DESIGN FOR HAPPINESS

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Happiness is potentially the most marketable commodity in the world, and design for the market simply cannot ignore it any longer. Personally, we are capable of understanding what makes us happy. However, design is aimed at a larger audience, and it is this larger audience's happiness that needs to be measured. Using the new tools offered by social networking sites, worldwide polls and systems of measuring happiness, it is possible to identify the keystones of happiness, to enable design for the promotion of well-being in a group of people.

From this data collection, it is argued that 'connection' to a product may be the key design factor which increases the happiness of the user. This can be argued through various studies on the impact of other precedental products, the Internet, mobile telephony being examples. There may be various levels of connection to a product. Designing with the aim of connecting people, places, products; ideas, emotions, experiences; time and nature can mean increasing the happiness quotient.

Keywords: Design, Happiness, Quality of life, Happiness index.

1. CONCEPT OF HAPPINESS

Happiness is potentially the most marketable commodity in the world, bigger than sex, bigger than love and certainly bigger than food. Obviously, design for the market simply cannot ignore it any longer. Man has not always had leisure for happiness, but with the advance of civilization, this is changing. It can be said that the pursuit of happiness has become more a duty than a right of man.

Therefore, we need to understand this concept — more importantly, look at it with a fresh approach. Historically, happiness has been treated as a philosophical ideal, an abstract emotion, or as the fulfillment of a subjective human wish. Personally, we are capable of understanding what makes us happy, how happy we are and what we need to feel happier.

However, design is aimed at a larger audience, and it is this larger audience's happiness that needs to be measured. The current and ongoing development of tools and systems to fulfill this very aim is an answer to the need for improving our understanding of the quest for happiness, the qualities of life and well-being. Using these new tools, it is possible to identify the keystones of happiness, to enable design for the promotion of well-being in a group of people.

1.1. Indicators of Happiness

One of the earliest accepted indicators, it could be said, were proposed by Abraham Maslow's Motivation Theory [1]. Maslow formulated a needs-based framework of human motivation based upon his clinical experiences with humans. The fulfillment of certain needs leads to creation of new higher needs — therefore creating a motivated and happy individual (the word 'motivation' can be interpreted as 'happiness', and Maslow has often used it interchangeably). These needs, from base level to highest level, are Physiological needs, Safety needs, Social needs, Esteem needs and Self-Actualization needs.

The Motivation Theory was an attempt to measure and control the happiness of a group of people, individually. Its major argument, that the basic needs of air, water, food, clothing, shelter and sleep had

to be fulfilled before a man could aspire for more, has been universally accepted. However, it clearly did not go far enough.

1.1.1. Standard of Living and Quality of Life

The next indicators of collective well-being were the concepts of Standard of Living and Quality of Life. These indicators were proposed as an alternative to Gross National Product measures, which implied the progress of nations on the basis of high monetary output. Standard of Living took into account measures such as life expectancy, infant mortality rate, health care services and education. Indicators of the Quality of Life include not only wealth and employment, but also the built environment, physical and mental health, education, recreation and leisure time, and social belonging. Are these valid indicators of happiness? The first test came with the Gallup Polls.

1.1.2. Gallup World Polls

In 2005, Gallup began its World Poll, which continually surveys citizens in more than 140 countries, representing 95% of the world's adult population. An analysis of data collected by the Gallup World Poll reveals that factors like national income, life expectancy and infant morality rate have little or no effect on the happiness of people. Quoting Angus Deaton's analysis [2] of the 2006 Polls.

"Recent growth in national income, unlike income itself, lowers average life-satisfaction. This result appears to be new, and contradicts much earlier literature that argues that improvements in living standards make people better-off, but that the effect wears off over time."

"HIV prevalence in Africa has little effect on Africans' life or health satisfaction; the fraction of Kenyans who are satisfied with their personal health is the same as the fraction of Britons and higher than the fraction of Americans."

