Comparing the UI and UX of a business web-site:
a user feedback study

Zsuzsanna Bakos

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This thesis project was commissioned by Koala Consulting and Training, which is owned by James Perkins and provides training and translating services for companies and individuals and makes podcasts. The training services include presentations skills, writing skills and cultural skills.

The client would like to know the opinion of the users regarding the company's new web page for the purposes of further development and improvement. To this end the author conducted usability test interviews with ten people. Three out of ten were already clients of the company and the rest were potential customers. The interviewees were chosen through LinkedIn.

The results of the study were that the users felt that navigation on the website should be more flexible. The hamburger menu would be more convenient on a mobile phone on the left side of the page, instead of the right. The search function would be easier through the content. The media and content are very professionally presented on the page. Based on the webpage as a whole, users felt they would be interested in the services.

Keywords: UI, UX, web-development

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1 Introduction

The name of the case company is Koala Consulting and Training. The company is owned by James Perkins and provides and provides training services for companies, individuals, podcast and translating. Training services includes presentations skills, writing skills and Cultural skills.

The client would like to know, what is the opinion of the users about the company new web page for the purpose what can be developed to make it better. I have made usability test interviews with ten people.

2 Usability test and research

The theory of UI and UX is more applicable when someone is in the process of creating a service. In my case the main point was to find out what can be developed for an already existing page. I intended to understand more what, is the user observation about the structure of the page, colours and main functionalities. What message the user might get from the page to hire the service based on that or not. My goal was to evaluate the case company webpage by testing it with users and to make suggestions based on the results.

2.1 Steps of the Research and Methods

The first step is to defining goals. Usability test should have a clearly defined purpose. The case company would like to get more clients and wanted to test the ready new webpage by their customers. Usability test tries to understand user impressions about the product in order to improve it and to clarify the problems that the service is expected to solve. Business Benefits are better understanding of users. User Benefits and the goal of this research is, to place users at the centre of the process (Invesp 2019).

Assumptions about the research problem in general includes three types of assumptions. The first is the attitude of the user and what skills of the workers the user (company) would like to develop. Behavioural assumption is focusing on user behaviour. The assumption of function is which focuses on the characteristics of the service (Invesp 2019).

3 Methods

3.1 Primary Research

Primary Research is much more accurate than secondary research, as researchers collect data themselves and research questions are tailored to the project's goals. There are several methods for carrying out primary research: An online or offline survey is a method for collecting quantitative data. It does not require much preparation and is easy to carry out. However,

the data collected may be misleading as users answer questions without the supervision of researchers. interviews are used to collect qualitative data. This gives researchers a lot of insight into the feelings and impressions of the product. Interviews can happen face to face, online or even by phone.

I have chosen face to face interviews to be able to interact with the user more. I considered that users are influenced by others. I choose to use generative research to be able to find new ideas or already existing ideas too, such as idea with the content or the features of the webpage. I have chosen a single test with shorter time answers as a shorter-term research, instead of longer time answers. I did not choose long-term research because I did not intend to examine behaviour and habits.

I have interviewed altogether ten people. Three people out of ten were customers of the company and the rest were individuals and potential customers on the field. For privacy reasons I did not mention the name of the participants. I have asked from them as interview questions how they like the content on the page do, colour, readability, would they hire t. I have asked them to check the whole page itself with buttons, menu navigation. The same features on mobile.

3.1.1   How did I choose the interviewees?

I have found the interviewees through LinkedIn. Three of them were advised by James Perkins as his previous customers and the rest of them were asked by me to participate in my research. I did not have any age limit who can participate. One criterion was that everyone has to have a business knowledge to be able to see the webpage as a professional on the field. I have four participants who have web development knowledge as well to be able to get more accurate result.

3.2   Secondary Research

This type of data depends on the information that has already been collected in a similar research. For example, during the research on an earlier project. While this type of research is easier to carry out and less time consuming - as the results already exist - is not comparable to primary research. I did not find any other research material what I would like to use in this topic.

4   The Difference between Usability and User Experience

Usability is more about to make the website itself easy to use while user experience is more to help to create the product, service before using it or after it. In usability the main aim is to make the user to accomplish their goals. User experience focus on more how happy, is the user experience was.

With an example, experts compared both to science and illustrated it, if usability would be a freeway and user experience as twisted mountain road. Freeway is faster and only require little learnability, while the twisted mountain road is longer and less usable, but the nature gives more pleasure to the route (Usability Geek 2019).

5   UX and UI design

UX is the design of the user experience and a web design, only from another approach. Though the "human" is considered in every design, there is a person in front of the designer's eyes, who is in the focus. All elements of the design are subordinate to the user, and we examine everything from the point of view of the user experience (Mediabistro 2019).

5.1   The difference between UX and UI

The abbreviation for user experience design (UX), means planning the user experience itself. The UI, on the other hand, covers the user interface design and, in the case of the user interface, it is visual. Both are required when creating a product or even a website. UI is closer to the commonly used web design expression, as it covers roughly the graphic work, while the UX designer measures, tests, analyses and works with data. A good product experience always starts with UX design and followed by UI design. Both are needed for the success of a product or website (Career foundry).

