Factors Affecting User Experience

User emotions play a big role in how people experience digital products, especially the first time they use them. First impressions are powerful, but they often do not reflect how users feel after spending more time with a product.

Gu, Tang and Xue (2023) explored this in their study of the halo effect, where users rate a product's usability more positively simply because it looks good. They found that this effect is strongest right after first use, but it fades within three days. I agree with their conclusion that this has big implications for user interface evaluation, waiting a few days before collecting feedback can lead to more accurate and realistic responses.

Psychological research backs this up. Clean layouts and limited information help reduce cognitive load, which makes users feel more at ease and in control (Mărcuță and MoldStud Research Team, 2024). When a design looks clean, modern and well organised, users often assume it will be easy to use, even if the underlying functionality has flaws. So early feedback often reflects how the interface looks and feels, rather than how well it actually works.

Visually appealing designs also tend to create positive emotions, which make users more forgiving early on (Thielsch and Hirschfeld, 2019). But there is a downside. When a product looks slick, users expect it to perform well. If it does not, those high expectations can quickly turn into disappointment (Bargas-Avila and Hornbæk, 2019).

That is why I think Gu et al.'s point is useful. Delaying evaluation gives users time to see past the surface and form opinions based on real interaction. Attractive design can cover up problems at first, but it also raises expectations. Letting users settle in before asking for feedback leads to better data and better decisions in user interface research.

References

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