

EN The Four Pleasures – Enabling Holistic Positive User Experiences

ES Los cuatro placeres: Facilitando experiencias de usuario positivas y holísticas

ITA I quattro piaceri: abilitare esperienze utente positive e olistiche

FRA Les quatre plaisirs : favoriser des expériences utilisateur positives et holistiques

POR Os quatro prazeres – possibilitando experiências de usuário positivas e holísticas

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The Four Pleasures – Enabling Holistic Positive User Experiences

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ABSTRACT (ENG)

The Four Pleasures is a framework that has been widely used in design over the last 25 years. It divides human experience into four areas – physical, psychological, social and ideological. The premise behind its application is that each of these four areas should be considered when specifying user requirements. Not every product or service will deliver benefits to the user on all four of these dimensions, but each dimension should always be considered. Not doing so can lead to both unforeseen issues and user experiences (UX) that fall short of being optimal. In this paper, each of the Four Pleasures is explored in depth, with examples being given of UX issues that fall under each category. Illustrative case studies are given, and a checklist is presented to guide research and design teams about what to consider when using the framework.

KEYWORDS: *user experience, design and emotion, pleasure, usability, user research, ergonomics*

RESUMEN (ES)

Los cuatro placeres constituyen un marco conceptual ampliamente utilizado en el ámbito del diseño durante los últimos 25 años. Este marco divide la experiencia humana en cuatro dimensiones: física, psicológica, social e ideológica. La premisa que orienta su aplicación es que cada una de estas dimensiones debe ser considerada al momento de definir los requisitos del usuario. No todos los productos o servicios ofrecen beneficios en las cuatro dimensiones; sin embargo, cada una de ellas debe ser siempre tomada en cuenta. Omitir alguna puede derivar tanto en problemas no previstos como en experiencias de usuario (UX) que no alcanzan un nivel óptimo. En este artículo se analizan en profundidad cada uno de los cuatro placeres, presentando ejemplos de problemáticas de UX asociadas a cada categoría. Asimismo, se incluyen estudios de caso ilustrativos y se propone una lista de verificación destinada

a orientar a los equipos de investigación y diseño sobre los aspectos a considerar al emplear este marco conceptual.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *experiencia de usuario, diseño y emoción, placer, usabilidad, investigación de usuarios, ergonomía*

RIASSUNTI (ITA)

I quattro piaceri rappresentano un framework ampiamente utilizzato nel campo del design negli ultimi 25 anni. Il framework suddivide l'esperienza umana in quattro dimensioni: fisica, psicologica, sociale e ideologica. Il presupposto alla base della sua applicazione è che ciascuna di queste dimensioni debba essere considerata nella definizione dei requisiti dell'utente. Non tutti i prodotti o servizi offrono benefici in tutte e quattro le dimensioni; tuttavia, ciascuna di esse dovrebbe essere sempre presa in considerazione. Trascurarne una può comportare sia problematiche impreviste sia esperienze utente (UX) non ottimali. In questo contributo, ciascuno dei quattro piaceri viene esaminato in modo approfondito, attraverso esempi di criticità di UX riconducibili a ciascuna categoria. Vengono inoltre presentati casi di studio illustrativi e una checklist pensata per supportare i team di ricerca e progettazione nell'utilizzo del framework.

PAROLE CHIAVE: *esperienza di usuario, diseño y emoción, placer, usabilidad, investigación de usuarios, ergonomía*

RÉSUMÉ (FRA)

Les quatre plaisirs constituent un cadre conceptuel largement mobilisé dans le domaine du design au cours des 25 dernières années. Ce cadre distingue quatre dimensions de l'expérience humaine : physique, psychologique, sociale et idéologique. Le principe fondamental de son application est que chacune de ces dimensions doit être prise en compte lors de la définition des exigences utilisateur. Tous les

produits ou services ne procurent pas nécessairement des bénéfices dans l'ensemble de ces dimensions ; néanmoins, chacune d'elles doit toujours être considérée. En négliger une peut entraîner à la fois des problèmes imprévus et des expériences utilisateur (UX) qui ne sont pas optimales. Cet article propose une analyse approfondie de chacun des quatre plaisirs, en présentant des exemples de problématiques d'UX relevant de chaque catégorie. Des études de cas illustratives sont également présentées, ainsi qu'une liste de vérification destinée à guider les équipes de recherche et de conception dans l'utilisation de ce cadre conceptuel.

MOTS-CLÉS : *expérience utilisateur, design et émotion, plaisir, utilisabilité, recherche utilisateur, ergonomie*

RESUMO (POR)

Os quatro prazeres constituem um framework amplamente utilizado no campo do design ao longo dos últimos 25 anos. Esse framework divide a experiência humana em quatro dimensões: física, psicológica, social e ideológica. A premissa que orienta sua aplicação é que cada uma dessas dimensões deve ser considerada na definição dos requisitos do usuário. Nem todo produto ou serviço oferece benefícios ao usuário em todas as quatro dimensões; contudo, cada uma delas deve sempre ser levada em conta. Ignorar esse aspecto pode resultar tanto em problemas imprevistos quanto em experiências de usuário (UX) que não atingem um nível ideal. Neste artigo, cada um dos quatro prazeres é analisado em profundidade, com a apresentação de exemplos de questões de UX associadas a cada categoria. São incluídos estudos de caso ilustrativos e apresentada uma lista de verificação com o objetivo de orientar equipes de pesquisa e design quanto aos aspectos a serem considerados na utilização do framework.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *experiência do usuário, design e emoção, prazer, usabilidade, pesquisa com usuários, ergonomia*

understand how to work it and it was physically within easy reach of the user. But from a social point of view it had, in this case, been the catalyst for an altercation.

THE FOUR PLEASURES

The Four Pleasures (Jordan, 2000) is a framework which can be used to analyze users and UX holistically. It includes:

Physio-Pleasure. Pleasure associated with the body and the senses. This includes being safe, well-fed and comfortable. It also includes sensorial pleasures such as positive tactile, olfactory, visual and audible experiences. Being able to do tasks, skillfully and within our physical limitations would also be a physio-pleasure.

