

UI and UX Analysis

In an expanding digital world, it is evident that user interface (UI) and user experience (UX) have become central to how people interact with online platforms. These design choices don't serve as just technical or aesthetic decisions, but they shape how users behave, they influence perceptions and carry ethical consequences. In this essay, I will be explaining how these design choices do all the things that I have mentioned above. I will do that through examining the interaction design of a website called *SweepSouth*, a South African platform that connects domestic workers with clients, offering on-demand home cleaning and related services. We will look at how *SweepSouth* presents itself as an accessible and empowering tool within the gig economy, a labour market system where people work as freelancers or temporary short-term basis through digital platforms. I will discuss how its interface and experience design raise important questions about inclusivity, power and responsibility.

This essay looks at how *SweepSouth* fits into South Africa's wider and social and economic challenges, especially in terms of inequality. It delves deeper into how the design of the website, like what users see and how they interact with it, affects the way the work is offered and done. I will be drawing my analysis from readings on ethical design such as *Design Justice* by *Sasha Constanza-Chock*, an article from UXMatters and a study on dark patterns by *Mathur et al.* The essay focuses on exploring the ethical side of *SweepSouth*'s design and also focuses of the website tries to make things easy and accessible for users while maintaining fairness and transparency. Does it support or limit its most vulnerable users? How does it handle the balance between ethical UI/UX design choices and making money.

Case Study: SweepSouth

What is SweepSouth? Well, SweepSouth is a South African platform that connects clients with domestic workers for domestic services such as cleaning, gardening and child care. If you are in need of a domestic worker, you can go to the website and book services online through a mobile app. You can browse worker profile, view customer ratings and make secure payments. The platform promises convenience for clients while offering flexible income opportunities for domestic workers.

Since *SweepSouth* is a South African website, we know that it operates in a country that deep socio-economic inequality, a high unemployment rate and a history of racialized and gendered labour systems. Traditionally, domestic work in South Africa has been undervalued and it is often black women under these poor working conditions and with limited job security (*Ally, 2009*). SweepSouth's platform seeks to create a formal and digitized version of this informal labour market, which it acknowledges in its own promotional materials offers "dignified work at decent pay" (*SweepSouth, 2023*). But the transition to digital comes with an increased risk of power asymmetries, agency and visibility in the platform's economy.

As part of the on-demand nature of the gig economy, services such as SweepSouth are changing the nature of how work is viewed and handled. The UI and UX of these platforms thus offer a powerful framing of domestic work as something that can be treated as a transactional, on-demand service. Design is never neutral (*Costanza-Chock 2020*), it outlines social

hierarchies and reinstates as well as reflects them. Interaction design has the potential here to enhance dignity and recognition for workers, but it may also reinforce existing inequalities masked under yet another shiny digital surface.

Digital platforms shape how we value different kinds of labour.” A well-designed interface can humanize workers and enable fairer systems, but it can also reduce them to ratings and profiles, prioritizing client convenience over worker agency (*Mathur et al., 2019*). Understanding such dynamics is important for evaluating the ethics behind SweepSouth’s design choices.

UI and UX Analysis:

SweepSouth UX flows is designed for efficiency, you can easily browse worker profiles, select services, choose a date and make secure payments. They also include ratings and reviews which helps customers feel confident in their choices. The interface emphasizes speed and simplicity. It has a clean, minimal layout with intuitive navigation and mobile responsiveness making it a platform that accommodate users across devices, which is important in a mobile-first country like South-Africa. The website has icons, white spaces and short forms which enhance clarity and usability.

SweepSouth’s UI design clearly prioritizes client needs, offering a streamlined, curated experience, but this overemphasis places control in the hands of customers creating customer-centric bias. It has rating systems which is convenient if I was a customer, but it unintentionally reproduces bias power imbalances (*Mathur et al., 2019*) Workers are rated but they cannot equally evaluate clients and that creates a one-sided accountability structure.

It limits empowerment for workers in a sense that, as much workers have profiles, they are unable to customize them and they lack visibility into how they are matched with clients. Their digital presence is reduced to availability, location and customer reviews. This limited agency within the UI reflects a broader issue in gig platforms, where design often sidelines worker autonomy in favour of algorithmic convenience (*Costanza-Chock, 2020*).

The design is convenient for clients to book, modify, and cancel services, yet it does not indicate clearly how this affects workers' schedules or earnings. Proper user experience (UX) needs to balance, yet SweepSouth's design affirmatively reinforces traditional power structures while feigning efficiency (*UXMatters, 2021*).