Particularly remarkable is the position of the largest rich country, the United States, where only 52 percent of the population express themselves satisfied". It becomes clear that happiness of a group of people is affected very little or not at all by wealth and health. It is rather affected by the perception of wealth, health and happiness which may be subjective.

1.1.3. Facebook Gross National Happiness Index

The case for happiness being subjective i.e. differing from person to person is clear. Measuring this subjective data has now become possible through the Facebook Gross National Happiness Index [3]. As a social networking site, Facebook is often used as a clearing house for public sentiment. Using status updates as its raw data, the Facebook system analyses the number of positive words appearing in one day, in a particular country, and the related keywords. Not only is it possible to define how happy a country (or at least, its online citizens) is on a particular point in time, but also, clues to the reason for that happiness can often be found.

A May 2010 announcement by Facebook noted statistics from India revealed Independence Day and Holi as some of the happiest days for the country in recent months. Sports also lead to some of the lowest days in the happiness index. For example, Ireland's score dropped on Nov 18, 2009, when FIFA awarded a controversial win to France over Ireland in the World Cup playoffs. The recent death of cultural icon Michael Jackson on June 25, 2009, came in as the second least happy day in the past two years.

Happiness maybe subjective, but will have roots in basic human behaviour. There will be commonalities in the way people feel.

1.1.4. A Possible Interpretation of Happiness

From the above data it can arguably be concluded that macro factors have a huge impact on the collective happiness of people, including music, art, sports, togetherness, celebration etc. Together, these factors can be said to form the Value plane of our lives, while fulfillment of our physical needs, as illustrated by Maslow, form the Consumption plane. As noted, consumption can lead to an increase in happiness only till a certain stage. The reasoning for this can be found in Law of Diminishing
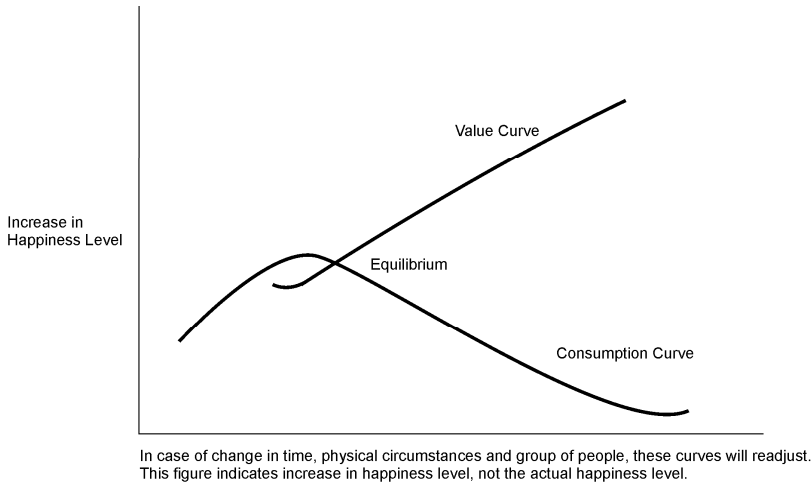
Value Curve

Increase in
Happiness Level

Equilibrium

Consumption Curve

In case of change in time, physical circumstances and group of people, these curves will readjust.
This figure indicates increase in happiness level, not the actual happiness level.

Figure 1. Happiness Quotient.
Source: Author Generated.

Marginal Utility [4] which proposes that consuming additional units of a product leads to a decreasing amount of increase in satisfaction derived from consumption. After this point, any increase in happiness levels must come from another source: the Value Plane.

Therefore, as seen in Figure 1, when the behaviour of consumption begins, there is a rapid increase in satisfaction level of a person. But with increasing consumption, there is less corresponding increase in satisfaction. On the other hand, indulgence in values gives a higher increase in satisfaction level. The rate of increase of satisfaction, with more and more indulgence in values, continues to rise. The Value and Consumption Curve meet at the point where consumption has stopped giving extra satisfaction to a person. Thus, to grow further in satisfaction, the person has to indulge in Values rather than in further Consumption. This point can be called the Happiness Equilibrium, where most people can attain a good quality of life. The Value Plane will naturally fluctuate with changes in time.

