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Research on design knowledge focusing on users' social emotions

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to deepen the understanding of design knowledge, and to attempt to clarify it. By what part of design do people feel moved? In this research, we focused on social emotions and examined their structure to deepen our understanding of the invisible emotions deep inside the user's mind: tacit knowledge needs. Within the current state of affluence in modern society, there are users who are materially affluent, but still do not feel truly satisfied in their minds. People's intrinsic affluence is not always proportional to their material affluence or time. One of the reasons for users' lack of satisfaction, is a discrepancy between users and the providers of products, such as companies. In this research, we hypothesized that designers who can embody the tangible and intangible needs of users, hold the key to regaining empathy between creator and users. Therefore, we tried to elucidate design knowledge by conducting two different studies and analyzing them comprehensively. Study 1 is a study to understand users, and Study 2 is a study to understand designers. In Study 1, after a preliminary survey and questionnaire, a sample suitable to understand the user's *kansei* (sensibilities) and desires was created. Then, using the sample, field demonstrations were conducted at four venues in the actual market. In the field demonstration, *kansei* / preference surveys and interviews were conducted along with user ethnographies (behavior observation). After that, a behavioral / psychological survey questionnaire and follow-up interviews were conducted to analyze the tacit knowledge needs of users. In Study 2, we hypothesized that good designers understand the tacit knowledge needs of users and can appeal to their *kansei*. In order to quantify their knowledge and share it as explicit knowledge, we conducted ethnographic interviews with four well-known designers who are active around the world. First, a questionnaire on the emotions of the designers was conducted, and based on the results, the content of the questions was examined for the ethnographic interview. Four prominent designers were selected by setting selection conditions, and ethnographic interviews with these four designers were conducted in two stages. The special "place" of conversation environment peculiar to network communication has made it possible to acquire various data that is difficult to acquire otherwise. The interviews were semi-structured, in the form of discourse interviews. The research results were analyzed to deepen the designers' introspection. As a result of comprehensive analysis and consideration of the two studies, it became clear that social emotions are greatly involved in the purchasing behavior and decisions of users. Social emotions are emotions for reconciliation in society, such as jealousy, envy, the feeling of being observed by others, and empathy for others. For example, dressing up (an external factor) can sometimes inspire users to grow mentally, due to its ability to stimulate their sensibilities and increase their knowledge. At the same time, social emotions always influence actions and decisions, and there arises conflict with emotions such as users' own personal values, preferences, and commitments. Users make decisions while balancing this conflict when they purchase things. Designers' tireless effort, learning, and conscious training to be aware, facilitate the power to innovate. From these unexpected design proposals, it was found that users experience various new discoveries and awareness, fresh surprises and even, in the best sense, betrayal. It turns out that users can also gain new awareness by encountering the creativity of designers who are constantly training to be consciously aware. It was found that users who had these new experiences and impressions were eventually enhanced through the creativity received from the designers. These stages of *kansei* growth are schematized as the *Kansei* Growth Model. Design products are things, but users can ascribe design products more value than mere things. These values include "triggers that promote self-growth," "amulets," and "empathy to live better." In addition, it was found that mature users who had achieved some degree of mental growth, and had experienced social status, economic and spiritual achievement, tended to be less dependent on things. This result is shown as an evolution of the *Kansei* Growth Model. This evolution is the SEMGG model, which expresses the relationship between social emotion, mental growth, and goods. This research indicates that good designers make design suggestions with the user's future in mind, rather than to instigate or inspire users to make a purchase. In other words, a good designer is one who can make design suggestions that promote and support user growth. When users come into contact with a good designer's philosophy and receive suggestions, they are impressed and moved by the difference. And as a result, they find that they have empathized with the designer's creation.

Keywords: Design knowledge, Tacit knowledge needs, Social emotions, Empathy, SEMGG Model