Week Seven: Experimenting with Layouts and Color Schemes for an App: Collecting User Feedback on Aesthetics and Usability Using GIMP

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Aim

To understand how different colour choices in app UI design affect user experience (UX), particularly in the context of a weather application.

Procedure

Using GIMP, three different versions of a weather app UI were designed, each varying mainly by background color schemes and minor element color adjustments.
The layouts were evaluated on factors like:

- Readability
- Mood/message conveyed
- Accessibility

Observation & Analysis

Version 1

This UI uses a pale, almost pastel, blue background with equally light-colored icons and text. Visually, the layout feels soft, dreamy, and airy, evoking the feeling of a calm, sunny morning. The colour palette succeeds in sending a positive, cheerful message to the user regarding the weather conditions. However, the major drawback of this version lies in poor contrast. Because both the background and the foreground elements are very light, readability is compromised. Users, especially those viewing the app under strong sunlight or those with visual impairments, may find it difficult to distinguish text and icons from the background. Thus, even though the colour palette sets the correct emotional mood, the lack of visual clarity severely weakens the user experience, making it less practical for daily use.

Version 2

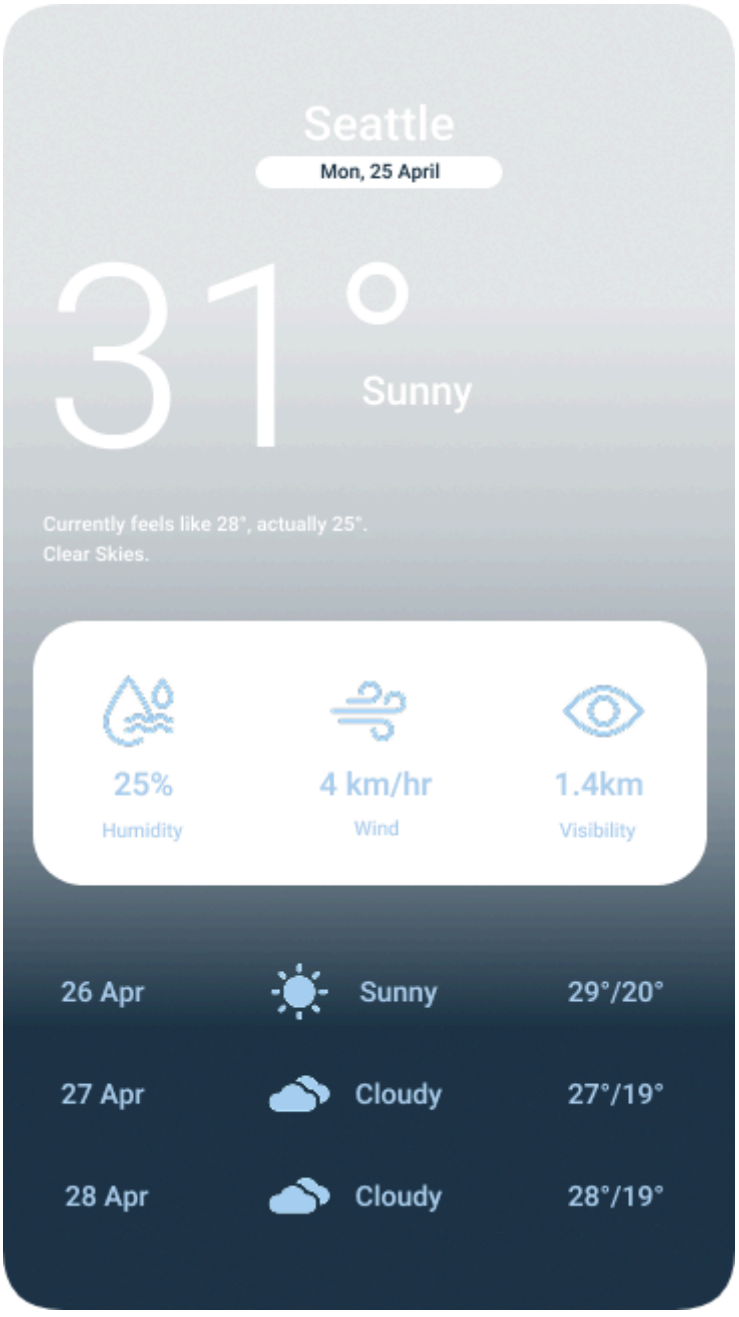
This UI uses a light blue background combined with dark blue cards and white text, creating a layout that immediately feels bright, clear, and professional. The contrast between the text/icons and the background is excellent, ensuring that information is easily visible and readable across the screen. Beyond just functionality, the colour scheme sends the right emotional signals. Light blue is widely associated with clear skies, freshness, and openness, making it a perfect choice for a weather application. The dark blue cards neatly organise sections like humidity, wind, and visibility, without making the app feel heavy or cluttered. Overall, this version achieves a perfect balance between emotional appeal and usability. It is

inviting, easy to navigate, and functionally strong, making it the most effective design among the three versions studied.