Psycho-Pleasure. To do with the mind – both cognition and emotions. Psycho-pleasures involve finding things interesting, mastering skills and feeling knowledgeable. Positive emotions such as happiness, excitement and relaxation would also be psycho-pleasures.

Socio-Pleasure. About relationships, concrete and abstract. Concrete relationships are those with specifically identifiable people such as friends, loved ones and coworkers. Abstract relationships include a person's relationship with society as a whole, such as their social status, social identity and the social labels that others put on them.

Ideo-Pleasure. About our values, aspirations and tastes. Tastes refers to our preferences. For example, we might prefer the colour purple to the colour yellow or we may prefer rock music to jazz. Values, in this context tend to have a moral dimension, for example we may believe in caring for the environment or follow a particular religion or philosophy. Our aspirations are about our ambitions and how we want to see ourselves as people.

The framework was originally developed within the discipline of anthropology, a branch of the social sciences (Tiger, 1992). In social sciences the term “pleasure” refers to anything good and beneficial, while its opposite, “pain”, refers to anything bad or harmful. The framework was then adapted for use in design (Jordan, 1997), the aim being to understand how particular products and services can deliver benefits pertaining to each of the pleasures.

INTRODUCTION

TROUBLE AT 40,000 FEET

I was on an overnight flight from Mexico to the UK. I was asleep but was awoken by a commotion. When the cabin crew rushed in and turned the lights on, I saw a passenger standing over the man who was sitting in the seat behind him. He was shouting something in Spanish, which I didn't understand. He was very animated, and it was clear that the ferocity of his demeanor was upsetting those around him. When things had calmed down, I asked one of the cabin crew what had caused the issue. “It was to do with the video screens”, she said. “The man behind was poking the screen very hard and he was annoyed because it was moving the back of his seat”.

THE NEED FOR A HOLISTIC APPROACH

On the face of it having a touchscreen operated video on demand system makes sense. After all, we are used to using touchscreens on our smartphones and tablets. People like them and know how to use them. Having them in the back of the seat in front makes them easy to reach. However, while they may be easy to use it's important to consider the context. A touchscreen can work very well as a hand-held device, but it may not be ideal when placed in the back of an enclosed space like an airplane where it means having to endure the person behind you poking the back of your seat for hours.

This example is indicative of the importance of taking a holistic approach to understanding user needs. The touchscreen was usable in the sense that it was easy to

In the following sections we will look at each of the Four Pleasures in turn, describing what each means and giving examples of UX issues that highlight some of the issues to consider for each.

PHYSIO-PLEASURE

SAFETY

Perhaps the most fundamental physical issue is safety. Does using a product or service expose the user to danger and, if so, how can this be mitigated?

For many, the most dangerous regular activity is driving (Valencia, 2019). Car manufacturers have developed a variety of aids aimed at making it safer. Examples include Anti-lock Braking (ABS), Traction Control, Electronic Stability Control (ESC), Blind Spot Detectors and Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC). ACC keeps the car at a fixed speed but slows down to maintain a gap to a slower vehicle in front of them (Edelstein, 2021).

I was working with a manufacturer developing ACC, testing it with drivers.

“Well, the great thing is I can text while I am driving”, said one of my clients.

“What?” I exclaimed, horrified.

“I just pull in behind a truck, turn the ACC on, then keep one eye on the road and the other on texting.”

This is an example of “risk homeostasis” (Wilde, 1998). Homeostasis means to keep something constant. In the context of safety aids this means that instead of using the safety aid to be safer, people use it to take another risk. For example, when ABS was first introduced, many drivers used the shorter stopping distance to drive closer to the car in front (Murray, 2008). In this case the driver had judged that because he didn’t have to pay so much attention to maintaining his distance, he could afford to direct some attention elsewhere, namely to his phone. Most of us will do this to a certain extent while driving, for example changing the radio station or talking to our passenger on quiet stretch of road.

Risk homeostasis means that safety aids may not deliver the benefits that they theoretically should. One aid that does have a high positive effect on safety is Electronic Stability Control (ESC) (Ferguson, 2007). ESC stops a



Figure 1. Adaptive Cruise Control is a driver aid which keeps the vehicle at a set distance from the one in front.

Source: Nozilla. (2013). Adaptive Cruise Control vw Golf [Photograph]. Wikimedia Commons.

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=25059896>

car from flipping over, but how it does it is difficult to understand. Because of this people don't tend to compensate for it. If drivers fully understood what it did, then maybe some would fling their cars around corners more recklessly. Perhaps the lesson of this is to disguise safety aids, or at least make it difficult to understand how they work, so that people don't compensate for them.

HEALTH

In the UK two-thirds of adults are overweight with a third being obese (NHS Digital, 2024). A major factor in this is the increasing number of people living sedentary lifestyles (NHS, 2023). "The problem," a health minister said to me, "is that we are a nation of couch potatoes. Older people spend their evenings in front of the TV and young people are spending hours and hours playing those infernal computer games."

When Nintendo invented the Wii, it challenged this perception (Ewalt, 2006). Instead of having the user sit passively on the couch, the interaction style mimicked the actions that would be involved in doing the activity in real life – swinging a virtual tennis racket, punching a virtual boxing opponent, pumping the arms and legs in a virtual race. Wii users weren't sitting down consuming snacks and sugary soda, they were up and about the room burning off calories. From being the enemy, games

suddenly became an ally in the war on obesity. The UK's National Health Service even endorsed Wii use as being part of a healthy lifestyle (Flatley, 2009).

What Nintendo had done is a concept that I refer to as "flipping". This is when a negative characteristic associated with a particular type of product or service, in this case sedentariness associated with games, is completely reversed. Nintendo turned gaming from a low-energy pastime into a high-energy one.

SENSORIAL DESIGN

Several years ago, I met a car designer. She told me her company had a team dedicated to working on just three parts of their new vehicles: the inside door handle, the steering wheel and the gearshift.

I was intrigued as to why they would put so much emphasis on these three parts of the interior.

"We hired some ethnographers", she told me.

