USER EXPERIENCE
WITH REGARDS TO ANIMATION

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Introduction

> *"Early web animation was dominated by bold, evocated and flashy work. But while there was wonderful work produced in the web's first days, practical web animation was a little harder to find. It's only in the last few years that web designers have come to appreciate what thoughtful, well-executed animation can do for them" – Val Head [1]*

According to its broadest definition, technology is a collection of activities that involve creating physical and immaterial entities with the purpose of producing something useful. The user of these technologies is the individual who utilizes the end product in various ways, such as for its services, experience, etc. In this paper, we will explore a technology that is not often discussed but is widely used, animation. In fact, animation is one of those technologies that you come across more frequently than you think. The popularity of devices such as smartphones, laptops, tablets, and others has resulted in the animation industry being given more importance than ever before. Different forms of animation are required for all of these devices to provide users with an enjoyable and fascinating digital experience. The majority of the population prefers watching animated movies over reading books for exactly this reason. We now have a basic understanding of animation as a technology, so let us talk more about how users experience animation, which is the primary focus of this paper.

We have discussed in class that the experience of living occurs continually due to the interaction between living creatures and their environment conditions. As a result of the advent of digital devices, an interactive tool like animation has become increasingly important in the digital age for users. A user's experience with animation can be classified under any of the four threads of experience discussed, for instance:
- o The sensual thread – The animators who have a strong sense for art and animating tools.
- o The emotional thread – Animated movies and videos.
- o The compositional thread – The personal experience with animation as a part or whole by the viewers.
- o The spatio-temporal experience – Animation has the power to take the users back in time, age and environment and let the viewers/users experience a different space altogether.

The user engagement aspect of the end product is another important aspect of the user experience. When it comes to animation, it is very important that the animation is attractive, correctly themed, easy to understand, and enjoyable, and only then will the user/viewers be willing to give it a try. A few sectors where the animation can be used are advertising, gaming, education, digital platforms like websites, virtual reality, engineering, digital art, simulations, etc.

The hedonic factor is greatly enhanced by animation. An informative website, for example, can be helpful, but a similar website with some animation explaining the content could keep the reader's attention for a longer period of time because of the aesthetic appeal of the site. As a matter of fact, the animation of the website does not only contribute to its aesthetic appeal, but also to its pragmatics. Using this method can increase the usability of a website by making the information easier to understand for the users.

In addition to ensuring that a product has good aesthetics and usability, it is also imperative to ensure that the user experiences an emotional connection when using the product. Our learning has taught us that emotion influences judgement, but judgement and experience also influence emotions. Using this approach, users will be able to experience not just the best of both worlds, but three worlds, which is one of the ways in which we can achieve the flow zone (sweet spot). To engage users, it is possible to implement a variety of tactics ranging from animating a simple fun icon within the product to creating a full-length educational video containing the content.

There are strengths and limitations to everything that exists. Let us examine a few of the strengths (reasons why characterizing the animation domain based on user experience is a good idea) and limitations (reasons why we might think that we should not characterize the domain of animation based on user experience). We will be using the famous designer Val Head's book "Improving the user experience through animation" for studying the strengths and limitations of animation. The author has elaborated on how animation is used to interact with its users to gain feedback, demonstrate content, express brands, orient, etc. These can also be considered as highlights of the domain and its metaphor.

"using animation to solve design principles tackles the design problems that animation can help you solve, based on existing research and best practices in interface animation. Each chapter in this section covers a specific benefit of animation and how it can be used to its full potential, as well as multiple examples to demonstrate what works and why. You can apply the lessons learned from these examples to your own work" – Val Head [1]

The following section will provide a more detailed explanation of some topics that were briefly discussed in the previous paragraphs.

Strengths:

- <u>Learning experience for users</u>

  Visual means are proven to be more effective at teaching than other mediums. Educating students with animated visuals is exactly why educational firms have adopted smart class environments. Students who were attracted to this concept attended classes more frequently, learned faster, and received better grades. Furthermore, it provided a new opportunity for mentally challenged students to be able to engage in the learning process because it conveyed messages beyond their linguistic abilities.

