

Reflection

Over the course of this semester, I worked on three unique projects that allowed me to delve deeply into various aspects of user experience design. Each project presented its own set of objectives, challenges, and opportunities, offering a well-rounded learning experience. Project 1, the IBot Network Communication Service, focused on designing a robot to enhance connectivity on campus, emphasizing both technical functionality and user convenience. Project 2 addressed optimizing the shopping experience for students at the SDU market, requiring a strong emphasis on observing real-world behaviors and proposing practical solutions. Finally, Project 3, a sleep-tracking application, was a solo effort where I applied insights from wearable technology and behavioral models to craft an independent, personalized design. Together, these projects provided me with a comprehensive understanding of user-centered design, highlighting the importance of empathy, collaboration, and creativity in solving diverse user challenges.

Role and Contributions

In Project 1, the design of the “IBot” for SDU, my primary roles included sketching the robot design, writing detailed scenarios, and contributing to the system's overall concept. I ensured the robot's navigation and connectivity features were visually represented and logically integrated into the design. My sketches highlighted how IBot would navigate SDU, interact with students, and provide enhanced internet connectivity. Additionally, I co-wrote scenarios describing use cases, such as IBot prioritizing busy areas and optimizing students' online experience.

For Project 2, which tackled the problem of long queues and inefficient shopping experiences in the SDU market, I focused on observing student behaviors and sketching redesign ideas for the market layout. I also contributed to identifying key problems, such as narrow passages and the difficulty of finding products, and proposed solutions like rearranging refrigerators and optimizing the layout to improve the flow of customers. My input helped visualize how these changes could streamline the market flow and enhance the overall experience for students.

In Project 3, the sleep-tracking application for students, I played a pivotal role in creating sketches for the app interface and writing scenarios that demonstrated how students would use the app to track and improve their sleep. I also researched current sleep-tracking technologies and incorporated their features into our design. My scenarios focused on addressing students' misconceptions about sleep and providing actionable insights to foster healthier habits.

Learning and Evolution of Approach

Each project provided valuable lessons that influenced my approach to subsequent projects. From Project 1, I learned the importance of integrating both technical functionality and user convenience into a design. The process of designing IBot highlighted how essential it is to think beyond visual appeal and ensure the solution aligns with users' practical needs. This realization informed my focus on usability in Project 2, where I prioritized creating a layout that minimized obstacles and improved the shopping experience.

Project 2 taught me how to address multiple interconnected problems within a constrained environment. The challenges of redesigning the SDU market emphasized the value of user observation and iterative testing. I applied these lessons in Project 3, where I carefully crafted scenarios and sketches to address students' sleep challenges, ensuring the app was both engaging and educational. Through these projects, I developed a deeper appreciation for user research and iterative design. My process evolved to emphasize empathy, usability, and continuous feedback.

Evolution of Design Philosophy

When I began the course, I viewed design as primarily focused on aesthetics and technical efficiency. Over time, I've come to understand that design is about solving real-world problems through meaningful experiences. It's not just about what users see but how they feel, interact, and benefit from a product or service. My philosophy now centers on creating solutions that are not only visually appealing but also intuitive, inclusive, and impactful. For instance, in Project 1, my focus shifted from designing a visually striking robot to ensuring IBot's navigation and connectivity features addressed students' actual pain points.

Initially, I perceived UX and UI as separate components: UX focused on user needs and UI on visual design. Now, I see them as deeply interconnected elements that together create meaningful and impactful experiences. UX lays the foundation by identifying pain points and understanding user behavior, while UI translates these insights into visually engaging and intuitive interfaces.

For example, in Project 1, UX research revealed the need for reliable campus connectivity, particularly in high-traffic areas like the library and dorms. This shaped the robot's functionality to prioritize these zones. The UI design then ensured the robot's interface was easy to understand, with clear notifications and an intuitive system to update students on available network levels. This integration of UX and UI created a cohesive experience for students.

Similarly, in Project 2, UX observations about narrow aisles and long queues guided the recommendations for layout changes and improved payment methods. The UI translated these insights by proposing clear signage and reorganized paths that enhanced both functionality and aesthetics, making the shopping experience more efficient and enjoyable.

In Project 3, the interplay of UX and UI became even clearer. UX insights, such as students' misconceptions about sleep quality versus quantity, guided the inclusion of personalized feedback loops and motivational features. The UI ensured that these elements were visually appealing and user-friendly, creating an app that felt supportive rather than overwhelming. These examples have shown me that UX and UI are two sides of the same coin, working together to craft designs that are not only functional but also emotionally resonant. My perspective now embraces their symbiosis, focusing on delivering designs that balance user needs with engaging, intuitive visuals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, these projects have been transformative in my development as a designer. Collaborating with my team in Project 1 and Project 2 taught me the importance of teamwork, while working solo on Project 3 honed my independence. I now understand that UX and UI are about creating meaningful, user-centered experiences, and I aim to continue applying these principles in future projects.