M01 Module 5 Discussion: Don Norman's The Design of Everyday Things

Supply 2-5 insights from the first few chapters of Don Norman's The Design of Everyday Things.

What caught your attention?

What do you agree or disagree with?

In Don Norman's, "The Design of Everyday Things", there were certain parts that caught my attention and made me think deeper about the necessity and usefulness of design. One thing the author brings up is the idea of consumers and viewers having a lot to do with the way designs are made. This is a truth universally acknowledged by designers. An example used is when the author states that many people do not even recognize the design of a typical coin anymore. This stood out to me because it seems like something that is so simple and easy to remember. When you think about it more, however, you realize it is usually the color and shape/size of the coin that first helps you distinguish its value from another. Another idea touched upon in the text is that knowledge requires interpretation and understanding. This stood out to me because it was well said and applies to many fields, even those outside of design. When it comes to knowledge, it is not enough to only read or look at something. In design, for example, the only way you can truly learn from someone else's work is if you understand the reason they made the design choices they did and why it is more logical than another approach. Overall, the text is very interesting and provides great insight into the world of design.

The author shares his experience in chapter three about borrowing his friend's car that I found quite interesting. When he borrowed the car, Norman mentions that he found a note stating that in order to get the key out of the ignition the car must be set in Reverse. It is this particular instance that makes the author realize that there is no visible cue in the car that lets the driver, or any other person, know that. As a designer, I've come to learn that visible cues are super important because they let your consumers, whether they know of your product or not, know how to use your product without having to provide explicit instructions. With reference to the author's experience with the car,

the car had no clear visible cues that could direct the driver on how to properly operate the vehicle, which is not a good thing.

This leads to another point the author made about knowledge going hand-in-hand with design. Norman mentions that, as humans, we mix the knowledge in our head (knowledge that we specifically know) with the knowledge of the world (knowledge about the world and its functions). He goes on to say that we don't necessarily have to know everything because being able to mix both types of knowledge allows us to figure out the context clues and how to use a product. This is what a designer relies on when designing a product so that they know what visible cues to design in the product - it relates to knowing who our audience is.

People have rules in their brains, when your design is different from people's logic, they might be really confused. However, doing design actually has its own logic. The aims of the design can be "be liked by the public" "sell more" and so on. But basically, designs would be used by people. No one willing to pay money for things use unfriendly. For example, I design a coin set which is super gorgeous, but the bigger its size, the cheaper its price. What would happen? Everyone needs to learn and accept this "my rule" to use my design. It's clear that there would be millions of mistakes happen before the whole world accepts it. But we all know that, actually, I could never change the whole world for my design. My designs need to serve the world. I agree with the author's opinion like constraints simplify memory. And culture differences should be concerned when doing designs.

On the cover of Don Norman's The design of everyday things, there is a teapot with the spout and handle on the same side. If you pour tea, you are likely to burn yourself. It shows that bad design can hurt people who use the product. Don Norman used witty language to describe many setbacks that product design ignores the real needs of users in certain situations, and even violates the principles of cognitive science. In his book, he emphasizes the user-centred design philosophy, reminding consumers that the items they choose must be easy to use and easy to understand. He hopes that designers should not ignore some necessary factors of design while paying attention to

the aesthetic feeling of system, because for product design, safety and ease of use are always the keys to the competition. I entirely agree with these views. Human beings themselves design all the things in life. It is to help people make life more convenient and relaxed. However, unreasonable design limits ourselves and brings more troubles to our life. People feel angry about wasting more time and workforce. I completely agree with him. Therefore, when designing new products or services, we must design according to people's living habits and preferences.

When Don Norman Speaks about Discoverability and understanding it caught my attention because he states they are two most characteristics of " good design". He states how design is concerned with how things work and the interaction between people and technology. I do believe that those are both important characteristics also I believe you have to discover to see what you are working with to be able to fully understand your product to others whether it is a good design or has errors you have to understand why. I also thought it was interesting chapter 3 when he speaks about "knowledge in the head and in the world". He states that "Effective memory uses all the clues available: knowledge in the world and in the head, combining world and mind." I agree Everything in design is either influenced by the current things going on in the world and in your mind.

What mainly caught my attention in "The Design of Everyday Things" is having a good conceptual model. "A good conceptual model allows us to predict the effects of our actions." Without a good model we operate blindly and we do operations as we were told to do them. We can't fully appreciate why, what effects to expect, or what to do if things go wrong. As long as things work properly, we can manage. When things go wrong, however, or when we come upon a situation, then we need a deeper understanding, a good model. By having a good conceptual model we can properly visualize our ideas and have a better understanding on the actions. We sometimes need to test it out, by making a model the idea comes to life.

