

Usability vs UX

The Interaction Design Foundation describes the Human-Computer Interaction¹ (HCI) as a multidisciplinary field that focus on the design of computer technology and the interaction between humans (users) and computers. Usability² is a key component of HCI and this concept approaches the elements: effectiveness, efficiency, engagement, error tolerance and ease of learning. User Experience³ (UX), on the other hand, is a wider term that focuses on creating products that meet user's needs and goals. It includes not only usability but also factors such as aesthetics, emotions, and experiences.

While usability is all about how easy and effective it is to use something, UX considers the emotional and experiential aspects. After reviewing the definitions provided by the Interaction Design Foundation, I'm impressed by the impact of User Design for product success. However, I'm also concerned about products that could negatively influence user's lives. This opens the discussion about the ethical responsibility⁴ of the designers and developers to prioritize the well-being and satisfaction of the users, as well as their privacy.

For the example, my team's project is a Visual Studio Code Extension. The usability would focus on how easily users can test their codes and receive feedback from the system. However, UX would consider factors such as the visual design, the colors, and how the user feels about the extension aesthetic. A Letter-to-Santa UX feature can be a visual celebration announcing that the code provided by the user passed all the tests, promoting a feeling of success.

¹ Interaction Design Foundation - IxDF. (2016, June 6). What is Human-Computer Interaction (HCI)?. Interaction Design Foundation - IxDF. <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/human-computer-interaction>

² Interaction Design Foundation - IxDF. (2016, June 1). What is Usability?. Interaction Design Foundation - IxDF. <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/usability>

³ Interaction Design Foundation - IxDF. (2016, June 1). What is User Experience (UX) Design?. Interaction Design Foundation - IxDF. <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/ux-design>

⁴ Team Designlab. (2024, February 8). Ethical Considerations in UX Design. *Designlab*. <https://designlab.com/blog/ethical-considerations-in-ux-design#:~:text=As%20technology%20becomes%20even%20more,%2Dbeing%2C%20and%20promote%20sustainability.>