"They went into showrooms to watch people buy cars. When someone showed interest in a car, the salesperson would come over and ask if they would like to sit in it. If the person said "yes", the salesperson opened the door, and the potential customer got in and closed the door



Figure 2. The Nintendo Wii changed perceptions of gaming with its active interface.
 Source: NAB 2007: Tom Playing Wii. by chrismetcalfrv is licensed under CC BY 2.0.



Figure 3. The tactile properties of a gearshift can influence users' perceptions of vehicle quality.
 Source: Manual Gear Stick Shifter Free Car Picture - Give Credit Via Link by MotorVerso is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

using the inside door handle. The next thing that most of them did was put their hands on the steering wheel and a hand on the gearshift.”

It is often when people touch things for the first time that they make their judgments about quality. Something might look good, but it is whether it feels good quality that tends to cement people’s opinions one way or the other (Karangi and Lowe, 2021).

The design team experimented with materials and finishes with varying textures, for example in terms of roughness and softness. They invited people to touch each of these and to rate them in terms of perceived quality. They then used the materials and finishes with the highest quality ratings (Bonapace, 2002).

This statistical approach is one that is referred to as “population stereotyping” (Vu and Sun, 2019). Their research was capturing the perception by a population – in

this case car buyers – about what materials and finishes were reflective of high quality and thus helped to project a good first impression of the car.

SOUND DESIGN

Another sense that helps us make judgments of quality is sound. Research consistently shows that we tend to associate bass tones with higher quality than treble tones. For example, doors that close with a reassuring thud are a characteristic of well-made, high-end cars. It is, perhaps, not surprising that bass “thuds” should be associated with higher quality than treble “clangs”. Thuds seem to communicate solidity – something that is well put together – whereas clangs suggest something flimsier (Shin, Park and Lee, 2013). Similarly, crisp, clear clicks when a clasp clips into place on a backpack and tooling that snaps together with a solid staccato sound conveys quality and precision (Schiff, 2024).



Figure 4. BMW car doors close with a reassuring low-frequency thud, reflecting high build quality.

Source: 2011 BMW X6 xDrive30d - NRMA New Cars by The National Roads and Motorists' Association is licensed under CC BY 2.0.



Figure 5. The Oxo Good Grips range is designed to be usable for a wide user group including those with and without arthritis. Source: OXO Tools by Didriks is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

INCLUSIVE DESIGN

With longevity increasing and the birth rate declining, the average age of the population is increasing. Because there is a very strong correlation between age and disability, as the average age of the population increases, so does the number of disabled people (Wellard and Colvin, 2023). Inclusive design involves creating products and services that are usable by both disabled and non-disabled people. An example is the Good Grips range from Oxo. This includes potato peelers, can openers, kitchen knives, jar openers, kettles and many more. They also have a range of garden tools such as trowels and forks (Clarkson et al, 2007).

The kettle is a good example of their approach. It is dome-shaped, made of metal and it looks stylish. It is designed to balance on the hand whether full or empty, so people with arthritis can hold it without the need to grip. The handle is made of a rubbery material that will grip to the hand whether wet or dry. The handle on the lid is designed so that the user could slip their hand under it and lift it upwards and off without the need to grip. Also, the spout has a device on the end of it which stops water splashing out if someone with a shaky hand is using it.

These features make the product suitable for a person with arthritis, but there is nothing that compromises the product’s utility and appeal for people who are not

arthritis. This is the essence of inclusive design – making products that are good for disabled and non-disabled people alike (Jordan, 2000). For non-disabled customers an advantage of inclusively designed products is that they are often very ergonomic and easy to use. For example, Good Grips products are very popular with professional chefs. In a busy kitchen they help them get things done quickly.

PSYCHO-PLEASURE

USABILITY

From a psychological point of view, perhaps the most basic issue is whether people understand how to use a product or service. Can they achieve what they want to quickly and easily, without making lots of errors or feeling stressed?

I remember the first time I used an Apple McIntosh computer. It was in 1990 on my first day working in the Department of Psychology at Glasgow University. Like most people at the time, I was nervous about using computers. The ones that I had used previously had “command line” interfaces. This meant that if you wanted to get the computer to do something you had to type instructions. For example, if you wanted to open a file, you had to type “OPEN” followed by the name of the



Figure 6. As well as being usable, the Apple Macintosh had a simple, cheerful appearance which reduced stress.

Source: Macintosh Plus by raneko is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

file. You also had to type in the name of the “directory” that the file was in and there was all sorts of complicated punctuation involved (Contentstack Team, 2024).

Often you would be trying haplessly for ages to get the command exactly right. It was very frustrating! The biggest fear though was that you would do something that would make the computer crash and that all the work that you had done would be lost. Using a computer was stressful!

When I turned the Mac on, I had my first pleasant surprise, a computer icon with a smiley face appeared. It looked reassuringly cheerful, a stark contrast to the emotions normally associated with turning on a computer. When the computer was ready to use, the smiling icon gave way to a “desktop” screen. This had menus on it, so you no longer had to memorize the commands. Just like today’s computers you selected the commands that you wanted using a mouse. Applications, folders and files could be opened simply by clicking on them and things could be moved around the desktop to be copied from one folder or another or deleted via the trashcan icon (Nielsen, 2009).

The design was revolutionary and improved the usability of computers exponentially. Not only was it easier to understand how to use them, but Apple used icons, such as the cheerful face, to create a feeling of cheerful light-heartedness to make using it less daunting – more emotionally approachable (Zec, 2024). Apple’s relentless pursuit of innovation in usability enabled them to become



Figure 7. In a product test, users appeared to associate speed of ironing with product aerodynamics.

Source: Spekking, R. (2019). Rowenta DM118 Actiline-0235.jpg [Photograph]. Wikimedia Commons. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=81211077>. Licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

the world’s most valuable brand, creating products of enormous technical complexity, which consumers knew they could use easily and confidently (Lee, 2015).

METAPHOR

Much of what made the Mac user-friendly was the use of metaphor. This is when something is designed so that users make associations with something they are already familiar with (Zullighoven, 2005). In this case, it was the office. Desktops, files, folders, trashcans – all are found in offices. The idea was to psychologically take the user out of the stressful world of computers into the comfortable world of the office, reducing stress.