5.2   UX Design

UX was introduced to the world in the '90s by Don Norman, co-founder of Nielsen Norman Group Design Consultancy, who started working for Apple in 1993. Norman is behind the widespread use of UX, but he hasn't invented it. In 1987, the concept of user experience could already be met in a scientific journal (Human-Computer Interaction - INTERACT'87), where usability engineers, Whiteside and Wixon discussed the need to change the image of users: from an experienced computer technician to average user. Don Norman has defined that user experience includes all aspects of end-user interactions with the company, its services, and its products. So UX is not just about creating websites or apps, it is all about "the whole experience", as by definition it encompasses all the interactions between the client and the company (Interaction design foundation 2019).

5.3   UX in practice

UX is mostly spread due to the growing complexity of products over the past one or two decades, and their developers have realized that it is rewarding for them to make their use easier. In practice, UX builds, analyses and optimizes the user experience of a company and product. This includes the analysis of competitors and customers, product design and content

development, the preparation of the wireframe and the prototype, the testing and the design of the development.

In addition, the UX task is to coordinate the work of developers and UI designers, to follow goals, and then to analyse. All this means that a UX designer is partly a market researcher, designer and project manager, and UX design is an activity to improve the interaction between the company and the users. So, the UX is simply a set of tasks aimed at creating an efficient and enjoyable use of a product (Interaction design foundation 2019).

5.4   Why UX design is not easy?

Before UX became an up-to-date concept, it really meant what the word was saying:
The experience of the user is the experience.
That is, the user exists, and he has experienced something while using a product. That's it. The understanding is basically complicated by the fact that the "experience" cannot be directly designed as a surface. The experience is only the result of user interaction with a product or service. And the experience is created within the user. The designer may have an influence on the usability and visual appearance of the product, but no longer what the user feels before and after use. They simply have no effect, because they depend on individual factors, not just on the product itself. Anyone who can design a user experience is the user alone.

The user experience also depends on what the user has experienced before, what associations they create when they meet the product, what kind of personality they have, what they want, what they felt before. UX can only be bad because the user had previous bad experiences with similar products. There is also no influence on the designer for the environment or the context. Different options can be considered, such as how easy the user can use the product in a bright environment, whether the Internet connection is slow, the noise in the background, some factors distract from the task, such as watching TV but not everything can be taken into consideration. Therefore, designers can only hope to produce a product that they would like to achieve after they have made a product. However, they cannot plan this inner experience directly because the experience is subjective. The influence of designers is primarily on usability and can be optimized (xwerx 2017).

5.4.1   Usability and UX

In practice, the UX concept of usability is generally related to ease of use. However, this is more a sign of intention, that is, the designer wants to make the product to be easy to use.

On the other hand, the user experience can be any experience: happiness, gratitude or feelings of sadness. Many people also mix the two, namely UX and usability. They also talk about UX tests when they simply test their usability. The UX design is a much wider area than usability.

For usability, companies pay attention to the fact that the use of the product is efficient, effective and satisfying for the user to achieve specific goals. Usability focuses on the task that a user performs in a given situation. For example, the customer wants to buy a product in a web shop and go through the shopping process. The bottom line is that the user has to click as little as possible to minimize the stress and uncertainty of the process. For easy use of a product (such as a website), it is necessary for the user to easily understand the use of the product without explanation.

UX also deals with why people want to use the product and what happens after use. This also means that UX does not replace usability but extends it. UX focuses on people and deals with subjective experience, with emotional traits coming to the fore. However, there is no full impact on the user experience. The designer can create the perfect system with the best possible usability for a target group. However, this does not guarantee a good user experience for each target group (UX Planet 2017).

5.5   UI design

UI design is also responsible for appearance of the design. It is not simply a graphic work, a graphic implementation, because it is about converting the results of the development, the content and the structure into an attractive, responsive experience for the users.

The tasks of the UI designer include user analysis, design research, graphic work, user interface design, interactivity and animation, interface adaptation for all display sizes and ultimately implementation through programmers.

UI plays an important role in every digital interface, but also plays a key role in consumer confidence in the brand. Although the design of the brand is not the task of the UI designer, it is already his product. User interface design is the process of user visual control on a product's surface, through interactive elements, across all display sizes and platforms.

UX and UI are needed for a product or website. When a product looks good, but it can be misused, there is a good UI design, but there is a lack of UX design. When a good product is terribly ugly, it is a good example of UX and bad UI. So, both have to pay attention to creating the optimal user experience (Interaction design foundation 2019(UI)).

5.6   How does UX affect the user?

While user experience (UX) is often downgraded when it comes to a product that is on the market or even a website, companies would need to take it seriously if they want to give users a true brand experience. There are opinions that by 2020, the user experience will be a more decisive factor in making a purchase decision than the price or the product itself.

