Title: Artifact Design
Week of Jan. 20 2020
Seminar #1

Introduction

Proper design is the essential essence of usability. Unfortunately, the everyday environment in which we live in does not always cater toward usability. Usability in our real world is often the result of trial and error, often resulting in products or artifacts which are hard to use. This topic deals with some basic principles of how and why controls and other artifacts found in everyday life are useful or useless. Following the principles which Norman lays out, one can design effective widgets to influence the user positively.

Summary

The reading provides a set of principles and guidelines which smart objects use to communicate with their users.

Objective

This university is full of objects and artifacts which are hard to use. Why? Based on the readings, scour the university for examples of good and bad designs. Why are these good or bad? What makes the artifact hard to use? What should be done to improve a bad design.

During the seminar, you will be asked to provide examples of your findings. These will be used for discussion purposes. Come prepared with a floor plan, photo or some other visual aid to help the group understand what you are talking about. You will be asked to present your finding. The discussion should relate to, and be relevant to the readings. In particular, the seminar leader may ask for specific cases where the design promotes or hinders usability.

Readings

Chapter one "The Psychopathology of Everyday Things" of Donald A. Norman's "The Design of Everyday Things".

Seminar Preparation

The university is full of good and bad design. Scour Brock and find several artifacts which exhibit the properties which Norman talks about in chapter 1, visibility, affordance, conceptual models, principle of mapping and principle of feedback. Come prepared to seminar to discuss: How does your artifact(s) exhibit these properties? What benefit to the user are these w.r.t. your artifact. Find some artifacts which are hard to use. Why are these hard to use? Which principles are violated? What can be done to improve usability? How would you design the artifact?

When identifying the artifact, it is acceptable that 1 artifact can cover several aspects of the design which is often the case. This will be true for both the good and the bad. Everyone has a smart phone which can take

pictures. Feel free to take pictures and present these to the seminar. All artifacts should be physical in nature, please no software.

Marking

Marks will be awarded for presentation, preparation and participation in the discussion which exhibit emulsion into the subject matter. Students who do not come prepared can expect a low participation mark.