Apple’s was a deliberately created metaphor. However, sometimes users will impose metaphors on a product independent of what the designer intended (Hekkert and Cila, 2015).

A domestic appliances company approached me to create a faster iron. We got expert advice and made a prototype. The iron had a semi-cylindrical base with a handle on top. We put it into tests against the best-selling irons on the market and timed people ironing using various different irons.

The new iron was clearly faster than the others. However, we hadn’t told people what their times were and when we asked them to arrange the irons in order of how fast they were, it always got rated as one of the slowest. People

tended to rate those with the lowest profile and the sharpest front as being fastest – the more aerodynamic the iron, the faster people thought it would be. This seems to be a metaphor borrowed from vehicles. A vehicle that is aerodynamic will be able to travel faster than one that is not. With an iron it won't make any difference unless you're ironing at 200 miles-an-hour! But this perception made the iron unappealing, and it never got to market.

ANTHROPOMORPHISM

A special case of metaphor is anthropomorphism. This is the human tendency to see animals or faces in objects.

The Juicy Salif is a lemon squeezer designed by Philippe Starck. Starck got the inspiration for it when he was eating squid. The first design sketches looked like squid, but the final version looks like a spider. It has a big

bulbous body and angular legs. It's not a particularly functional product. It costs around £80, and you could probably buy a more effective plastic one for 50 pence. But its unique appearance makes it a talking point. It is very interesting to look at, so much so that it has been displayed in the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

It's spider-like qualities also means that it attracts attention. Spiders are potentially dangerous creatures, so the primitive parts of our brain are programmed to notice them. Because of this, if you put the Juicy Salif in a room full of other products it is likely to be the first one people notice. Its presence will quickly be recognised by the visceral, primitive part of the brain (Norman, 2004).

Another area where anthropomorphism is commonly applied is in automotive design. We see faces in the front of cars. The lights represent eyes, the grill the mouth and the badge the nose (Norman, 1993). Cars can be made to



Figure 8. The spider-like appearance of the Juicy Salif contributes to making it highly noticeable.

Source: Sailko (2016). Philippe Starck per Alessi Spa, Juicy Salif (1990) [Photograph]. Wikimedia Commons. CC BY 3.0.



Figure 9. The Mini Cooper's front is considered cute by many, perhaps due to an association with a baby's face.

Source: Dietmar Rabich (2016). Dülmen, BMW Mini [Photograph]. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

look aggressive, powerful, elegant or cute. An example of cute is the BMW Mini. The front of this has been compared to a baby's face (Miesler, Leder, and Herrmann, 2011; Mini Cooper News Blog, 2010). The big headlights representing the eyes, the small badge the little nose and the grill the mouth.

CONSISTENCY

We feel uncomfortable with uncertainty. In establishing a long-term relationship with a customer, it is important to live up to expectations again and again. People want confidence in what they are getting.

For example, one of the reasons that big-name fast-food outlets such as McDonalds, Burger King and KFC are so successful is that you know that the food is going to be

the same every time you go (Bailey, 2024). When my son was little, he used to enjoy the McDonalds Happy Meal, which included a burger, fries, drink and a toy. The burger fries and drink were the same every time and he always enjoyed playing with the toys. I knew that if we went there, he would never be disappointed.

These outlets may not have *great* food, but they are extremely good at not being bad (Sutherland, 2014). As a customer you know they will not let you down. If you go to a Michelin starred restaurant it could be that it will be an amazing and wonderful experience, but on the other hand, there might be a risk of getting food poisoning – something extremely unlikely to happen in McDonalds. The same principle applies to any type of product or service.



Figure 10. The McDonald's Happy Meal is of consistent quality meaning that the user can be assured their children won't be disappointed.

Source: "McDonald's Happy Meal with the new all-natural Diet Soda called McDonaldland Soda" by PatrickRich is marked with Public Domain Mark 1.0.



Figure 11. Wrestlers wearing red win more often than those wearing blue.

Source: “Sgt. Ildar Hafizov wrestles at the 2020 Summer Olympic Games (51351833766)” by U.S. Army is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

COLOR

Mixing ten parts white paint with one-part red results in a color that looks like bubblegum. It is known as “drunk tank pink” because it is commonly used in holding cells for people who are intoxicated (Bryne, 2003). It is believed that looking at the color reduces people’s energy and makes them less aggressive and there is evidence for this (Pellegrini, Schauss, and Miller, 1981). Some sports teams painted their visitors’ locker rooms drunk tank pink in the belief that it would pacify their opponents. Consequently, college football league authorities introduced a rule requiring that both home and away locker rooms be painted the same color (Color Matters, 2024).

Colors can have effects on the user and also help shape users’ perceptions of products. For example, green is a color that can help people to relax (Cherry, 2023). Red is a color that can increase our energy and intimidate others –

wearing red is an advantage in sporting competition (Hill and Barton, 2005). Blue elicits trust, it is a good color for financial websites, for example (Su, Cui and Walsh, 2019).

SOCIO-PLEASURE

THE HUMAN ELEMENT

When designing a service, it is important to consider the human component within it. A few years ago, I conducted a study for the airline industry looking at passenger satisfaction and at what aspects of the customer experience had the biggest impact on it. We looked at the whole process, from booking the ticket to arriving at the destination. We asked people about the quality of the food, the in-flight entertainment, how punctual the flight was, whether all the baggage arrived OK. By far the biggest factor in terms of how people rated their quality of experience was the behavior of the airline’s staff. This



Figure 12. Singapore Airlines cabin crew are regularly praised for the quality of service they provide.

Source: Singapore Airlines (2012). Wikimedia Commons. PNG image licensed under CC BY 4.0



Figure 13. The Routemaster Bus has good accessibility, but many wheelchair users prefer not to travel by bus.

Source: "OppCharge-SRM-BusExpo2016-P1390351" by citytransportinfo is marked with CC0 1.0.

included those staffing the check-in and help desks, but above all it was the way the cabin crew behaved that mattered to people.

When designing an offer that includes interaction with customers, getting the behavior side of it right is probably the most important single element (Gibbons, 2017). Yet often it seems to be neglected. The service is designed in terms of how it should work and the practical benefits it should offer, but the expected behavior of the employees is not clearly defined.