Good design makes the product good. In the early stages of designing a product, the designer should work investigate what people need, how they behave, how they can solve their problems. Perfection is not always the first attempt, but through research the solution can be better. Then the first, second, hundredth redesign can come to make the product better. Users don't even notice design unless it's bad.

When a designer works on a website, always try to consider the function and fit of all the elements, as this makes the use of a product smooth. Nobody read the user manual. Users want products that can be handled without user instructions and are fully intuitive to use. Designers need to make sure that the surfaces of different devices and applications are easy to understand and user-friendly. To do this, the designer must go through all the necessary steps from the quick prototype to the controls and make sure that the user knows what he/she should do at the first use. This makes the experience unforgettable and productive.

As a result of UX Design designers need to think about how users interact with a product and what solutions they can offer for the best user experience. Good design promotes shopping where people will love the product or a website. And happy users will be more likely to buy. For example, the more people using their mobile for browsing the web, the more important is to make websites responsive.

- UX promotes loyalty

The experience that users get on a website is important, as it determines whether he/she will return to the site later, perhaps mentioning a product or services on other platforms. Unfortunately, the negative user experience leaves a stronger mark on people than the positive. User experience have to be improved continually in order to meet the expectations. This will eventually lead to long-term trust in a company and brand.

- UX Increases User Satisfaction

UX puts user needs first. With user-centred communication, companies can more easily understand what their customers want. And if they understand what users want from a product or service, they are more likely to meet the expectations. This also gives the opportunity to prevent the competitors.

- Good UX brings more money

The more time users spend on a website, the more money will be spent on it. The more UX satisfies users' expectations, the more likely the company are to make customer decisions on their website. By analysing a website, the designer need to create a user experience that meets the needs of the customers. If the UX is maintained and checked well since the start, then less likely errors have to be fixed later on a website, what saves time and money (ecommerce CEO 2019).

5.7   Important to understand the user

The user has to be understood for a good UX. Without the knowledge of the user, to design a website may be a failure. It is always a difficult to look at a website or application from the users' point of view. The user only willing to learn and to use technology if they really need it. The goal of the users is to have as little time as possible on a website, so the time should be minimized as optimal as possible. They have a task what they want to accomplish in a short time of period and without the need to read so much. They use it sometimes in a different way instead how the designer intended it. Only matters what people see, not what the designer does.

Templates help people know how a website or application works. If a product was bought in a web shop, they already know how most web shop work. The experience is similar in each, because the proven pattern works well.

Million things compete for their attention around them while reading a website. That's why important the need to know what the user wants to achieve. A clear, unambiguous, one-step process should be developed and avoiding having to deal with several things at the same time. The better it is, the more the user can move forward, the more he or she will have the chance to finish the task without seducing something else.

It may seem that people know themselves very well when they ask questions in theory. Only when they are in a real situation, they behave quite differently. They don't want to lie, they just have no idea what they're doing. But that's not the only thing they don't say right. For example, after a usability test, it is easy to judge a task that was spun for five minutes. The line can continue, the point is not to believe what they say, hence their behaviour has to be watched.

Users are generally not designers. When they say how they want something to work, they come up with a solution that they think would mitigate the problem, but it is do not mean certainly that it will solve it. They can hardly formulate what they really want, they can't solve the problem, they only know they want to solve it and make suggestions. Designers therefore need to find out what people really want, and what the real solution is for them.

If the user does not get answer for their questions, there is a big chance that they will step down. They want to know how good an application is, how it helps them, how hard it is to use, how much it costs. It is up to the designer to give answers because that is how the users will become costumers.

The user experience is not only up to the website UX is a set of interactions, impressions and feelings that characterize a user when they meet your website, product or service. However, the impression is not only shaped by a type of design, but by many other things. For example, the reputation of a company, the opinions of other people, the look of the product, the feelings it had with similar-looking things, the day they are, how open they are to the moment, how easy they can learn to use, how disappointed they are with other products, etc. The point is that many factors affect the user experience and not all of them affect the designer (Keep it useable 2019).

6   Result of the research

6.1   Findings related to UX:

1. Page is really good, media, podcasts professional and informative.

2. References hard to read on mobile.

3. Minimalistic, modern layout and content with enough space for advertising.

4. Colour preferences (bright colour of green).

5. Based on the webpage altogether they would be interested in the services.

6.2   Findings related to UI:

1. Hamburger menu expected on the left instead of the right side.

2. Missing navigation back from a deeper level of the structure (for example back from podcasts)

6.3   All the interviewees mentioned:

1. Navigation should be solved backwards as well from deeper level, because they can only

navigate through the main menu.

2. Search field difficult to find

3. The liked the personal touch of the owner (many pictures in teaching situations) because is a good ux.

7   Suggestions:

1. I would consider to layout hamburger menu on the left side.

2. I would suggest adding search field in the top section of the page.

3. To activate social media and e mail hyperlinks.

4. The most negative findings affect rather single controls of the website, while overall UX makes good impression on the user, the improvements are rather of technical nature to fine-tune the functions rather than the overall content.

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