For the most part, we all have a basic understanding of how everyday things are "supposed" to work. Sometimes designers want to create something new and exciting and they forget that their new and improved versions of things cost the user their understanding of the product. Don Norman explains this in the first couple of chapters of his book "The Design of Everyday Things". He explains that the design of a non complex item should have natural signals that help the user through the execution and evaluation stages. I agree that something as simple as opening a door, should take zero thinking at all. In fact it should be so second nature to us that we don't even notice our brains working to complete the task. There are too many complex things in the world that take up our time, basic human actions shouldn't take any because that is just a waste of time and frustration for something so minuscule. To already have so much on our plates and then be conditioned to blame ourselves when we can't figure out how a basic everyday thing works is unfair. It isn't the users fault, its the bad design. The design of everyday things should always fulfill the human needs, be enjoyable, and understanding for the best experience.

In Don Norman's, "The Design of Everyday Things," the home thermostat impressed me the most. This is because when the temperature in the room changes, it shows up on the thermostat. This gives the first impression that it may be getting cold or hot. In the design process, the common aesthetic things in daily life cannot be ignored. Moreover, the design is inseparable from the beauty of daily life. If the technology, concept, and knowledge learned in the process of design learning have nothing to do with my daily life or cannot be applied to daily life, then such design technology, concept, and knowledge will not be of great help to the development of the design industry in the future.

For Don Normans "the Design of everyday things" I say the most interesting thing was the thermoset. The thermoset is the control of the temperature in a room. One you change the temperature in a room the thermoset shows the what temperature the room is on. It gives me a impression that it might be getting warm or cold. For example if I wanted to design a cold winter theme or warm summer theme for holidays like the fourth of July or Christmas. It

could give me a inspiration on why temperature gives everything meaning. Anything you put your mind to can have meaning. Don Normans idea for design really inspires those who can see their point of view differently when being creative.

As designers, when we design something, we are drawn to designing it to our own specifications, which is often discouraged. While the things we design have to look good and provide a certain visual aesthetic, they also have to be functional. Don Norman touches upon this subject when he mentions the importance of communication between the designer and the user. He mentions how the designers expect the users model to be identical to the design model. Yet designers have no direct way to communicate with the user, which can make things hard. Functionality of a design sometimes varies from one individual to another, affected by many different factors such as age, education, social background etc. No matter how brilliant the design, if people can't use it, it will not be received well. This tells us how important it might be to always keep functionality in mind when coming up with a design. Norman also says how a good conceptual model that guides the user is very important. Without one, the user will struggle and things will get worse. All of this tells me how deep design thinking can really go, and how we must try to look at something from different points of view. Personas that are developed for experience design might come really useful when trying to prevent such a problem, as they help to keep the design functional for different kinds of individuals.

In chapter two, the author discusses *The Gulf of Execution* and *The Gulf of Evaluation.* The gulf of execution is the process of figuring out what an object does and how to use it while the gulf of evaluation is the process of evaluating what the device did and whether that action matched our goals. I learned that as a designer, it is my job to help people link the two gulfs by using feedback and good conceptual model. These are things i agree with because you need to hear what people have to say about the product to help improve it and having a proper model encourages users to interact more or give up on the product less. It is also important not

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to just listen to these feedbacks but to actually get the
job done.
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Don Norman spoke about needing to understand the needs and feelings of consumers before creating a product. This has been very relevant during our project's process when coming up with personas and prototypes. We have to keep the consumers feelings and needs in mind throughout the entire process in order to have a successful product. He also talks about how human knowledge is important in designing things. People take in a small amount of information at a time, which is why visual keys are important. I agree with this statement. Visuals catch their attention faster and is easier to remember than being overloaded with text. This comes in handy with my Craigslist redesign, since it is overloaded with text and becomes very overwhelming.

Don Norman has taken everything I knew about design and added another layer to it. When he discusses how a beautiful looking door can cause so much confusion because there's no clear indicator about weather you should push or pull from the right or the left it blew my mind. You can't take away functionality to add visual appeal. Even though everyone knows how a door works you can't assume anything! I mean if you can make a door confusing I'd say that's a pretty bad design. Adding this element truly makes design an art (as if it already wasn't). He adds that a user can feel like an accomplished master with technology if it's easy to use all of its functions. Doing that means making not adding too much or too little, you have to find the right amount of information and make it as accessible and simple for the user as possible. As a designer you have to let your design act as a guide through a maze.

There were 7 points in Don Norman's book that were mentioned that caught my attention, mainly on the idea of accessibility and not making a user experience too complicated. Some of the following that intrigued me were the ideas of discoverability and feedback because I believed they were most important to the aspect of experience design. Discoverability in Norman's

book is defined as a product being "able to determine what actions are possible and the current state of the device", and feedback is defined as a product having "full and continuous information about the results of actions and the current state of the product or service". It also goes onto state that the new state of the device is easy to determine once the action is taken.

Both of these points assure in making the features of a product easy to discover and easy to interact with, and what said features will execute as a result of the interaction. I feel like these two points were the most important and could either make or break your design in function because in terms of general use you'd have to make sure all functions work are easy to determine to the user. Whether it's a design, app, product or anything in daily life that you want to or have to use, the disco