (negative valence) of an event, object, or situation.

The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions suggests that positive emotions broaden one's awareness and encourage novel, varied, and exploratory thoughts and actions. Over time, this broadened behavioral repertoire builds skills and resources. So it's a general spin on positive

psychology – the branch of psychology that focuses on increasing the positivity and good emotions in one’s life.

And eliciting certain emotions in people can lead them towards certain behaviors, so for example signs eliciting negative emotion will be deterrents and therefore make good warning signs. The broaden-and-build theory is based on a similar approach, which argues that certain emotions – not only positive – drive us towards certain kinds of actions.

Micro-valences

We intuitively understand the importance of objects that evoke strong emotions; for instance, we instinctively avoid things that represent danger, like a snarling dog, or something repulsive, like spoiled food. Conversely, we are attracted to objects associated with comfort or pleasure, such as a warm blanket or a friendly smile. But why do we also have an automatic emotional response to everyday items that neither pose a threat nor offer obvious benefits?

Consider picking out a pen from a drawer when you’re interrupted by a sudden knock at the door. In that brief moment, you grab one pen without much thought. What influences that choice? The authors propose that most objects in our environment have a subtle emotional appeal—a “micro-valence”—that, while often unnoticed, still influences our decisions.

Consequently, they argue that valence can be considered a higher-level object property that connects vision to behavior. Micro-valence is a small region of the valence continuum, but is critical for understanding the automatic perception of objects.

Hedonic adaptation

Too much good thing is never good; restricting pleasure increases pleasure.

Arousal: Easterbrook hypothesis

This is an important discussion because arousal is something designers can moderate or influence through task characteristics or system characteristics. So should we? Under what circumstances should we actually increase arousal of our users? On the other hand, what happens when the task is naturally difficult?

Yee (2006)

This is an example of a user study where the researcher set out to define the most important motivations for why users keep using the product. Here, the product is a computer game. Understanding of those components does not only provide a valuable insight into motivations, but can be a powerful scaffolding on which to build further testing and development. Furthermore, by linking this with particular user characteristics, this knowledge is fundamental for targeted system improvements. This is also valuable for the marketing department, because those are the people who are trying to sell your product to a particular group, and knowing what the group is looking for in a product makes their work that much easier.

For example, male players rated the achievement components as much more important than female raters. This is further moderated by age, where the younger the player, the more interest they had in achievement components. Women also rated the relationship subcomponent more highly than men.