The airline that was most highly rated in the study was Singapore Airlines. People noted how polite the staff were, how quickly they responded to any requests (Konstantinides, 2025). If there were delays or any other issues, passengers were kept informed and promptly updated if the situation changed. Being

polite and considerate usually costs no more than not being so, and it makes an enormous difference to how a company is perceived.

PERFORMANCE METRICS

Where people are central to the provision of a service, the way in which their performance is assessed can have a major effect on end users. It is important to consider how performance indicators may affect the user experience.

I was part of a project, run by Brunel University, looking at disabled people's experiences of using public transport in London (Nickpour and Jordan, 2013). Because much of the transport infrastructure in London is very old, many of the underground stations are not easily accessible for wheelchair users. The same applies to the overground

trains, meaning that, for those with a mobility-restricting disability, buses are often the most practical form of public transport.

Transport for London had commissioned new buses. They were well designed and had good wheelchair access. However, when we asked wheelchair users about their experiences, many said that they were discouraged from using buses because they had experienced rudeness from a driver. Even if this had happened just once, it could make anticipating a journey stressful.

Drivers were sometimes abrupt out of stress. They were under pressure to adhere to a timetable and if a bus ran late, it would be noted. It takes time for a wheelchair user to board the bus – a ramp is deployed, and the wheelchair must be securely in the designated area before the bus can continue. Fearful of a reprimand for running late, the driver could get impatient.

This is an example of how performance metrics can have unintended consequences. Transport for London and the bus companies were trying hard to create a positive travel experience for disabled people but the strict demand for punctuality appeared to undermine it (Nickpour, Jordan and Dong, 2012).

STATUS

The products and services that we own and use can confer social status. Products that are expensive can signal wealth but will only do so if those around us understand that what we are displaying is an expensive product (Nelissen and Meijers, 2011).

Louis Vuitton (LV) was the world’s most valuable fashion brand for seven consecutive years, from 2006 to 2012 (Alexander, 2012), and it continues to be very successful. Because LV put their logo all over their products, even those with only a rudimentary understanding of fashion will be able to see that what someone has is an LV product. They will likely, correctly, assume that the product is expensive. For those wanting to demonstrate wealth, this can add to the products’ appeal. If you spend a lot of money on an LV product, most people who see the product will know that you have a luxury product.

There are other expensive brands which don’t signal their cost so clearly. For example, John Lobb shoes can cost £ 10,000 per pair, however they are not ostentatiously branded and comparatively few people will have heard of the brand (Laurenti and Amiri, 2024). Owning these shoes may not signal your wealth to a wide audience, but it might to others in the know – those who can afford



Figure 14. Louis Vuitton products have clearly visible branding – even those with little knowledge of fashion may recognize their products. Source: “louis vuitton outlet 2012” by foeock is licensed under CC BY 2.0.



Figure 15. John Lobb makes very high-quality shoes but they are not ostentatiously branded. Source: “John Lobb” by Menswear Market is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

John Lobb shoes themselves. In this case, the product can facilitate wealthy people to signal to other wealthy people (Currid-Halkett, 2017).

SOCIAL PROOF

Instinctively, we tend to take our cues from others. Like much of human behavior, this originates from primitive times. Going with the crowd may not always have been the optimal thing to do, but there was safety in numbers. Doing our own thing was potentially isolating and risky (Waschenfelder, 2019).

There is still a tendency to go along with the crowd. This can be used positively to encourage people to behave pro-socially and do things that will enhance their wellbeing. However, if not properly understood, antisocial and damaging behaviors may be inadvertently encouraged (Rose, 2022).

When I was consulting to the UK's National Health Service (NHS) I was based at their headquarters in London. There was a culture among those who worked

there of using the stairs rather than the elevator. When it was understood that this was the expectation most people went along with it. Because using the stairs was the norm, taking the elevator – other than if a person had a mobility disability – would have been, in effect, to make a statement that you were against the workplace culture. The vast majority were happy to go with the flow and got the exercise benefits.

A concern for the NHS, was that people were missing doctor's appointments. Missed appointments are costly for the NHS and surgeries were encouraged to take action to increase attendance rates. Some put up signs saying how many had missed their appointments and how much NHS money this wasted. These signs didn't help – the numbers of people missing appointments increased. This is because the signs are normalizing missing appointments. If told that many are doing it, people may not feel any shame in doing it themselves. Signs which highlighted that the vast majority kept their appointments were far more successful as they indicated that missing an appointment was an unusually irresponsible thing to do (DNA Insights, 2016).



Figure 16. Using the stairs is a good way of integrating exercise into a daily life.

Source: "Man Walking up Stairs" by danielfoster437 is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

STORIES

A huge part of social interaction involves telling each other stories. These include stories about the products and services that we use, spreading our good or bad experiences by word of mouth. If companies can create a positive notable experience it can lead to a good story that customers will want to tell (Ciotti, 2020).

My father was shopping in Safeway supermarket. As he loaded his groceries onto the conveyor belt at the checkout the store manager was passing on his daily round.

“Ah, I see you’ve got a loaf of our raisin bread”, said the manager, noticing the store-baked product among Dad’s shopping. “What do you think of it”?

“It’s good”, said Dad, “but I’ve noticed that recently it doesn’t contain as many raisins as before”.

To Dad’s astonishment, the manager picked the bread off the conveyor took it out of its wrapper and broke it in two. After studying it for a few seconds he said, “Sir, you are absolutely right, this bread should have more raisins in it! My apologies, please let me know your address and we will put this right”.

Dad came home and a couple of hours later a Safeway van pulled up outside the house. The driver came to the door with three freshly baked loaves, packed with raisins and still warm from the oven.

The way that Safeway behaved makes for a great story. It has the drama and theatre of the manager breaking the bread and the unexpected twist of the freshly baked loaves being delivered to the door. It is a story that he told to all of his friends. Had the manager simply noted Dad’s disappointment with the lack of raisins and sent him a voucher, he would still probably have been satisfied with the service, but he probably wouldn’t have told many people. It would soon have been forgotten.

