UXU Lesson 3 – Emotional Design

Key ideas from Interaction Design (Ch. 6: Emotional Interaction)

Chapter 6 examines how emotions shape user experience and what designers can do to elicit positive emotions and avoid negative ones. Core topics include expressive interfaces, annoying interfaces, affective computing / emotional AI, persuasive technologies, and anthropomorphism.

- Emotional aspects of interaction: design to facilitate states like pleasure and to avoid frustration; well-designed, aesthetically pleasing interfaces can be a joy to use.
- Expressive interfaces: use feedback, visuals, micro-interactions, and tone that reassure, inform, and can be playful—when appropriate.
- Annoying interfaces: dark patterns, intrusive notifications, and friction create anger and abandonment; avoid nagging and manipulative timing.
- Affective computing & Emotional AI: systems that detect emotions (e.g., via facial expressions, voice) to adapt interactions—raising benefits and ethical issues (privacy, consent, bias).
- Persuasive technologies: design to encourage behavior change (e.g., health, sustainability) while steering clear of deception.
- Anthropomorphism: attributing human qualities to systems/robots; helpful for approachability but can create unrealistic expectations.

Key ideas from Norman's Emotional Design

Norman explains why attractive things can work better and proposes three interwoven levels of design that together shape emotions and performance.

- Visceral design – immediate sensory impact (look/feel); sets first impressions and attraction.
- Behavioral design – usability in action: function, performance, and ease of use; drives pleasure in skilled, effective use.
- Reflective design – meaning, culture, and self-image; the story a product lets us tell about ourselves over time.
- Positive affect broadens thinking and creativity; negative affect narrows focus—useful under stress. Design for the emotional state your context demands.
- No single product suits everyone: individual differences and culture modulate emotional responses.

Highlights from the Lesson Slides (UXU 3 Emotional Design)

- 3-level model recap: Visceral ↔ Behavioral ↔ Reflective; with sensory input and motor output control loops.
- Visceral level: instant emotional impact; sparks curiosity and attraction.

- Behavioral level: function first—understand real use and context.
- Reflective level: meaning, message, culture, and self-image.
- Expressive interfaces: use expression to be informative, reassuring, or fun.
- Annoying interfaces: identify and remove sources of irritation.
- Persuasive technologies: consider ethics; avoid deceptive tactics ('dark patterns').
- Anthropomorphism: giving human qualities to objects/systems; used judiciously.
- Zoomorphism: object shapes inspired by animals—use with intent.
- In-class exercise: design a language-learning app considering visceral, behavioral, and reflective layers; peer review focusing on emotional design.

Design implications & practical tips
- Start with the feelings: what should users feel before, during, and after using your product? Map touchpoints to visceral/behavioral/reflective aims.
- Expressive, respectful feedback: clear status, gentle tone, and micro-delight without noise.
- Reduce irritation: remove nags, needless confirmations, and confusing flows; provide control and undo.
- Ethics in persuasion and emotion detection: require consent, explain benefits, and provide opt-outs; avoid deception.
- Prototype for emotion: test visuals, motion, and micro-copy; measure delight, trust, and frustration alongside task success.
- Reflective hooks: support pride, identity, and meaning (e.g., milestones, narratives, artifacts worth sharing).

Study prompts & studio checklist
- Where does your design deliberately trigger visceral attraction? What signals say "this is for me"?
- Can a first-time user complete key tasks smoothly? (Behavioral design metrics: efficiency, learnability, errors)
- What lasting meaning or story does your product create? (Reflective design)
- What elements could annoy users? How will you detect and fix them?
- If considering affective computing or persuasion, what are the ethical guardrails?