

User Experience Elements and Brand Promise

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ABSTRACT

Designing for good user experiences in a big corporate like Nokia requires a set of collective user experience elements. We use the elements not only in designing, but also in evaluating, benchmarking, and monitoring trends. By analyzing the existing lists of user experience elements, we found that researchers see the pragmatic user experience elements in a very consistent way, but it is harder to select the elements for the emotional side. We used Nokia brand to guide us in selecting the four user experience elements for Nokia: Utility, Usability, Social value, and Enjoyment.

Keywords

User experience, Elements of user experience

INTRODUCTION

As user experience (UX) is still a vague concept and different researchers view it from very different perspectives, it is not clear what it means to design for good user experience. Each company, designer, and product may have very different goals for user experience, e.g., stimulating, relaxing, efficient, or fun. Defining the UX goals, or *product UX elements*, for each product separately helps the development, evaluation, and marketing of the product. It is relatively easy to identify product UX elements, but the quality of the elements may differ drastically and comparing the UX of different products is difficult. *Universal UX elements* apply to all kinds of products, systems, objects, and services. They enable comparing UX of different products with the same criteria, and provide common guidelines for UX designers. It has been difficult to find UX elements that would be truly universal, i.e. applicable for a mobile game, nuclear plant security system, spoon, cosmetics, or automatic petrol station, for example. A company, in turn, may define *company-wide UX elements* that reflect its goals and missions, its brand promise.

In this paper, we analyze the existing lists of generic UX elements and explain how Nokia has tailored them to support the brand promise, “Connecting people through very human technology”. The Nokia UX elements help the company to see UX in the same way, to design for good UX, and to evaluate products of different kinds.

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RELATED RESEARCH

The first experience researcher was probably John Dewey, who studied the experience of nature [2] and art [3]. User experience research is a specific field of experience research, because UX is not about one way enjoyment but includes interaction (or the chance for it). UX research focuses on a person’s perceptions and responses that result from the use of a product, system, or service [8].

There are many lists of UX elements, representing many different perspectives to UX. Some list the characteristics that affect UX [1,4,7,12], some the design layers [5], some the desirable goals of product UX [6,9,10,11]. In this paper, we concentrate on the UX elements that list the desirable goals of UX as universally as possible.

According to Norman, a successful product engages users on behavioral (functional and usable), visceral (attractive), and reflective (high in prestige) level [11]. Jordan states that a product should provide users functionality, usability, and pleasure, where pleasure can be physio-, socio-, psycho- and ideo-pleasure [9]. Hassenzahl has identified pragmatic and hedonic goals for all successful products: pragmatic manipulation (utility and usability) and hedonic stimulation, identification, and evocation [6]. Kort et al. have listed compositional (pragmatic), aesthetic, and meaning aspects as goals for UX design [10]. All lists clearly divide UX elements to functional/pragmatic and emotional/hedonic/experiential. The similarities and differences between these lists are analyzed below.

Each list includes functionality/utility and usability (the compositional element of Kort et al) on the pragmatic side. Having utility on the list means that improving UX requires changes not only in the user interface but also in the set of functions. The product must be both useful and usable to result to great UX. Utility and usability are the pragmatic attributes that need to be there, but they are hardly enough to truly engage the users.

The lists of more experiential aspects have clear similarities as well. All of them mention the aspect of how the product reflects one’s identity (part of Hassenzahl’s identification, Norman’s reflective, Kort’s meaning), or am I proud about the product (Jordan’s socio-pleasure). Hassenzahl’s evocation and Norman’s reflective level refer to the memories attached to the product. The visceral level of Norman refers to the instant attractiveness of a product, such as the appearance. Aesthetic aspect by Kort et al. is

about delighting one or more of our sensory modalities. The other two lists do not contain the aesthetic aspect on the top level. Hassenzahl has brought stimulation to the top level, whereas Jordan highlights the four pleasures.

In summary, all lists agree on the pragmatic attributes of utility and usability, but there is more variation in the emotional attributes. The list of possible emotional attributes is a long one, and different types of products are aiming at different emotional goals. This is why it may be hard to find a universally applicable set of emotional UX elements. The identity aspect is the only item that has made it to all 3 lists above.

UX ELEMENTS FOR NOKIA PRODUCTS

In Nokia, we have strived to find a set of UX elements that would apply for all Nokia products, namely for mobile devices and Internet services. This would help us to design for better UX, to compare different products, and to see trends on how UX is developing along the product development process or over product generations. The common UX elements would also help employees to speak the same language in times when UX was understood in many different ways.