This gives a clear indication towards the design of products and services which allow/encourage indulgence in Value factors, and simplicity in Consumption factors.

2. TO DESIGN FOR HAPPINESS

If design is to aim for happiness what is the most important Value, among others, that it should imbibe?

2.1. Connection' in Design'

2.1.1. The IT Revolution

Often cited as one of 10 most life-changing events in the 20th century, the development of the Internet and the advent of the mobile phone both achieved global connection. Both allowed people far apart physically to connect to each other, in order to pass on information, to share entertainment, and ultimately to even share their daily lives through the network. Arguably, both have increased the happiness quotient of a large number of people.

In the study "Does IT Make You Happier?", researchers from the U.K.'s Trajectory Partnership [5] analyzed data from 35,000 people involved in the World Values Survey from 2005 to 2007. They examined the social and economic factors that determine happiness, including gender, age, income and education. The survey illustrated the connection between Internet access and happiness and found that this happiness doesn't only affect children, but older adults as well. Quoting Dr. Daniel Carlat, an associate clinical professor of psychiatry at Tufts University School of Medicine (AOL Health) that

the Internet helps people to connect to one another and makes it easier to create friendships – which often leads to happiness. "

2.1.2. The Slow Life Movement

The emergence of the Slow Life movement, taken as an expression of a group of people aiming for happy living, is another advocate for 'connecting'. This movement promotes slowing the pace of our life and appreciation of its qualitative aspects by being connected to them. For example we connect to our food if we are connected to its growing, preparation and consuming.

2.1.3. The Design of Apple

The genre-defining designs of Apple have been one of the most successful products within the last decade. Apple has announced that it's sold 3 million iPads —- less than three months since the device hit stores. Apple's popularity can be attributed to its unique experiential designs — which allow a user to emotionally connect to it, rather than being intensely functional.

2.1.4. Connecting to the Inner Homo Sapien

The recent revival of craft, the advocacy for sustainable and green living [6], of natural products and connecting to nature [6] is another expression of man's wish to be closer to his origins. Thus organic connection, living off and on the land, and systems bringing us closer to the original *homo sapien* life, naturally make for more happiness.

2.2. Types of Connection in a Product

Thus, 'connecting' at various levels, can be an important quality of a product designed to improve the quality of our living. These levels can be actual or physical, mental, emotional and organic. In Table 1, the example of food is taken to illustrate the comparison, with discussed product precedences.

A product may have some elements of emotional connection, others of actual and a little of perhaps organic or mental connection. It could also cater exclusively to one type of connection. But it is clear that the more connected it is, the more successful it will be in giving satisfaction to the user. Going

Table 1. Types of Connections.

Level	Description	Product Precedence
Actual/Physical	Connecting in real terms through wires, waves E.g. ordering food online, growing own food	Information network: mobile phones, Internet, radio;
Mental	Connecting a mental image/thought with an actual product E.g. preparation of food in open kitchens in front of customers in restaurants	Slow Life Movement
Emotional	Connecting to the emotional, experiential aspect of a product E.g. taste food, which is rare or exotic food, eaten in small quantities for the experience of luxury eating	Apple experience-enhancing designs, Chef
Organic	Understanding and organizing a product as part of an organism of living E.g. eating locally grown food, so that each locality is self-supportive; a number of localities forming a city which is self-supportive; a number of cities forming a self-supportive state and so on, each part being a microcosm of the larger scenario, like an organism	Craft; Sustainability systems; Eco-emulation and bio-mimicry

Source: Author Generated

back to the Happiness Index, more connection' means an increase in Value, and therefore increase in the quality of life.

Designing with the aim of connecting people, places, products; ideas, emotions, experiences; time and nature can mean increasing our quality of life and the happiness quotient.

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