- <u>Emotional experience for users</u>

  Humans desire to experience various types of emotions at different stages of their lives. Animation has the power to evoke a wide range of emotions in users (viewers in this case). Several major companies, including Disney, Pixar, Studio Ghibli, MAPPA, etc, are based on animation solely for the purpose of entertaining people through this art form. It is also worth mentioning that animated games are considered to be one of the most popular forms of entertainment.

- <u>Tactical experience for users</u>

  The use of animation in engineering has been beneficial. The purpose of these tools is to help engineers communicate their ideas and thoughts in a more effective manner. It facilitates the execution of their plans in an efficient manner. Software engineers, for example, use software such as Wix, which permits the creation of a website that includes animations, while architects use animation tools such as Adobe and CAD to demonstrate their designs. During product launch events, large brands such as Apple make use of brilliantly designed animations to demonstrate their new products.

Limitations:

- <u>Overwhelming experience for consumers</u>

Despite its beauty, animation can prove disastrous if not used correctly. Whenever you provide too much of anything, it will prove to be a negative experience for the user. This is the same with this application as well. In the event that users are bombarded with a large number of animated elements at once, they are bound to become overwhelmed. As an example, imagine that you are visiting a website in the hope of having an enjoyable experience as a user, but instead you find yourself visiting a chaotic website with extensive animation. Too many elements on a website can be equally detrimental as having no attractive elements at all. It is therefore recommended that a designer keep the product design as simple, effective, and enjoyable as possible.

- <u>Challenging experience for adopters</u>

There can be a lot of difficulty in using animation tools. An understanding of design and animation is necessary here. It is because of this that some very young or very old people may not be able to use these tools. Animation is still available to you as a viewer, but it is limited to that. A skilled individual who is knowledgeable about using this tool will be necessary for your success. This presents a potential challenge. To make these tools user-friendly, developers should keep all kinds of users in mind while developing them.

- <u>Experience of uncertainty for stakeholders</u>

Numerous stakeholders may be investing in animated content and products available on the market. Due to the rapid evolution of trends in this market domain, these stakeholders are always in a state of uncertainty when it comes to making a profit. An example would be NFT. Right now, NFTs are trending and many users have invested in them, but nobody knows when the trend will cease, which will result in a loss for these parties. Considering that these types of popularity trends are very unpredictable, it is recommended that users (in this case buyers) invest in a trend that will last for a considerable period of time.

We have discussed the metaphor "user experience" in various ways considering animation as an example of a domain. Could this domain be metaphorically represented in any other way? Yes, in a variety of ways. As an alternative metaphor, my first choice would be "User as a Creator." That is, the user as an innovator/developer. It is not uncommon for users to use a product and be inspired to create their own product. Students may be inspired by animated lessons shown or taught in class and decide to create more animated lessons to assist others in studying. Another example is a person watching an animated movie who is inspired to become an animator and create his own work. The above are a few ways in which users can transform into creators.

Conclusion

Technology is more than an abstract concept associated with advanced tools and systems used by businesses and end users to facilitate and automate complex tasks. The environment also influences the manner in which societies and individuals behave, grow, evolve, and develop, both within their own lives as well as in their relationships with others.

For users, the strengths we discussed will prove to be the highlight, as they can use the technology in a number of different ways. There might also be a few cases where animation can miss out on our relationship with technology which is not always a bad thing. For example, Val Head mentions in his study that digital animation has gained popularity now but back in the day, animation was created with alternative technologies such as flipbooks, overlapping picture frames, etc. Technology and our relationship with it are constantly evolving, and even though we may miss out on certain technologies, we are always developing new relationships with new inventions.

We have come from the invention of wheel to inventing flying cars. Isn't it interesting to learn the user experience of not only the presnt but also the past and future users? Isn't it amazing how we ourselves experience different phases of technology at different stages of our lives as users? Perhaps it can be considered the beauty of living where technology and its users can share such vivid relationships.

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