The process of identifying the elements was both top-down and bottom-up. We studied the existing UX elements lists as described in the previous section. We also collected a set of factors that Nokia UX, quality, market, and brand experts have testified important, e.g., easy to use, minimal effort, useful, robust, no malfunction, high performance, long battery life, secure, aesthetic, presentable, personal, “green”, pleasurable, stimulating. We also saw that the UX elements must follow the brand promise, “Connecting people through very human technology”. In this section, we report how we mapped the high level UX elements to lower level UX factors and to the brand promise.

It was easy to select the top level elements on pragmatic side, **Utility** and **Usability**. *Ease of use* and *minimal effort* map naturally under Usability, and so does *high performance*. Mobile devices and Internet services are increasingly *useful* as the range of activities on mobile devices and Internet is growing constantly. These tools should be available anywhere, anytime, which sets special requirements both to Utility and Usability. We mapped *secure, robust, long battery life* and *no malfunction* under Utility, because if the user cannot rely on the system, some useful functions will remain unused and utility decreases.

On the emotional side, **Social value** was a natural choice for a top level element. The existing lists of UX elements mentioned the connection between the product and my identity. Identity is related to other people, such as how do I look in the eyes of others when they see me with or through this product. As this aspect is crucial both for mobile devices and Web 2.0 services, it is no wonder that the experts saw *presentable* an important factor. The *green* factor refers to environment-friendly and ethical product

choice. It is about caring for other people, thereby falling under Social value. In Nokia case, Social value is also about making people feel close to each other, as the well-known brand slogan is Connecting People.

We still had a set of factors that were not mapped, e.g. aesthetic, personal, pleasurable, and stimulating. *Aesthetic* is related to the presentable aspect discussed above, but an aesthetic product will please the user also individually, despite the social aspect. *Personal* can be seen as a Usability factor (my functions easily available), or a Social value factor (looks like me). It also reflects the brand promise of Very Human Technology. As we have learned from mobile phones, many people have an emotional attachment to personal products. *Pleasure* is the good, relaxing feeling resulted from product use, where one can lean back and enjoy. When I’m attached to a product, it is a *pleasure* just to have it with me. *Stimulation*, in contrast, is a ‘lean forward’ feeling when I am excited about the opportunities the product conveys. Also *stimulation* makes using the product enjoyable. The theme of feeling good, enjoying the product, started to emerge. This resulted in naming the fourth UX element as **Enjoyment**. The possible sources for enjoyment are various, but the scope here is individual (not social) pleasure and/or stimulation. The product can act as a mediator (TV) or an actual source (stress ball) for enjoyment. Nokia aims to bring enjoyment to people’s lives through “very human technology”.

So far, we have neglected the evocation aspect from the discussion, although it was mentioned both by Norman and Hassenzahl. The reason is, evocation is hard to build into products. The memories that a person attaches to a product are not often related to the product features but to the situations where the product was used (the chat site on which I found my wife), or the origin of the product (birthday present from grandpa). Evocation aspect is promoted by designing personal products that I keep close to me most of the time. Sometimes evocation can be designed into product features, but we decided not to introduce evocation as a top level element but rather have it as one of the potential sources of pleasure.

CONCLUSION

We have discussed the reasoning and development of collective UX elements for Nokia product development. We were interested to find a set of UX elements that would be applicable for all Nokia products. After analyzing the existing UX element lists and the insights of Nokia experts, we identified four elements that best reflect the brand core proposition of connecting people with very human technology. The selected elements – Utility, Usability, Social value, and Enjoyment – are expressing the general level UX goals for any Nokia product.

1. Utility: usefulness, reliability
2. Usability: ease of use, efficiency, accessibility
3. Social value: connecting people, identification
4. Enjoyment: pleasure, stimulation

Each product program can define product-specific UX goals in addition to the four common ones. In UX evaluations, each goal can be tested e.g. with a lightweight questionnaire. We can also dig deeper into reasons when surprising results are found with the main level elements.

The four UX elements have helped us to design for UX and to monitor UX trends. The elements are received very well in Nokia also because they concretely communicate what is important when designing for good user experience.

FUTURE WORK

We are still trialing the UX elements with various types of products and concepts in Nokia. The four elements are not equally important for all product development activities, as many projects are concentrated in developing a new feature instead of a whole product. Thereby, it might be beneficial if each project sets a target level for each of the elements. A utilitarian feature would not have to score high on emotional side, and an entertainment feature would not have to score high in usefulness. In any case, it is good to examine all four elements in each project, since it helps to see what kinds of concepts we have.

We are also investigating the methods and tools for evaluating products and concepts against the UX elements [13]. UX evaluation methods are still immature and collaboration between researchers and practitioners would be beneficial for the field.

Our trials so far have shown the importance of the emotional aspects in overall user experience. The functional side is not explaining product preference, but the focus on emotional side provides us data on topics that matter to people. We welcome researchers to study mobile devices and Web 2.0 services with the UX elements described in this paper, and to further develop the universal UX elements.

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