The discipline of narrative psychology looks at – amongst other things – the qualities of stories. Two of the most important qualities, from a UX point of view, are “tellability” – the extent to which people think a story is worth telling (Baroni, 2014) – and “salience” – how memorable a story is (Ware and Farrell, 2022). Because it was dramatic, unexpected and showed unusually great service, the raisin bread story scores high on both of these.



Figure 17. A supermarket manager created a great story though the way he handled a complaint about raisin bread.

Source: “Mmm... raisin bread” by jeffreyw is licensed under CC BY 2.0.



Figure 18. The Novopen is a discreet device for injecting insulin.

Source: Wesalius (2018). Insulin analog 100 IU-1ml novomix pen yellow background [Photograph]. Wikimedia Commons. CC BY 4.0.

IDEO-PLEASURE

FITTING IN

There are many situations in which people want to fit in and not seem “different” from others. When I was high school, there was a girl in my class who was diabetic. She would have to inject insulin several times per day. She used, what seemed to us, a huge syringe, with a long, frightening looking, needle which she carried with her in its own case. She stood out as “the girl who injects herself”. No one was mean to her about it, but I can imagine that it would have made her self-conscious at a time in life where fitting in can feel particularly important (Leever, 2023).

Many years later, Novopen created an insulin pen for children. Like a syringe, it is used to inject insulin into the bloodstream, however, unlike a normal syringe, as its name suggests, it looks like a pen. Novopens are offered

in a range of cheerful colors. They are inconspicuous and compact and, like pens, can be clipped into a pocket or carried in a small bag.

The insulin is contained in a small cartridge, mirroring an ink cartridge and injected into the body by putting the pen against the skin and pressing down the top, in the same way that we might click the top of a pen bring the point out. The metaphor of a pen is stuck to throughout, downplaying the whole process, so that it is discrete, non-frightening and doesn’t make the user stand out (Hyllested-Winge, Jensen and Rex, 2010).

MORAL PURPOSE

Sometimes products or services can be rethought to include a moral element which wouldn’t usually be there. An example is GoodGym, an online virtual gym where you can sign up and get fit while helping members of your



Figure 19. GoodGym adds a moral dimension to exercising.

Source: “GoodGym Haringey 2016-01-16” by C_Dave is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0.

local community. For example, if you tell the app that you would like to do 30 minutes cardio followed by a strength workout, it might suggest running round to someone’s house 15 minutes away, and then digging their garden, and then running back. The people who are helped are registered disabled (Hothi, 2017).

Not only are GoodGym users more likely to feel good about themselves, they may also be more likely to achieve their fitness goals as each workout session comes with a sense of moral purpose – something which has consistently been shown to enhance people’s motivation to act (Rosati, 2016).

IDEOLOGICAL BLOCKERS

Different generations are likely to have different values. This includes, for example, ideas about ideals of masculinity and femininity and the extent to which male and female roles are delineated (Campbell and Shorrocks, 2023).

Research suggests that Generation X – those born between 1965 and 1980 – value equality (Faster Capital, 2025). However, at the start of the twenty-first century, when many Gen Xers were settling down and starting families, women were doing the vast majority of childcare and housework – 62% of women did all their household’s

housework as compared to 6% of men (Bedell, 1992). It seems a paradox that a generation of men who valued equality so highly weren’t getting involved in these things. However, it is a generation that mostly grew up in households where their parents – largely from the “Silent Generation” – would have had traditional gender roles (Rainer, 2024). These men may not have seen their fathers participate in housework or childcare and in the back of their minds there may have been the idea that these are not things that “real men” would do.

Around the turn of the century, sometimes by coincidence, sometimes in response to opportunity, a series of products emerged which although associated with traditionally “female” domains, were designed in such a way that they appealed to men. The Dyson vacuum cleaner appealed to many men (Thompson, 2012) – its tool-like appearance perhaps enabling men to frame vacuuming as “DIY” rather than “housework”. The “sports-stroller”, with its black and chrome styling and knobby “off-road” tires appealed to men far more than the traditional small-wheeled push-chair with its flowers and butterflies illustrations (Turner, 2019). By the turn of the century, L’Oréal had started marketing cosmetics to men in masculine looking containers under the L’Oréal Men Expert brand (L’Oréal, 2023).

If people are uncomfortable with carrying out particular tasks, we may be able to design products that give them “permission” to do them by addressing the issue



Figure 20. Dyson helped make vacuuming more appealing to men.
Source: Credit Ssu. (2024). Dyson vacuum cleaner [Photograph]. Wikimedia Commons. CC-BY-SA-4.0

that concerns them – in this case fear of being seen as “unmasculine”. It is important to understand people’s ideological blockers so that we can address them and enable them to participate in things they aspire to do.

BRAND VALUE ASSOCIATIONS

Harley-Davidson is a brand that has a particular set of values associated with it. These include American patriotism, toughness, but perhaps above all a rebel or outlaw image (Mark and Pearson, 2001). Much of this comes from the brand’s heritage, particularly its association with the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club.

Previously, Harley-Davidson have often tried to disassociate themselves from the Hells Angels, however the association can add to Harley-Davidson’s appeal



Figure 21. The Harley Owners Group brings together riders with a passion for Harley-Davidson motorcycles.

Source: Craig Howell. (2008). Harley Owners Group - San Jose Chapter [Photograph]. Wikimedia Commons.

(Hyde, 2018). When people buy a Harley-Davidson, they are buying into the fantasy of a rebellious lifestyle. During the week, many Harley owners may have respectable office jobs, but on the weekend, they can put their leathers on and look tough and outlaw-like on their motorcycle (Pratt, 2002).

If you buy a Harley-Davidson motorcycle, you are offered the opportunity to join the Harley Owners Group – or HOG as it is known. The aesthetics associated with HOG further emphasize the Hells Angels link. For example, HOG members wear a back patch with the Harley logo emblazoned on it, with another above giving the name of their local chapter.

Because of the heritage associated with their brand, Harley don’t need to create the most powerful or technically sophisticated motorcycles on the market. But it is important that they maintain the Harley aesthetic so that the historical associations are maintained (Hyde, 2018).

