Skeuomorphic and flat designs

Comparative report

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Overview

This report compares the experience of using GUIs with skeuomorphic or flat designs from the perspective of the user.

The following table compares the longevity, versatility, and navigability of skeuomorphic and flat designs.

	Skeuomorphic	Flat
Longevity	▪ Users who have no experience with the real-world equivalent of a skeuomorphic design are alienated. ▪ Since the design is tied to the real-world object, the functionality of the application is bound by real-world rules.	▪ Simple and clean design with a technological context. Users do not have to link the design to a real-world counterpart. ▪ Since application functionality is not tied to the design, there is no user schemata conflict with the design.
Versatility	▪ Real world link means the design is consistent across all platforms and devices. ▪ Difficult to articulate with newer design technologies.	▪ Well suited for audiences with slower internet speeds. ▪ Works well with responsive design techniques.
Navigation	▪ The real-world reference eases navigation for older audiences who are overwhelmed by the complex features in flat design.	▪ There is a link between all the designs and harmony between different applications is consistent.

	▪ There is no link between all the different designs on the GUI.	▪ The 2-dimensional designs can be easily learned by users.

Conclusion

This objective comparative report serves as a guide for developers deciding what design to use for GUIs. The earlier table compares the longevity, versatility, and navigability of skeuomorphic and flat designs from the perspective of potential users. The data in this table acts as a starting point for developers and designers deciding between the two design schemes. Although flat design has overtaken skeuomorphic design in terms of popularity in recent years, the purpose of designing the GUI is to accommodate audience needs. To best reflect audience needs and preferences in the different components of a GUI, developers and designers must perform an audience analysis and include the needs of the audience in their decision making process.