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On 13th Jul 2016

#DESIGN

Emotions and Experiences with Design

UI/UX DESIGN

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contributory factors, but the true distinction is in how they make users *feel*. Every experience has an emotional component. Using products is no different. At the heart of the best products is knowledge; if we want to provide great user experiences, then we must understand how users feel, and what factors affect these feelings.

There are various things around us that are not necessarily the best at what they do, and they might not even be particularly attractive. However, they are meaningful to us, and because of this we feel connected to them. These connections are powerful; they affect us unconsciously and have the capacity to turn inanimate objects into evocative extensions of the individual.

A pine cone might have pride of place on your shelf as it reminds you of a nice holiday you once had. You might find it difficult to part with a damaged guitar, because it was the first thing you bought with your pocket money. All products are capable of providing similar positive emotional responses, regardless of whether they are old or new.

Emotions have a crucial role in the human ability to understand the world and how we learn new things.

What is Emotion? How we experience it?

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Emotions, encompassing both positive and negative emotional states, have the potential to benefit us. And not only can emotions have an enduring and positive affect on our psycho-physiology, but they provide us with the impetus to choose and pursue different goal paths. This is of particular importance when an event or situation results in the continual prevention of goal attainment. If we did not experience some negative emotion as a result, we may be more inclined to continue with the same line of attack, resulting in the loss of physical and cognitive resources, essential for self-preservation.

The defining moments in our lives are typically associated with distinctive emotional states. When we gain the grades necessary to go to our favored college or university we experience elation, happiness and perhaps a little trepidation of going somewhere new. In contrast, if we have failed to gain the grades we might feel sad, shocked (depending on how you felt you had performed in the exams) and/or depressed. These emotional states become as much part of the memory as the experience itself. If you were to look back to a particularly important point in your life, you would instantly remember how it made you feel, how it affected you physically, and how it affected your behavior. Even the act of recollecting the experience may induce a similar emotional experience; underlining quite how important emotions are to us and our experience of the world.

Key Elements of Emotional Design

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How to create a product that impresses our users so much so, that they will keep coming back?

The answer is quite simple (like all things genius), you should evoke positive emotions, emotions like:

- Pleasure

- Joy

- Surprise

- Attention

- Expectation

- Exclusivity

- Anticipation combined with strong personality

All these factors are the basis of emotional design. However, appropriate tactics should be chosen for each product and target audience.

Emotion and Design

The emotional brain is essential to human experience; without the psycho-physiological changes that occur as a result of arousal from emotionally-charged stimuli, we are unable to make decisions, pass judgement, and interact with the world in a personally meaningful way. Desigr
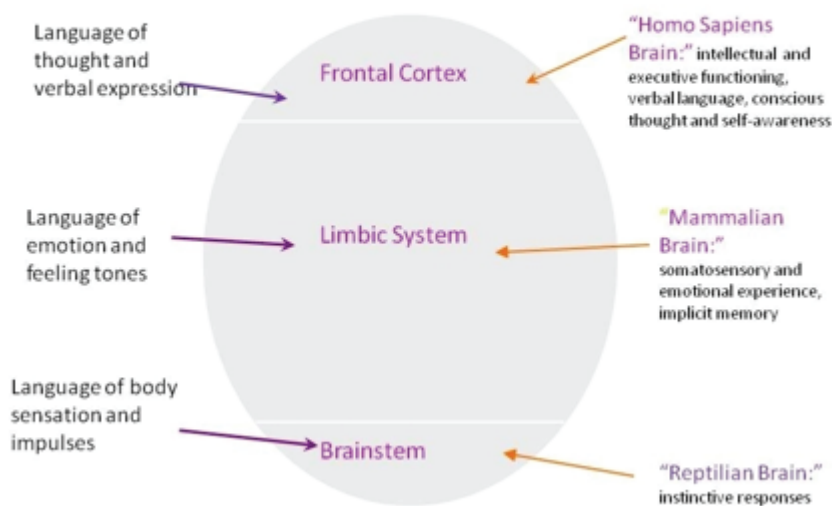
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techniques lies an understanding of what we respond to and how we respond. This requires research that encompasses information specific to our product and general knowledge of the human state.

