

Interaction Design Beyond Human Interaction, (3rd ed) by Yvonne Rogers, Jenny Preece and Helena Sharp's (Chapter: Emotional Interaction)

Human emotion and behavior informs design choices. Approaching designs for humans can be challenging because of the complexity and diversity of human behavior and emotion. *Interaction Design: Beyond Human Interaction (3rd ed)* by Yvonne Rogers, Jenny Preece and Helena Sharp's chapter "Emotional Interaction" discusses how to understand and work with emotional interaction. I will demonstrate how having a certain understanding of these emotional responses can, in turn, inform decisions made in design. I will first to discuss and evaluate the importance of both anthropomorphic and expressive forms in interface designs then proceed to look at human behavior can be altered through successful design that takes into consideration our pre-existing behavior; for instance how we respond to gamified design or services.

Using interfaces will generally elicit an emotional response on a positive to negative spectrum (with neutral in the middle) and that often highly depends on what information is being given to us via the interface. Because of this, "expressive forms" have been used to invoke emotion. These include animations, emojis and much more, and often provide familiarity thereby deepening users' engagement. Norman confirms however, as mentioned in the chapter, the represented emotions should not be overly obvious and should maintain the nuances that human emotion displays, "The emotions need to appear as natural and ordinary as human emotions. They must be real, a direct reflection of the internal states and processing of a robot." (Norman, 179). As humans are generally considered better at reading other humans' emotions and consequently emotion that is either oversimplified or exaggerated can be perceived as fake which can cause distrust (which is usually the opposite of a designer's intentions). Alluding to human-like forms and qualities can provide suggestions or queues of some sorts based on how we would typically act in reality. For instance, many robots are given multiple human qualities: arms, legs, eyes, etc and yet designers, "the design of these robots a certain amount of robot-ness" and also serves "identification of the robot's role in the environment" (239). This also demonstrates the necessity to keep a certain authenticity in the expressive forms, as attempting to mask the robot qualities can make the human a lot less forgiving in judging the 'quality' of the said robot and might ultimately feel fake and deceitful.

“people [...], have a propensity to accept and enjoy objects that have been given human-like qualities has led many designers to capitalize on it”(Rogers et al,145).

Anthropomorphism also renews the way that humans are drawn to people similar to them in design. This is especially helpful with design that is perhaps unfamiliar to users, and therefore they would be more eager attempt to given the existing familiarity with characteristics an anthropomorphic design that can be associated humans. By using these techniques designers are able to shift, possibly pre-existing views on something with anthropomorphic familiarity in design that also takes into consideration authenticity and nuances of both human emotion and expressive form.

Following the theme of shifting views and judgment, another important dimension in emotion-focussed design is the ability to nudge users towards certain behaviour changes. The particular chapter focuses on behavior change and refers to these types of designs as persuasive technologies. There are successful ones out there the are able to invoke behavioral change thanks to their use of a range of techniques such as gamification that both uses a reward system and can bring in an element of fun (141). Jane McGonigal provides one key reason for why we feel compelled by gamified designs and processes: “Games give us unnecessary obstacles that we volunteer to tackle.” (Interaction Design Foundation). This ‘game’ almost becomes as though one is daring themselves to do something users challenge whether or not the dare is actually possible thereby making it a proof of one’s own character to a certain extent. Although this strategy has proved to be successful, there might be limitations in terms of the extent of the change that has occurred, as often gamified designs can bring a certain novelty that eventually wears out with time. Often the intended outcome is long-lasting change; changes in habits and in turn sometimes even lifestyle. This concept of gamification has also been taken to the medical field in order to help patients tackle this problem: “The success of platforms will be related to the motivation and engagement of the players and this will often depend on experienced game developers building good games’ (“Gamification’: Influencing health behaviours with games”). The question of motivation comes up in this situation and shows that engagement can be a limitation to how much change a design can have on behavioral change compared to how much is up to users’ free will.

In conclusion, there are limitations to how much designers are able to replicate human qualities in design to invoke more user engagement. However, understanding using human behavior can and will continue to inform and ameliorate design processes. This strategy should be at the core of these decisions as that will inherently determine how we interact (both emotionally and not) with the design or service in question.

Bibliography

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