Version 3

The first version of the weather app uses a gradient background transitioning from a light grey shade to a deep navy blue at the bottom. The white text and light icons initially stand out well against the lighter background. However, as the gradient darkens towards the bottom, some of the information slightly blends in, reducing readability for users, especially those with visual difficulties. While the contrast overall is moderate and acceptable, the choice of darker, colder colours unintentionally conveys a rainy, stormy, or gloomy mood.

This does not align with the intended purpose of a weather app that should ideally represent clear, sunny, or neutral weather. Despite having decent readability, the wrong emotional message is delivered because of the poor emotional association with the colour palette. This highlights an important insight: even with good contrast, if the colour tones do not match the app’s purpose, it can lead to user confusion or misinterpretation of the app's vibe.



Results

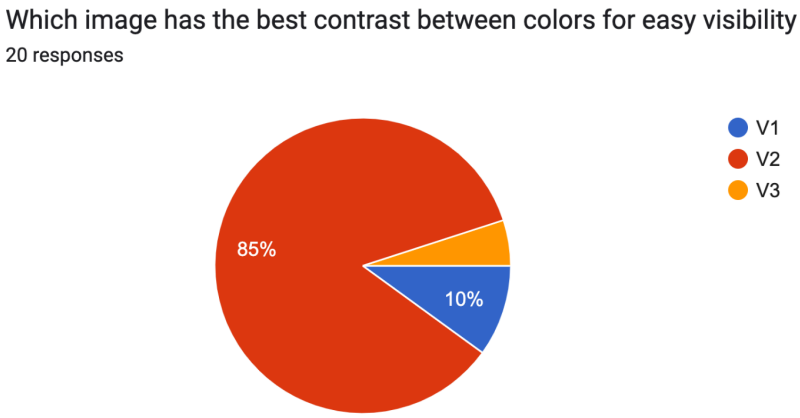
After evaluating all three versions of the weather app UI, it is clear that colour choices strongly impact both the emotional tone and usability of a design.

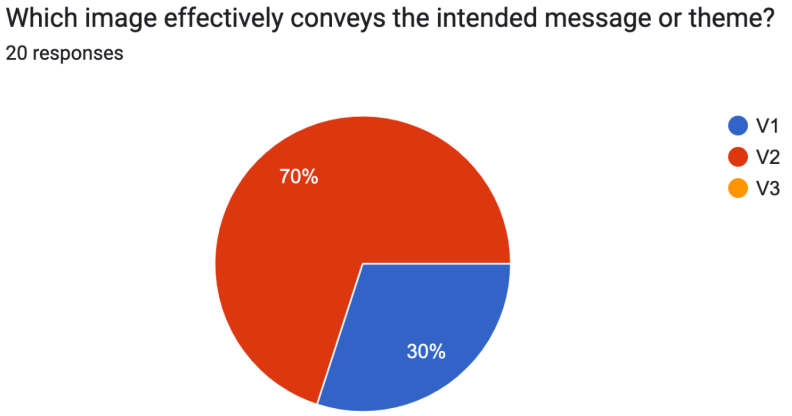
The **first version**, although aesthetically soft and cheerful with its pale blue tones, lacked sufficient contrast between the background and the text. This led to **poor readability**, making it harder for users to quickly absorb the information presented, especially in real-world conditions like bright sunlight.

The **second version**, in contrast, achieved the best results. The combination of a light blue background with dark blue elements provided **high readability**, excellent **visual hierarchy**, and the right emotional appeal of **clarity and freshness**. This made the app feel inviting, organised, and easy to use.

In the **third version**, although the gradient background provided reasonable contrast, the dark tones gave a rainy and gloomy impression, which was not appropriate for a general weather app expected to convey bright and neutral moods.

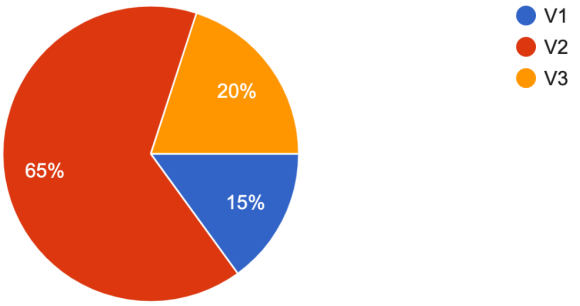
Here are the pie chart summaries of responses from the survey:





Which image is the most aesthetically pleasing overall?

20 responses



Conclusion

This exercise emphasised the importance of balancing aesthetics with accessibility, showing that good UI design is not only about looking attractive but also about enhancing the user's ability to interact comfortably and correctly with the application.