While Harley might be seen as something of a heritage brand in this respect, people wanting to associate themselves with a brand’s values can occur in any sector. For example, Apple users might wish to associate themselves with the brand’s innovativeness, and hope that others will see them as innovative if they have Apple products. People are often loyal to brands whose values they think match their own (Rigby, 2022).

CHALLENGING PREVAILING NORMS

Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty is one of the most successful marketing campaigns of all time. It challenges stereotypical perceptions of female beauty, for example by using models of all shapes, sizes and ages in its advertising. It also ran videos showing how images of models are retouched and manipulated to make them fit beauty ideals (Millard, 2005). The campaign resonated hugely with many women, presumably fed up with having standards of beauty forced on them and frustrated with trying to meet unobtainable ideals. While other cosmetic and skincare brands may have been seen as dictating what their customers should look like, Dove were perceived as being on the customers’ side in promoting a more diverse view of beauty. The campaign was extremely successful, with sales of featured products increasing six-fold (Whitehead, 2004).



Figure 22. Eddie Stobart set high standards for the cleanliness of the trucks and the smartness and courtesy of their drivers. Source: “Eddie Stobart Ireland ‘Aneka Annette’” by Peter Mooney is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

Challenging the values and norms of an industry, particularly those that may be seen as negative by many members of the public, can give a company a unique advantage among their competitors.

Another example is the haulage firm, Eddie Stobart. When Stobart was founded in the 1960s, truckers had a bad reputation. They were seen by some as scruffily dressed, with dirty trucks, and were not considered courteous drivers. Eddie Stobart decided to be exactly the opposite. His drivers kept their trucks meticulously clean; they were very courteous to other road users and wore a suit and tie while driving (Barford, 2011). Perhaps because they were so different, and in a positive way, Stobart had a section of the market to themselves and developed a hugely successful business.

DISCUSSION

In the examples above we have considered each of the Four Pleasures separately. We have, for sake of illustration, associated each of the products and services described with one type of pleasure. When actually using the framework in the research and development process, we would consider each of the four pleasures for every product or service we were developing. This is not to say that all four will be important for every product and service. However, by

considering each we will often find potential benefits we may not have thought of and avoid negative user experiences that might otherwise have occurred.

Consider, for example, the Good Grips kettle that was described under physio-pleasure. This might also bring pleasure in the other categories. For example, under psycho-pleasure the user might feel reassured that they would be able to use it without dropping it or having a spillage. Under socio-pleasure, the product might enable someone to prepare food and drink to share with family or other loved ones. Under ideo-pleasure, the user may feel enabled and unrestricted by disability, which may be aspirational for them.

It is important to note that the Four Pleasures is a framework rather than a theory. It is simply a useful way of dividing the world of good things into four manageable segments rather than trying to address them all at once. The framework acts as a guide for thought and brainstorming. There is no suggestion that this is the only way of looking at positive experience. For example, if we felt it was useful we could break them down with more granularity. Psycho-pleasures could be divided into cognitive and emotional pleasures, or physio-pleasures into safety, sensorial and convenience pleasures. Similar divisions could be made for socio- and ideo-pleasures.

Another way of adding granularity is to cross-reference the Four Pleasures with other pleasure frameworks. Previously this has been done with C.S. Lewis's Need Pleasures and Pleasures of Appreciation, and Donald Norman's three levels of pleasure (Jordan, 2000, Norman 2004).

NEED PLEASURES AND PLEASURES OF APPRECIATION

The philosopher and scholar C.S. Lewis makes a distinction between what he refers to as “need pleasures” and “pleasures of appreciation”. Broadly, need pleasures are things that are only pleasurable in a particular context, whereas pleasures of appreciation are things that are pleasurable in their own right.

For example, drinking a glass of water might be something that would be pleasurable if you are thirsty, but perhaps not if you weren't, whereas drinking a fine wine might be pleasurable in many circumstances. Need pleasures could be thought of as things that are about taking away a negative, while pleasures of appreciation are about adding a positive.

Looking at the examples in this paper, probably most pertain to pleasures of appreciation. However, some relate to need pleasures. These include the Novopen helping to take away stigma and the signs in the surgery that helped reduce the number of missed appointments.

There are also examples where the product or service may be addressing both. The sport stroller, for example, may be helping a user to overcome discomfort at performing a role that they might see as not fitting with their self-image – a need pleasure. However, they might also find it a positive pleasure to interact with a well-made and aesthetically pleasing product and, more importantly, to engage in childcare – pleasures of appreciation. The Wii might also come into this category. It is addressing a need pleasure – preventing obesity – but it is also providing a pleasure of appreciation by providing an enjoyable gaming experience.

THREE LEVELS OF DESIGN: VISCERAL, BEHAVIORAL, REFLECTIVE

In his book *Emotional Design* (Norman, 2004) cognitive psychologist and computer scientist Donald Norman, identifies three levels at which designs can elicit emotional responses.

Visceral responses are those that the user has upon first encountering the product or service. These may be based on first seeing the product or service or the earliest interactions. For example, a product might look cute and make the user smile, or it may appear easy to use and invoke a sense of confidence. Perhaps on first touching the product it may transmit a sense of quality and solidity, giving a sense of reassurance.

The *behavioral* level refers to when the user is interacting with the product. If it is easy to use, for example, it may enable the user to feel reassured; if it is helping the user to do a good job, it might elicit a sense of pride; if it is helping them to get an important task done it may enable a sense of relief.

The *reflective* level is more contemplative. This would include reflecting on the experience of use afterwards and evaluating how satisfying it was. It might also include judgements about meaning attached to products, whether cultural, personal or in the context of relationships with others.

EXAMPLE OF A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE ON ALL THREE LEVELS

When he was little, my son used to love going to amusement parks. He had a season ticket to Legoland, which he enjoyed a lot. One weekend, I bought us an all-inclusive pass to Paulton's Park, a place that had lots of great rides and contained within it Peppa Pig World, themed on the cartoon that was one of his favorite TV shows at that time.

When we arrived in the park in the morning, his face lit up with excitement as he caught his first glimpse of some of the rides. This was a visceral psycho-pleasure enabled by the first impression. His reaction made me feel happy, a visceral socio- and psycho-pleasure – I felt happy for him and happy for me: a sort of chain reaction to his response.

