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Response Paper:
Why We Love (or Hate) Everyday Things

Donald Norman's chapter on *Why We Love (or Hate) Everyday Things* really provides a thorough way of explaining why we use various products in our lives through relatable examples and descriptions. Beginning the chapter by referring to the commercial water bottle as an example of successful design that accomplishes visceral, behavioral, and reflective levels of design set up the platform for the familiar qualities that each level encompasses. I have definitely observed the artistic packaging that many brands of water have, and have been enticed to buy a more expensive brand over another just to experience drinking from a bottle that feels and looks special, thus, appealing to the visceral level. I have held onto the bottle or other items like it, such as a bag or gift box from an expensive boutique because it triggered the reflective level of the design - I wanted to be reminded of the purchase or gift through the experience that the packaging gave. Although I could understand how a good design needs to accomplish these levels based on successful designs for which I have interacted, I was unaware of the specifics that each level targets.

The visceral level of design is the most familiar aspect of good design, as most people who don't study design theory are attracted to this type because of its "point of presence" and the initial emotional reaction it causes based on its physical features. A lot of people are mostly familiar with visceral design if they tend to obtain or are attracted to art or design in "advertising, folk art and crafts, and children's items" because of the physical features it involves. This type of successful design does not reach far beyond the surface. For those that are knowledgeable about, for example art history, then visceral design is only a small aspect of the innovation that a piece of art contains. I thought it was interesting how Norman stated that if you design primarily for the visceral level then "your design will always be attractive, even somewhat simple. If you design for the ...reflective level, your design can readily become dated because...this level is sensitive to culture differences and...fluctuation"(p67). In this case, design dominated by the visceral level can still be successful.

With regards to behavioral design, the initial importance is whether or not the design fulfills the needs of the category it relates to, whether it's for enhancement or innovation. I thought it was interesting how Norman explained the difficulties surrounding innovation. Everytime a new product comes on the market that is innovative and new, it's often initially useful to a small group of people but then slowly grow to be a popular item. The MP3 player is a good example of this as they were not in widespread usage upon first introduction. I liked how Norman stressed the importance of blind user-testing in product enhancements as being the best way to get feedback that will determine how a product will behave in the hands of an uninformed user, what qualities of a product will be the most used or attractive, and what unarticulated needs will arise. The "touch and feel" of a product is important in determining behavioral success. Observation and user-testing enhances the human-centered aspect of a design, thus being the focus of good behavioral design. His example of the car cupholder was brilliant, as in my driving experiences having a cupholder does indeed make a car ride more comfortable and satisfying. The statement that the mismatches between the "designer's model" and the "user's model" helps to develop product enhancements even more clarify's the process of building the success of this design level. I liked how Norman explains the importance of product to user feedback in order to keep the user aware that the product is functioning. We often don't stop to think about the importance that changing icons give when they are working in a user's favor, but when they aren't giving the

user the feedback that they are seeking is when dissatisfaction with a product occurs. The explanation that the computer has eliminated the delight of physical interaction is definitely a true concept. It was interesting to read that “too much adherence to the abstraction of the computer screen subtracts from emotional pleasure” (p80), because I definitely often need to step away from computer interaction at times because the lack of emotion that a computer promotes can be overwhelming. This is evident in online communication tools that tend to confuse or complicate relationships. I like the explanation of how designer’s fail when the visual elements of a design overrides the ability for a user experience, and that engineer’s fail when too much technology overrides usability.

The explanation of Reflective design shows how so much of our culture defines what we buy and use based on the message a product displays or how it evokes something in us. The watch explanation clearly demonstrates this idea, but many other products can do this as well. The widespread phenomenon that an expensive designer handbag gives off a perception of one’s self-image is very similar. There are many other inexpensive and more practical versions of the handbag out there, but many people opt for the one with name or iconic recognition because of the cultural recognition and acceptance it promotes. The Swatch example was really interesting, as the Swatch company has always maintained a unique place in the watch industry, always selling products with functional design that gives off a message about the owner’s personality. A product’s success in fulfilling one’s emotional need also includes establishment of self-image and position in the world, learned by society. Beauty falls into the reflective level of design since it is a quality influenced by culture, and varies between cultures. The football headset example gave a thorough explanation on the importance of reflective design in a viscerally attractive and behaviorally successful design.

Because of the section on the Devious Side of Design, I was influenced by the Diesel store explanation to actually go to the store and experience what Norman revealed. It was, indeed, very confusing at first and distracting as many men’s and women’s items are put together on different floors, but the store’s lack of signage made me aware of the full presence of the employees.

The closing section in the chapter focuses on whether or not better design comes out of an individual approach or an approach involving several people. I think that many important and successful design ideas comes from the work of one person, but it’s important to consult others with regards to usability and behavioral success. Clear vision has always helped me carryout a successful project, but it’s the iterative testing and consultation from outsiders that guide it through the design process.