Ethical Analysis of Interaction Design:

Design Justice (Costanza-Chock, 2020)

The "*Nothing About Us Without Us*" design principle centers marginalized users, domestic workers in this case, in design. There is limited public evidence that SweepSouth includes its workers in any real design decisions. This reflects a top-down design where the platform's interface is designed for and not with, service providers. Worker experiences are thus mediated through design decisions they were not involved in, goes against the participatory ethos of design justice (*Costanza-Chock, 2020*). *SweepSouth* does little to visually challenge traditional class and gender hierarchies. The site digitalizes domestic work which is historically linked to race and gender-based discrimination in South Africa, yet does not reimagine the narrative or image of workers in a way that brings about dignity or equality. Workers are profiled primarily

through customer-facing metrics such as ratings and reliability as opposed to the workers' personal stories or desires, and still perpetuate a client-dominant relationship model.

Dark Patterns (Mathur et al., 2019)

As much as SweepSouth presents as user-friendly, subtle dark patterns may still exist. For instance, when you book a service, availability appears limited, which creates artificial urgency, pressuring fast decisions. According to Mathur et al. (2019), such urgency cues can manipulate user behaviour and lead to impulsive bookings. Also, cancellation policies are unclear. As much as customers can and may cancel with ease, the implications for workers who depend on regular gigs, are anything but clear. This lack of clarity can conceal the true costs suffered by workers, aligning with the notion of obstruction (Mathur et al., 2019), in which systems render consequences or choices more difficult to understand. There are no apparent hidden fees, but the commission structure of the platform is opaque to clients, and workers do not understand what share of the payment they're getting compared to the overall fee. This asymmetry impacts trust on both sides.

Ethical UX Principles (UXMatters, 2021)

According to UXMatters, ethical UX prioritizes transparency, fairness, and inclusivity. SweepSouth is somewhat successful in these terms as it does simplify access to domestic services and allows users to sort workers based on their individual requirements. However, in terms of algorithmic decision-making, like the mechanism underlying worker recommendations and the finer financial detail of service costs, transparency is still lacking. User autonomy and consent are partially upheld. Customers have choice and control, but workers lack control over the tasks they're given or how they're prioritized. Such asymmetric autonomy operates against fairness and points to a wider issue in gig platforms, where convenience for the platform is favoured over the rights of workers (UXMatters, 2021). On the privacy front, SweepSouth appears to be doing the bare minimum, but it is unclear how worker data, especially performance metrics, are stored, utilized, or shared. Greater ethical transparency would demand open disclosure and worker involvement in the control of their data.

Reflection:

Discovering and researching SweepSouth made me think more deeply about the moral responsibility involved in UX design, specifically where platforms match work for at-risk communities. I've come to understand that ethical UX is not just clean design or usability, it's a matter of who the design is for and who gets left behind along the way. What was immediately apparent to me was the persistent tension between social justice and commercial interests in the gig economy. SweepSouth's platform is evidently built for customer convenience and satisfaction, but this too often is at the cost of empowering workers. Such an imbalance is typical of gig platforms, where workers are figured more as data points than active agents (Costanza-Chock, 2020). Where the convenience of one group of people results in the systematic disempowering of another, it is clear that design is never neutral. For SweepSouth, the efficient booking processes, rating systems, and client-led interactions subtly place the needs of customers ahead of the rights and autonomy of domestic workers.

What intrigued me the most was the ease with which design choices can cross over into morally ambiguous territories, specifically where there is a lack of transparency. When users are not

made aware of how decisions are being arrived at, whether it is in terms of job matching algorithms or payment allocations, it becomes coercive design, or what *Mathur et al.* (2019) have referred to as dark patterns. Although these tactics are not always necessarily ill-intentioned, they still serve to show an uneven balance of power and control throughout the platform.

SweepSouth provides a compelling argument for exploring the ethical considerations of UX design within the gig economy. As much as the platform provides simple access to home cleaning work and simplifies service delivery for clients, it also shows great imbalances in how user experience is structured and whom it ultimately serves. Through the lens of ethical UX, we can observe that the design provides a certain degree of significance to customer satisfaction and convenience at the expense of employee dignity and empowerment more often than not. The UI/UX design of the app reinforces deeply rooted hierarchies around class, gender, and race and mirrors the broader socio-economic disparities in South Africa. This analysis concludes that UX designers have an ethical responsibility not just to create usable interfaces but to also consider the social implications of their design choices. Ethical design requires listening to the voices of those most impacted and redesigning interaction systems to foster agency, transparency, and justice. As they go along, platforms like *SweepSouth* have to battle commercial norms, putting inclusivity and fairness at the centre of their design processes. Only in this manner can digital platforms actually create fair and humane types of labour in a rapidly evolving economy.

References:

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