UI/UX: ETHICS OF INTERACTION DESIGN

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ASSIGNMENT 2: ESSAY

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever opened an app and immediately knew you did not like it? Or how about logging onto a social media platform and discovering new features added in, and having to take a short, forced tutorial? Have you ever just stopped using an app because you just couldn't understand how it worked? These seemingly minor issues are part of a larger topic that has to do with UI/UX design.

In this essay, the topic that will be discussed is UI/UX ethical design. This topic mainly aims to unpack the theory behind ethical design within the digital space and the ways in which to identify and work ethically within digital spaces. This essay will include a thorough analysis of the chosen website, YouTube, and a few suggestions on how it could better in order to counter UI/UX related issues. This essay will use reading done throughout the course, articles related to UI/UX. The following topics will be discussed, namely:

- UI/UX Design: Why is it so important?
- Structures for Analysing Unethical Designs: YouTube Case Study

Which will then be concluded with a summary and further thoughts regarding the topic at hand.

UI/UX DESIGN:
WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

According to Coursera, User Interface is the visual elements that are displayed on the screen. These elements include the screen itself, buttons and other visual interactive elements one may encounter on either a device or website. It's basically what the user can click or interact with on the screen using a controller or mouse. UX, User eXperience, is essentially the way in which the user feels when interacting with the elements. It panders more towards the user or player's reaction towards the User Interface and goes according to how much they either liked or disliked it.

Now to the most important question I'm probably sure everyone asks themselves, why UI/UX? What is so important about it?

The simple way to answer this question is that UI and UX are essentially the foundation of everything that you see online. Without User Interface, there wouldn't be any interactables

within a website or mobile. What I am implying is that without things to fidget or play with on the screen, it would simply resemble an ongoing TV-like program where things happen on screen, but you are unable to participate. Small things like power buttons, start buttons, exit buttons are extremely crucial to any app, product, or platform.

STRUCTURES FOR ANALYSING ETHICAL UI/UX DESIGN: YOUTUBE CASE STUDY

According to a PowerPoint slide by Peta Goldberg called *"A CRASH COURSE IN USER EXPERIENCE INTERFACE DESIGN"*, There are basic principles that designs must adhere to for them to be classified as ethical. These principles are namely: Readability and Legibility, Visual Weight, Balance and Alignment, Visual Directions, Law of Locality, Hierarchy and Scale, Focal Points, Harmony, and Shapes. Each of these principles dictate whether the UI/UX will be ethically successful, and each have their own sub sections to further analyse what is being reviewed. For this case study, I have chosen to apply these principles to the popular website or app, YouTube.

READABILITY AND LEGIBILITY

The font that is utilized on the YouTube website is called Roboto, which differs from its original font Ariel Black that was used in the past. The webpage's CSS properties have been set in order to establish distinct letter spacings for specific elements. For instance, the sub headline link on the page has a letter spacing of 0.15 pixels, while the regular link and thumbnail attribution are set at 0.25 and 0.3 pixels respectively.

This provides users with a consistent and organized visual experience on the website. In terms of webpage design, the CSS code plays a crucial role in determining the font size of various elements. For instance, the height of the channel line is set to 3.2rem, while the height of the navbar title is fixed at 2.6rem. Similarly, the sub headline is assigned a height of 2.2rem, while the regular link uses a height of 2rem. Moreover, the CSS code specifies a font size of 1.2rem for the thumbnail attribution.

These proportions make it easier to read and engage with the videos. Another thing I have noticed is the difference in colour. The headings or titles are all solid black and they are bold, whereas the channel name, views, and the time when the video was posted, is all in grey. I think this was done to make the title stand out to be more eye-catching to the viewer. By prioritising the topic, viewers can quickly decide whether this interests them without the need of going to the actual channel, only to be uninterested.

VISUAL WEIGHT

When it comes to visual weight, YouTube has a more symmetrical balance. From analysing the centre of the screen, all the videos are arranged in orderly rows and columns with even spacing around them. I would say that the weight of the content is asymmetrically imbalanced because YouTube pushes the picture or visuals first before the lettering and fonts. This does bring a sense of balance, as stated in the lecture slide and video, even though they may be totally different. This is a good thing to push forward due to people being more attracted to visuals than words. According to EdApp.com, 65% of the world's population are visual learners. This means regardless of what information is put out, the majority will always flock towards the first source with colourful pictures. So, YouTube utilising this information is a prime example of ethical UX/UI design.

BALANCE AND ALIGNMENT

Each column of the centre part of the YouTube page is aligned at the centre. Although the fonts and lettering may have an edge alignment unlike the visual representation, which is aligned at the centre. I think its safe to say I understand this alignment due to there being a picture next to the words underneath the video (referring to the main page), There had to be a sort of shift that won't make everything look unaligned and unruly.

VISUAL DIRECTIONS

With regards to the location of the elements, I would say there is no instance whereby the inventory bar overshadows the main centre of the home page, which are the videos. With the way it is positioned, it actually makes it easier to locate the other important features this platform has to offer, such as discover tags, side bars for subscriptions and playlists, and so on.

The shape of the videos is rectangular, which is a good thing with regards to spacing and alignment. It is far easier to engage with something that looks uniform like a rectangle than to have a row of circular icons next to each other. Plus rectangular elements allow for there to be a comfortable space between each element for typography to reside.

YouTube does have a grid like structure with the previously mentioned rectangles being aligned next to each other. There is no subject matter that suggests any direction within this platform besides the navigation bar.

LAW OF LOCALITY

There is no doubt that YouTube has changed its hierarchies throughout the years, and it might have been for the better. Using the website version of YouTube on my computer, the first thing I identified was the search bar. It was put in a place whereby the user does not have to look far to find. Another interesting thing is the topics that are now at the top, underneath the search bar. YouTube implemented this as a new feature for when users want to watch a specific niche of content without having to search and constantly alter the home page algorithm.

HIERARCHY AND SCALE

As stated in the other topics, The tag line that contains the logo appears first, followed by the search bar, followed by the content, then by the side bar or inventory bar. The scaling of these elements is not fairly proportioned seeing as how the content takes up much of the screen space compared to the search bar. This was done for specific reasons of course but this was said to mainly point out the scaling element.

FOCAL POINTS

I could not find a clear indication of a focal point on YouTube, but there is a feature whereby if a user is watching something but still wants to explore the page, the minimisation of that page will occur and the small window will be placed at the bottom right corner of the screen. This creates a blocking element whereby the user wants to see the elements blocked by the window. Personally I don't think this is a good ethical design because it can become irritating and may subsequently result in the window being removed. The information that was being relayed has been cut short.

There being no focal point might also be an example of unethical design as there is nothing persuading the user to look for more information.

HARMONY

With regards to YouTube, I can see more incorporations of proximity and continuation. I say this because the overall structure of YouTube has become one of convenience. Everything being fitted onto the homescreen and being a click away without having to use a lot of moving around is something I think YouTube has achieved.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this essay, I would like to state that UI/UX is a very important step when creating media platforms that users will interact with. Furthermore, using the 12 principles of ethical design pracrtice, the case study was fully analysed and was overall had a pretty ethical design, with a few things that could be improved here and there.

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