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[Emotions Can Be Quite Ephemeral. We Cannot Design Them] by Marc Hassenzahl

In the article [Emotions Can Be Quite Ephemeral. We Cannot Design Them], the author said that we had to "design for needs rather than for emotions" because we couldn't force people feel a specific emotion which we intended, but we could increase the possibility of people's feeling positive emotions when they satisfied their desires.

His statement consisted of three parts.

At first, he mentioned many kinds of emotions required and were caused from cognitive process. Another one is that most emotions "are momentary and largely dependent on context." Because the emotions are so ephemeral and changed as situations or contexts are changing, it is impossible to design products which make people feel in a specific way whatever the context is. The other one is that when people do successfully what they want to do with a product, most people will feel positive emotions such as "joy, satisfaction, and pride." Thus, according to his saying, trying to improve usability and usefulness, which are cognitive processes, is more important than trying to design emotions.

Generally, his article has some important points. Emotions can be caused from cognitions, and it is impossible to design products which make people feel specific emotions. However, do they mean that we should not design for emotions and we should focus on the cognitive parts?

It is true that we cannot design emotions for every people in every context, but how about most people in usual contexts? Although there are some exceptional people, most people feel similar emotion in movie theaters - sadness for sad melomovies, fear for horror movies, and fun for comic animations. Most people feel comfortable when they see pretty pictures than grotesque pictures (although there might be a few controversies about which is pretty and which is grotesque, there are some common standards). There are some common factors which many of people can share in usual situations.

Also, it is true that effective, usable, and useful tools can cause positive emotions with positive results, but there are various kinds of emotions before and during the process of works, and those in-the-process emotions are also important, and sometimes more important than emotions with results after the works. In another article, Designing for Fun: How Can We Design User Interfaces to Be More Fun, Shneiderman mentioned several fun factors such as appealing animations or attractive graphics. Although they are not required to improve the usability or usefulness of the tools, those factors can help users to feel more positive emotions such as fun and interests, and it will affect the efficiency of the works and results too, in positive ways.

Also, the author tended to separate emotions and cognitions too much in spite of what he said, emotions and cognitions couldn't be separated. Instead of separating emotions and cognitions and then dismissing cognitions, which he criticized at the beginning of his article, he separate them and then dismiss emotions in design process.

However, even though those disagreement written above, I agree that he pointed an important fact. Without usability and usefulness required to fulfill users' needs and desires, there is nothing no matter how the tools have attractive shapes and fun factors.