Mini-Project 2: Emotional Design Analysis
I300 HCI/Interaction Design – Fall 2015

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The Gibson Les Paul
In Reference to Emotional Design Framework

Overview

This project will include a background of Norman’s Methodological Emotional Design Framework, and present a case study of the Gibson Les Paul based off these principles. I will then present my analysis of the design and describe how the guitar’s design makes an emotional impact.
Emotional Design Framework

A brief of Donald Norman’s three types of design response

• **Visceral Response**
  This response is best defined by an observer’s first basic instinct (i.e. excitement, fear, happiness) as his/her subconscious reacts to the object.

• **Behavioral Response**
  This response describes the feelings a user gets when using the product delivers either the actions desired, or problems unexpected.

• **Reflective Response**
  This response is the critical thinking that surrounds a users evaluation of the product in the experience, based on his or her values.

Case Study

The Gibson Les Paul

The Gibson Les Paul is a mahogany-stock based electric guitar that holds the title as one of the worlds most popular and iconic guitars. With two top of the line BurstBucker pickups, a rosewood fret board, and a tone and volume know for each pickup, this guitar
has a feel and sound that any guitarist would be delighted to experience. The guitar requires just a $\frac{1}{4}$” guitar cable and amplifier to emit the full sound it is designed to release. The guitar is designed to sound elegant with any genre of music from blues, to rock, to rap and jazz, and brings the player an opportunity to become emotionally involved with a more smooth and natural sound than can be found in most other guitars. Complete with a third party guitar strap, the guitar can even be played standing up.

**Responses**

**Visceral Response:**

When I first saw this guitar on Reverb.com, my initial reaction was: “That’s the guitar I’ve always wanted to play”. Its sleek black design with subtle metallic-gold electronics gives it the classy touch that I always imagined hanging from my shoulder on stage. By touch, the solid wood felt polished and smooth, which convinced me that it is a compact, strong guitar that can stand up to its fair share of abuse. The sound takes over a different visceral response, one recognized as clear and pure, which makes the instrument that much more magical.

**Behavioral Response:**

The guitar gave the right vibrations, felt perfectly on my side, and sounded better than I had ever expected. Every function of the instrument operates perfectly, and the control knob slides effortlessly with touch. Every string vibrates perfectly, as designed by Gibson for maximum playability. When hammering on with the flick of a pinky makes the same sound as every other note the experience of playing the guitar grows with focus and experience.
Reflective Response:

When I was finished with the guitar for the moment, the value was ever-present and delivered the sound I desired. The stock was stronger than I could have ever expected and every part was obviously crafted for years of durability. The aged neck of the instrument had dried so perfectly that the strings sat just above the fret board, an optimal design for the guitar that maintains value in every piece. I was disappointed in only the pick guard, which was flimsy and worries me. With the durability the guitar was made and the sound it emits, I could not be more emotionally satisfied with any guitar.

Conclusion

Breaking down emotional design into the framework of Don Norman helps to plan design to be something the user will fully enjoy. It is also important to consider mapping when designing because the relationship between how a control works and how a user expects it to work can be misinterpreted when designing the product. It is so important to market a product that immediately attracts the visceral attention, but no more important than the behavioral responses. An item functioning the wrong way will reflect poorly, especially in the guitar world. The reflective response encompasses both prior responses as well as ethical, moral, and idealistic traits of the user to determine response.

References