

UX and good digital design

 By Nick Durrant, issued by Bluegrass Digital 9 Sep 2014

It would seem that Feng Shui is not only limited to interior design and Chinese culture, but its design principles are now being considered for improving the user's experience (UX) on online platforms.

Connecting a brand with its user

The resurgence of the ancient, philosophical system can be seen in global financial institutions like HSBC and Standard Chartered Bank, where the Feng Shui principles are being incorporated into their online services for customers. "We are systematically using the principles of feng shui to design and enhance banks' online properties for customers," says Boz Zou, the head of UX at HeathWallace Asia (the JWT-owned UX design company which has HSBC and Standard Chartered amongst its clientele).

The notion of harmony is the key component to ensure that the design is based on the customer's needs. Putting people's particular circumstances at the core of the design, is another important factor - like are they using a mobile device for instance. Thirdly, having a sense of chi, or in digital design terms being dynamic and able to continually innovate, is being employed by UX designers in this space. The last of the six feng shui principles that are being adapted to improve UX, is being aesthetically pleasing, sustainable and seamlessly connected.

Brands that are already doing it

Whether some big brands know it or not, feng shui principles are already being used in digital design. Amazon, Starbucks and Apple are among the pioneers in this regard. Anthony Long, another practitioner and supporter of feng shui in digital design, is the principal technology and marketing practice lead at Harrison Group Ventures in Chicago. He maintains that Apple for example portrays a consistent approach in their online platforms as well as their storefronts. The brand seems to embody precision, clarity, ease and abundance - pertinent elements of feng shui. What (still) sets Apple apart and contributed to it being a pioneer in its field, is the understanding of the importance of providing a connected user experience.

Keeping an open mind

Having said this, feng shui doesn't always enjoy a positive perception and remnants from 90's interior design trends come to mind. The digital community needs to think laterally and consider how applying the principles to improving UX, can strengthen the connectedness of brands with their customers. A combined support base comprised of experienced and trained designers, brand marketers and those in the creative arts is required to drive the underlying principles and thereby improve the overall UX of brands.

"Backing the results up with numbers will obviously go a long way in growing the follower-base of feng shui principles in digital design. Everything in digital can be measured and making simple, yet effective changes can markedly increase use and visitors to your online platforms," says Bluegrass Digital MD, Nick Durrant

Ruminate on the notion that the average online user is already bombarded with a plethora of digital and social platforms that all require the same measure of attention. Decluttering your UX and simplifying the process for the user will go a long way in setting your brand apart and entrenching it in the hearts and minds of users. Connecting the brand with the user through a considered and clear UX design, is paramount to ensuring longevity.

Examples of brands using feng shui principles in their UX

- Gamespot recently underwent a complete overhaul and the result is startling, see the new design here: www.gamespot.com

Old Gamespot:



[click to enlarge](#)

New Gamespot:



[click to enlarge](#)

- Not all changes need to be drastic, to be noticeable. CNN.com which is a very content-rich website. Sometimes design decisions are based on trends, not data or rationale.

Older CNN website:



[click to enlarge](#)

New CNN website:



[click to enlarge](#)

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Our expert knowledge in creative technology and development means that we are able to deliver a unique offering, centered on service delivery excellence. Bluegrass has a proven track record of delivering high-quality projects on time and within budget.

As one of the pioneering digital agencies in South Africa, we have many years of experience in the industry and can deal with just about any challenge presented to us. We understand that each client and every project is unique, and we ensure that we take the time to thoroughly understand you and your business, align with your strategic objectives and develop a strong working relationship.

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Nick Durrant is MD at Bluegrass Digital, a digital solutions company with offices in Cape Town, Johannesburg and London. We are experts in crafting web and mobile products and platforms. After spending 17 years in working the tech industry in the UK and setting up the Bluegrass in London in 1999, Nicholas now runs the company from Cape Town, developing business into Africa and Europe offering world class digital solutions.

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