The concept of Triune Brain

Fisher, 2003

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In the 1960's, American neuroscientist Paul MacLean formulated the 'Triune Brain' model, which is based on the division of the human brain into three distinct regions. MacLean's model suggests the human brain is organised into a hierarchy, which itself is based on an evolutionary view of brain development. The three regions are as follows:

1. **Reptilian or Primal Brain**(Basal Ganglia)

2. **Paleomammalian or Emotional Brain**(Limbic System)

3. **Neomammalian or Rational Brain**(Neocortex)

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has shown various regions are involved in the three groups of activities outlined above. Therefore, there is no such neat division; instead, primal, emotional, and rational mental activities are the product of neural activity in more than one of the three regions addressed in McLean's model and their collective energy creates human experience. Nevertheless, McLean's model provides a clear view of mental activity, which can be beneficial when addressing the needs of users in our design projects.

Applying The Triune Brain model to Design

The reptilian brain is in charge of our more basic and impulsive attitudes and behaviors. As designers and user experience specialists, the reptilian brain represents your best target; if you want consumers to buy our products, we must grab their attention and make them feel as though they *need*, rather than want, this item. There are various methods available, but they must be appropriate for our product(s). The reptilian brain is somewhat simplistic and hedonistic, we are capable of overriding it through further processing in our more cultured brain regions. For this reason, we must tap into the primal brain without arousing the suspicions of the emotional or rational brains, which are liable to call into question the methods being used and direct away from the product.

Human behavior is often not as rational as we think; we are emotional animals, making decisions on the basis of how things make us feel. Feelings and emotions may help us discern between good and bad, safe and dangerous, and useful and irrelevant, but emotionally-charged stimuli influences us automatically. We may be able to suppress and even quell these emotional responses by rationalising during reflective p

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emotional or paleomammalian brain (Paul McLean) is susceptible to coercion, persuasion and underhandedness. When others tug at our heartstrings, our emotional brain is exposed and we are more inclined to make decisions that would infuriate the rational brain.

The paleomammalian or emotional brain is influential to our experience of the world and this is no different when we are using products and making our purchasing decisions. Below is a short list of potential methods we can use to tap into the emotional brain:

- **Fitting emotional experiences**

- **Tug the heartstrings**

- **Use colour for effect**

- **Create complete experiences**

The neomammalian, or rational, brain represents the 'third brain' within Paul McLean's 'Triune Brain' model. Information from the reptilian and paleomammalian brains is transmitted and analysed by the rational brain. The rational brain is essentially the central operator, which organises, analyses, interprets, and manipulates information to help us arrive at the most accurate conclusions regarding events and things in the external world.

The rational brain processes information from various regions and appears to make many of our final decisions, we need to consider some of the ways we can support and ease the pressure on this brain structure. We must,

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tap into the rational brain, designers must to the following things:

- Provide users with the right information at the right time

- Help users make the right decisions

- Let the user/consumer know they made the right decision

- Soothe the rational brain, by easing the process of analyzing information

- Remember, rational brain slows down decision making

Levels of Visual Design

In Donald Norman's "Emotional Design: Why We Love (Or Hate) Everyday Things," he explains three levels of visual design — visceral, behavioral and reflective. These concepts can explain how we relate to a visual element and how to create something that is more appealing, effective or well received.

- **Visceral level:**This is the first impression someone has with a design. It's a purely instinctive reaction to something. This level of design can make users feel something (the desired reaction) or leave a neutral and

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- **Behavioral level:**This level relates to the user experience. What do you do with the design? How does it work or function?

- **Reflective level:**The "highest" level of the emotional-visual thought process is reflective. It's the interpretation and understanding of a visual element combined with feelings about it. At this stage of thought, a person determines and creates a lasting impression of something. Is the visual memorable? Does it leave a lasting impression? Will he or she reference it later?

Visual-Emotional Cues

Aaron Walter in "Designing for Emotion," explains emotion creates "an experience for users that makes them feel like there's a person, not a machine, at the other end of the connection."

Think about the emotional impacts any of the common visual elements can be associated with, positively or negatively:

- Color

- Sound

- Big Words

- Textures

- Usability

- Readability

- Photo style

- Shape

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right tone and emotional impact should be one of the first discussions at the start of any design project.

- Entertainment

- Humor and lightheartedness

- Patterns and dissonance

- Recognition and familiarity

- Relationship and tone

- Photo style

Wrap-up

The goal in almost every design, is to get users to connect with our product. While the desired emotions may vary, most have common themes. A good design has elements of appeal, effectiveness, and is pleasurable and memorable for the user.

By a combination of these ideas and working to use strong visual cues that tie to the right emotions for our product, we can develop a design that works in the right way. It will have visual appeal and evoke emotional connections.

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