We then spent a wonderful day on the rides, staying right up until the park closed. There were some rides that were gentle and fun and others that were fast and exciting. We experienced behavioral psycho-pleasure at the enjoyment and behavioral physio-pleasure at the sensations. There was also behavioral socio-pleasure in doing all the rides together and making joint decisions about which to do next. As well as the rides, they had a Peppa Pig show, with actors dressed up as characters from the cartoon. Although he quite enjoyed this, he didn't think it was as good as the show that they have at Legoland (Pirates of Skeleton Bay), a view I agreed with.

For weeks, months, even years afterwards we would discuss our day there. Remembering the enjoyment we had, and the shared experience, brought us reflective psycho- and socio-pleasure. Interestingly, our preference for the show at Legoland also brought us reflective pleasure, in this case reflective socio-pleasure because we agreed and reflective ideo-pleasure because the preference for the other show reflected our values – our preference for something more exciting and admiration for the bravery of the Pirates of Skeleton Bay performers.

VISCERAL

Of the examples in this paper, perhaps the product that draws the most notably visceral reaction is the Juicy Salif. It's spider-like shape is designed to draw a visceral psychological reaction from users to grab their attention. This is an example of a visceral psycho-pleasure – or perhaps displeasure depending on the individual – but there is no doubt that it has an effect on the user experience.

The tactile design of the car's inside doorhandle, gearshift and steering wheel is also an example of aiming to create visceral pleasure. In this case visceral physio- and visceral psycho-pleasure, through the first touch being sensorially pleasant and also eliciting a positive judgement about the quality of the car.

The reaction to the shape of the irons was also visceral – in this case the psychological association of aerodynamics with ironing speed. In this case the association appeared to be so strong that despite the behavioral experience of using the irons and the reflective experience of assessing their performance, the visceral assessment – although factually incorrect – overrode the others and dominated user perceptions.

BEHAVIORAL

The Good Grips kitchen implements are a good example of products that provide behavioral pleasure. They are easy to use from a physical perspective, so provide behavioral physio-pleasure. For someone with arthritis, they may also provide a sense of empowerment when being used that other, less suitable, tools would not be able to. This might give a sense of behavioral ideo-pleasure.

Apple's products are also pleasurable to use. The ease of understanding the interface and the usability of the product provides behavioral psycho pleasure – in this

case giving a sense of calm and confidence. There may also be an element of behavioral ideo-pleasure through the feeling of being someone who is achieving things and being creative.

Another example of behavioral pleasures would be MacDonalds. Their consistency means that usually everything is as expected. It feels reassuring, providing a behavioral psycho-pleasure. If your children are with you, they are also getting what they hoped for and anticipated, making it a happy family time and providing behavioral socio-pleasure.

REFLECTIVE

The Safeway example, with the raison bread, is a good example of something which brings reflective pleasure. The actions of the shop manager created a story that is fondly looked back on, and which has been told over and over. The incident led largely to reflective ideo-pleasure – the customer feeling special because of the effort, and drama, that went into serving them. The incident makes a remarkable story, which makes the customer feel special each time they tell it.

Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty could also bring reflective pleasure. It enables people to have a different take on what beauty is and challenges conventional beauty standards. This would probably come into the category of reflective ideo-pleasure. Those that may have felt negatively about themselves because they perceived themselves as not meeting the ideals promoted by the beauty industry may be enabled to think more positively about themselves.

Another example of reflective pleasure is the Harley Owners Group. Being part of a social organization enables people to talk and reminisce about previous rides, a form of reflective socio-pleasure because of sharing stories with friends and reflective ideo-pleasure because of the way the stories can help people to feel good about themselves. There are also numerous online social networking sites and forums where Harley riders can submit stories about their trips and adventures.

CONCLUSION

The Four Pleasures has proved a useful tool for understanding the various kinds of benefits that products and services can provide as well for identifying potential

pitfalls in the user experience. It continues to be widely used in commercial and research contexts and is much cited in academia. Within the design process it provides a simple but comprehensive means of understanding user needs. It enables the creation of products and services that are not only useful and usable, but which are also a genuine pleasure to own and use.

CHECKLIST

Based on the examples given in this paper, Table 1 is a checklist of issues to consider when researching requirements and recommendations for new products or services. It is not comprehensive but can serve as a tool to help thinking in the product development process.

Table 1. Checklist of issues to consider when using the Four Pleasures Framework in research and design

Physio-Pleasure	Pleasures to do with the body and the senses.
Safety	Could the product or service provide safety for the users?
Health	Could the product or service provide health benefits?
Sensory Experience	Are there potential tactile or olfactory benefits?
Sound	How can sound be used to enhance user experience?
Physical Inclusivity	Is the product suitable for users with physical disabilities?
Psycho-Pleasure	Pleasures to do with the mind.
Usability	Can people understand how to use the product or service?
Metaphor	Would metaphors aid user understanding?
Anthropomorphism	Can anthropomorphism evoke positive user emotions?
Consistency	Does the product or service deliver consistent quality?
Color	Can color be used to help regulate users' emotional state?
Socio-Pleasure	To do with relationships and interacting with others.
Human Element	How do staff behaviors impact user experience?
Performance Metrics	Will employee rewards, penalties impact user experience?
Status	Can the product or service confer status to users?
Social Proof	Will users take cues from other users?
Stories	Can the product or service inspire memorable stories?
Ideo-Pleasure	To do with the users' values.
Fitting In	Can user discomfort, embarrassment be reduced?
Moral Purpose	Can users' moral values and aspirations be supported?
Ideological Blockers	What user values may block engagement?
Brand Associations	How do users' brand associations affect their experience?
Challenging Norms	Can negative norms be challenged?
C.S. Lewis's Model	Lewis distinguishes between two types of pleasure.
Need Pleasures	These derive from removing a negative.
Appreciation Pleasures	These refer to things that are pleasurable in their own right.
Don Norman's Model	This distinguishes three types of pleasure based on time.
Visceral	A users' immediate reaction to a product or service.
Behavioral	The experience during use of the product or service.
Reflective	How the user reflects on the experience afterwards.

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