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User Experience Is Brand Experience

The Psychology Behind Successful
Digital Products and Services

 Springer

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Preface

Customer preferences and values are going through severe changes: A recently published study named “*Enabling The Good Life*” (SB Insights & Harris Poll, 2017) reveals a shift in consumer values, which affects product designers and marketers alike. The results of the study show that while for more than half a century consumer behavior has been driven by the pursuit of status, consumers have now grown increasingly aware that excessive consumption is not the key to leading a happy life. Becoming more and more emancipated from producers and advertisers, customers are developing higher expectations of a brand: Their purchasing behavior should benefit their physical and psychological health, their communities, and their social and ecological environment.

What does this mean for brands? The answer is simple: Brands need to connect with customers on a deeper level in order to reach market success. Emphasizing the technological or status-related features of a product or service alone cannot convince the emancipated consumer anymore. A high functional and aesthetic quality of digital products and services has become a mere precondition for market success. Neither of these qualities can be regarded as a distinguishing feature anymore. In order to be relevant, differentiating, and thus eventually successful, digital products and services need to additionally connect with their users on an emotional level. Brands that cannot manage to create meaningful connections with their customers will lose their market position: The “*Enabling The Good Life*” study describes that about a third of US-American customers do not purchase goods or services that do not harmonize with their values.

Brands that do meet the values of their customers, however, are rewarded with strong customer loyalty: The majority of respondents of the conducted survey state that they would be loyal to brands that support their living of a *Good Life*, and a relevant share of participants would actively advocate for the brands they are choosing to support. Still, there is some space to fill: Two-thirds of respondents cannot name a brand that actually helps them living a good life in the sense of given definition, and in many categories none of the brands assessed by the study perform well. Hence, the study indicates the important mission arising for brands: They must keep a close eye on their customers’ values—and design their products and services accordingly.

But how can brands achieve this? This book provides the reader with all the necessary information on how this important task can be done, be it scientific or practice-related. From the basics of the human perception and information processing to hands-on insights such as methodological recommendations for your very own design process, this book covers the most important aspects of systematic value-based user experience design. Since high functional and aesthetic quality can be achieved with existing methods, frameworks, and design systems, the book focuses on the so-called hedonic quality of digital products and services, i.e., the degree in which the users' needs are fulfilled through interacting with a product or service. Only with the help of hedonic quality a strong and sustainable emotional connection between a digital product or service and its users can be established and maintained.

With its broad, but well-chosen scope of insights, this book is a unique and valuable instrument for beginners who need a guided introduction into the design process, as well as for professionals who wish to enhance their existing knowledge and optimize their design processes. It offers practitioners a systematic and consistent method to direct design processes in a structured manner. It also addresses those who are interested in the academic background knowledge of value-based design, while for practitioners, it gives hands-on examples. Although we might focus on people's experience with digital products and services, the knowledge we provide here can also be applied to traditional product and service fields in the analog world.

To develop a systematic understanding of designing experiences, Chap. 1 gives an introduction to why it is important for brands to catch the attention of consumers, and why it is especially difficult for brands to get consumers hooked in the age of information overflow. Chapter 2 dives deeper into the topic by giving scientific knowledge about how human beings process information physically, followed by Chap. 3, which provides a complementary understanding about attention processes. This chapter ends with a section about unconscious information processing, which is especially important in brand perception and, hence, for designing positive experiences. Having laid out the basis of customers' perception by explaining the cognitive and sensory aspects of information processing, these chapters are followed by Chap. 4, which is concerned with the role of needs and values. This should help us to understand what consumers look for in an experience: After successfully perceiving a brand, how do we decide which brand we like or not? What is the link between user needs and brand values? We learn here that, in order to reach customers, brands need to fulfill the customers' needs with the experience they provide. But when we talk about experience—what do we mean? To connect these dots, Chap. 5 illustrates the relation between customer experience (CX), user experience (UX), and brand experience (BX), explaining why it is important to align all three in a holistic way. Until this point, we have gained a deep understanding of how customers perceive and experience brands and their products. Chapter 6 summarizes this knowledge to finally apply it to the practice of designing experiences: We learn that with their specific visual or tactile features, products send signals, which are then decoded by consumers. By making sure to choose these signals in alignment with the values a brand aims to convey, we can actively

influence how our product is perceived. How this can be done in design practice is illustrated by Chap. 7: It introduces the user experience identity method (UXi), which helps to derive a design language from brand values. After this method has been explained in its single steps, Chap. 8 describes research and validation methods that support the UXi process. With the last, concluding chapter, the book summarizes the learnt knowledge and gives an outlook into to what can be expected next in research and practice.

Attentive readers will notice that in this book, we use different terms to describe people as subjects. These terms vary in accordance with the context: When we are concerned with cognitive properties and processes, we speak of *humans*, and when we talk about the purchase of products and services, we speak of *consumers*, while we choose the term *customers*, when explaining about markets and prices. We call them *users*, when we write about the interaction with digital products, and when assessing the work of agencies and designers, we involve the term *clients*. By this, we intend to support the understanding of the different perspectives we must take on target groups and stakeholders in order to fully comprehend value-based UX design.

In the end, we hope that practitioners as well as researchers in the field of UX design find useful information for their very own engagement with the design of beautiful experiences. With that, we aim to provide a deeper understanding of why and how to design experiences—not only to share our knowledge, but also to inspire both researchers and practitioners to test our method and engage in further discussions about it.

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Abbreviations

API	Application Programming Interface
Approx.	Approximately
AR	Augmented Reality
B2B	Business to Business
BX	Brand Experience
CNBC	Consumer News and Business Channel
CEM	Customer Experience Management
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CX	Customer Experience
CI	Corporate Identity
ERP	Event-Related Potential
EU	European Union
HCI	Human–Computer Interaction
HIP	Human Information Processing
HMI	Human–Machine Interaction
HQI	Quality of Identification
HQS	Quality of Stimulation
HUD	Heads-Up Display
HVB	HypoVereinsbank
IAT	Implicit Association Test
IoT	Internet of Things
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
LTM	Long-Term Memory
MDI	McKinsey Design Index
RAM	Random Access Memory
SEEV	Saliency – Effort + Expectancy + Value
SOA	Stimulus Onset Asynchrony
STM	Short-Term Memory
STSS	Short-Time Sensory Store
SUV	Sport Utility Vehicle
TRS	Total Returns to Shareholders
UAI	Uncertainty Avoidance Index
UCD	User-Centered Design

UI	User Interface
UPA	Usability Professionals Association
USP	Unique Selling Point
UX	User Experience
UXi	User Experience Identity
UXPA	User Experience Professionals Association
VR	Virtual Reality