

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

research report A1

13 september 2001

micah alpern

eunice bae

reagan heller

marisa manhem

t. jonathan mayer

In researching products and services, our group chose to approach the task on a widespread level of references. General observations were made viewing relevant websites, magazines, and shopping centers. To cover such a broad topic, we tried to limit our research to three distinct areas: Products, Services or Service-Oriented Products, and the Interaction of Choosing Products.

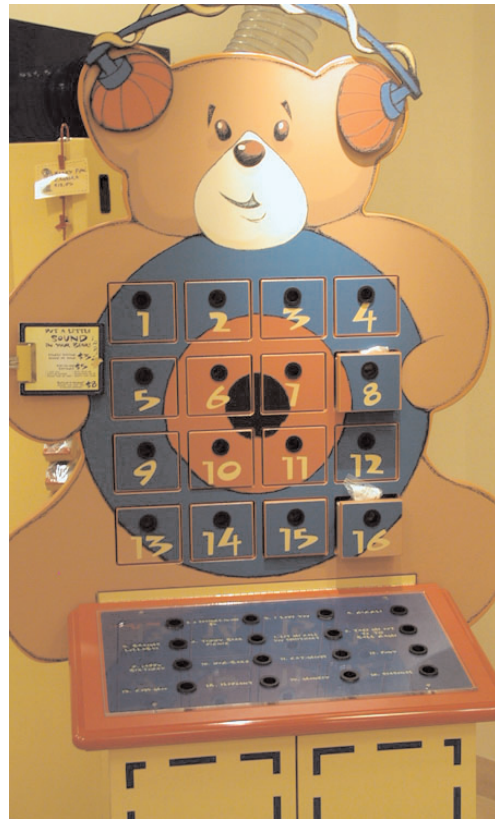
Our focus tended to lean heavily on the enormous field of products available for human purchase and consumption in our society. We chose to assess these products based on simple categories of functions and aesthetics such as:

- Materials
- Shape
- Ergonomic factors
- Intended Audience
- Interactivity
- Fun
- Disposability



- Customization
- Portability

As far as services are concerned, we wanted to avoid focusing our research on the vast amount of communication technology available. Our group spent some deal of time researching "service



products". Service products offer an added "experience" to acquiring the tangible goods.

An excellent example can be found in products such as supermarket foods, gourmet coffee, and our most unusual shopping experience, the "Build-a-Bear". In each of these situations the focus is not so much on the product itself, but the ability to interact with the creation or use of the product in a kind of experience. The consumption of a Starbucks coffee is different than making the same coffee in our homes, as the ability to enjoy the environment and patented "atmosphere" is

an offered service. At "Build-a-Bear", this "experience" is a family-oriented event wherein a product is selected and custom created by the consumers to fit the exact wants and needs they desire.

General Observations were made studying people as they evaluated products and services. From the act of traditional "shopping" or "browsing" to creating a personalized product, we took care to observe the user and the way in which they chose to interact with products.

Genres of Products and Services: Different "genres" of people tend to gravitate towards different niches of goods and services.

-They communicate well with the people knowledgeable about these particular items.

-They do not hesitate to ask questions or aggressively engage sales associates.

-There is a sense of enjoyment from "browsing" these goods.

-These products are mainly "want" (not necessity) products, for enjoyment or leisure.

Product Quality Taking Precedence: Sometimes consumers are more concerned with product quality than mere aesthetics.



-Functionality brings the main value to these sorts of products.

-Even older, or used products retain a high monetary value.

-Products are typically re-sold in stores.

-Although newer products have more automation and aesthetic concern, they are not always preferred.

Form as an Attractant:

People are often drawn to inspect a product based on its form alone.

-Aesthetics interest and draws in a potential user.

-Creativity and novelty is often highly valued.

-Potential users often touch and "test" these sorts of products.

-Although form is fascinating, functionality is sometimes hindered.

-Color is also important to the user, a selection is highly appreciated in the shopping



experience.

Need Objects are Browsed on a Separate Level of Care:

These kinds of objects are not typically "browsed". Most users are seeking a particular product for a need or problem.

-Customers often need or feel the need for an "exact" object.

-They tend to ask questions frequently, but almost apologetically.

-Inspect product carefully based on functionality.

Food is purchased on a Separate Level as Well:

Food purchasing can be a mix of wants and needs.

-Customers take into serious account how much they personally will enjoy the product.

-Considerations for some things are made for other users in conjunction to themselves.

-Packaging and branding comes into



play very strongly in this shopping experience.

Atmosphere is an Important Factor:

This is an important part of creating a likeable product experience for many people.

- "Happy" or "Relaxing" music is often played.
- Air conditioning/heating is usually present.
- Expensive, well-designed products are on visible display.
- Goods and services to be found are sometimes of very high quality.
- Comfortable setting is encouraged to keep users/customers returning.



focus on simpler services and goods that people would be intrigued by and wish to interact with.

Option 1: According to our observations, people enjoy the aspect of "customizing" their products. This allows a sense of personalization and "creation" to the goods they receive. Taking even common products such as cell phones, PDAs and computer towers to a new level of custom design and personalization would be an interesting design problem.

Option 2: On a more general idea, people enjoy having products made with new and more "unique" materials. Taking a common product and conducting an exploration of new and interesting materials may prove to catch the interest of the user and bring a new level of design to a "simple" product.

Design Opportunities

Our group discussed and analyzed our research and observations to predict what we think would be useful and demanded products. In general, we felt a need to stay away from high-technology products and



Option 3: How can a product as useful and well used as the Post-It note be simplified further? The idea of creating a space, such as a home, with "writ able walls" is an idea that would explore the constant demand to simplify family communications without complicating the initial idea.

Option 4: In an opposite direction, the idea of "electronic Post-It notes" also came into discussion. The general idea was to place some sort of electronic screens around the home in places where notes are usually found. By using some kind of portable communications device, people in the family could leave notes for family members both electronically and physically in these places. These screens could also contain images or sounds to personalize the note-communication experience within the home.

Resources

Observations: Squirrel Hill and Oakland Areas

Ross Park Mall
Best Buy

(Some noteworthy specifics)

Photo Hut (Used products, photography)
Giant Eagle (Food and food services)
Starbucks (Coffee and service)
Kiva Han (Coffee and service)
Starbase One (Genre products, comics)
Kitchen Wizard (Products)
Squirrel Hill Hardware (Need Products)
One Thousand Villages (Internationally produced goods)
Build-a-Bear (Custom products)
Footlocker (Products)
Sharper Image (Products)
GAP (Products)

Flea markets (Used/dated products)
Goodwill (Used/dated products)

Magazines:

Colors
WallPaper
MacAddict
ID

Web:

Seimans
Sony
Phillips
Parentlink
Advanceneeds

MATERIALS



SHAPE



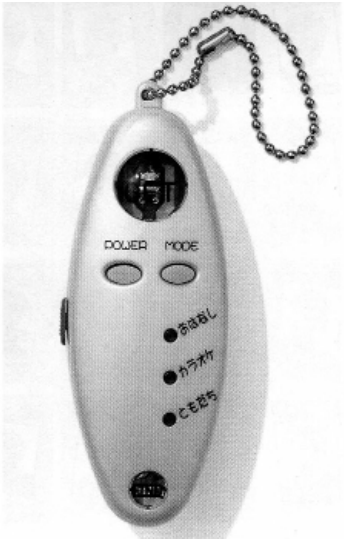
ERGONOMIC FACTORS



INTENDED AUDIENCE



INTERACTIVITY



CUSTOMIZATION

