In this reflective report, I aim to assess and review my personal performance and practical experiences during my first semester of a Master's degree at the University of Southampton. Using the DIEP framework, I look back and analyze the skills enhancements, experiences gained and shortcomings in the course or design project during the first semester, and look forward to future developments. As an undergraduate studying product design, this course has made me realize that design is not only about solving functional problems, but also about meeting users' needs and expectations, and that a shift in design thinking will lead to a greater focus on users' behaviors, emotions, and needs in design in the future.

1.Describe (D)

In my first semester course design and new media module, I began to learn and understand communication design such as front-end code and user-centered design concepts. Throughout the course, was assigned many design projects ranging from observing users, observing public facilities to developing digital platforms.

Project 1 that I did was PEOPLE WATCHING, and I chose a flower store as the location for my observation. After 3 hours of people watching, I found the information data that I usually ignore when I summarize the data, the main group of people who buy flowers are mostly young women. Crowd watching can help me to improve my empathy. Observing other people's behaviors in public places can lead to a deeper understanding of users' behaviors, interactions, and psychology, which can help me to design a more inclusive product.

Project 2 and 3 are both about designing a mobile application interface. One is a time management app for young people, using a combination of time management and electronic virtual pets, and the other mobile app is a remote control app for water purifiers for international students in the UK, intelligently controlling water purifiers and helping users to develop healthy water drinking habits. These two projects gave me a new insight into the concept of user-centered design, which is to enhance the user experience while taking into account the operating logic of the interface, and to design an easy-to-use and friendly application interface with maximum possibilities.
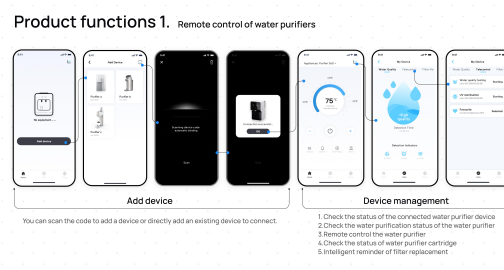

Image 1: Interface design for project 3

2. Interpret (I)

The experience of 3 projects can help me to improve my skills and understanding from multiple dimensions. User interface design is a complex and multi-dimensional design task. User interface design does not only require designers to design an aesthetically pleasing interface, but also involves user behavior, emotional needs, technical feasibility and other dimensions.

In terms of interface design, at first I thought it was good to just focus on the functionality of the product, but as I got deeper and deeper into the project, I became more and more aware of the importance of emotional design. Emotional design in interface design can alleviate the negative emotions of the users when they encounter difficulties and problems in using the application or the product. The use of friendly error alerts, guided animation effects helps to protect the user's patience and enhance the user's product satisfaction.

About prototyping, learn about the diversity and importance of prototypes, from sketch prototypes, high, medium and low fidelity prototypes, code prototypes, etc., which can be chosen according to different design stages. Prototypes can help us quickly verify our design ideas and get first-hand feedback on functions and interactions, so that we can make necessary adjustments and optimizations.
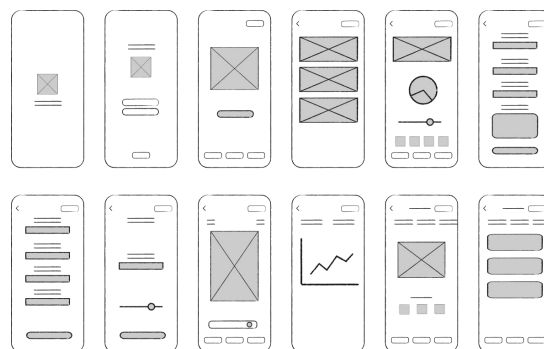

Image 2: Prototyping for Project 3

During the design process, I gradually realized that excellent user interface design is not a quick fix, but a process of repeated iterations and continuous optimization. The essence of design is to continuously feedback, test, adjust and improve, rather than just completing the design for the first time. In actual projects, every design decision is based on user feedback, data analysis and design validation, which are important driving forces for design evolution and user experience improvement.

In user interface design, in addition to focusing on the functionality of the product and user experience, the feasibility and practicality of the design are equally important. An excellent design should not only achieve the ideal effect in visual and interaction, but also ensure that it can be realized smoothly in the actual

development, and bring a smooth and comfortable experience to the users during the process of using the product. If the design is too complex or detached from the reality, it may lead to difficulties in the development phase, thus affecting the final effect of the product.

3. evaluate(e)

Design is Storytelling focuses on the relationship between design and storytelling, emphasizing how designers can use narrative techniques and strategies in the creative process to enhance the effectiveness of their designs and user experience. It made me realize that designers need to have storytelling skills in order to be able to clearly articulate the ideas and goals behind their designs. Designing an application is like telling a story. The protagonist of this story is the user, and the story revolves around the user's needs, pain points, and goals.

Image 3: Book "Design is Storytelling"

For example, when designing the app for Project 3, we had to consider the perspective of international students, their habits, understand their expectations and emotional needs, and design an interface that meets their desired functionality and resonates with their emotions. This process is similar to writing a novel, in which the designer builds a "plot" that resonates with the user through research and in-depth understanding of the user's needs. Every element of the design, from color, typography to interaction, tells the story. The designer plays the role of "narrator" in this process, transforming complex needs and goals into simple and emotional design elements. Through storytelling, good design creates not only functional satisfaction for users, but also emotional resonance and connection, so that users experience satisfaction, pleasure and a sense of belonging in the process of use.

The concept of user-centered design always reminds us of the importance of the user in design. To accurately understand users' needs, user modeling is a powerful tool for designers, which can help designers deeply understand users' behaviors, needs and preferences, so as to make design decisions that better meet users' expectations. User modeling helps designers to accurately identify the user's pain points and goals, and then design design decisions that meet the user's expectations; user modeling can provide a more personalized experience based on the user's characteristics and

behavior, for example, social platforms recommend personalized content (e.g., news, videos, etc.) through user modeling; at the same time, user modeling can also provide support for the subsequent user testing by simulating the use scenarios of different user groups, which can be used in a variety of ways to improve the user's experience. At the same time, user modeling can also provide support for subsequent user testing, by simulating the use scenarios of different user groups, effective usability testing can be carried out before the product is launched, and potential problems can be found and repaired in a timely manner.

4.Plan (P)

Based on the learning experience in the first semester, I plan to improve my professional ability in the future. In the previous two app design projects, I found that I did not do enough in user testing, which led to the lack of usability and user experience of the products. Therefore, in my next semester design projects, I will strengthen user testing to optimize the usability and user experience of the product through user feedback.

In addition, I plan to further enhance my skills related to my major, especially my mastery and understanding in coding. By increasing my understanding of code, I will be able to better understand technical constraints so that I can avoid unrealistic ideas in design and ensure that design solutions are realizable.

During my first semester assignments, I realized that I have deficiencies in time management. In the future, both in my studies and in my work, I will plan wisely in advance to ensure that I allocate enough time for each stage to ensure that I have enough time to complete my tasks and to ensure the quality of my tasks.

Summary:

In conclusion, the first semester has laid a solid professional foundation for me to become a professional designer in the future. Through self-reflection using the DIEP framework, I was able to gain a clearer understanding of the strengths and weaknesses I have demonstrated in the design process. Identifying my strengths and areas for improvement not only enables me to improve myself in a more targeted way in my future studies, but also gives me a clearer idea of my career planning and development direction. In the coming semester, I will continue to improve my design skills through practice, reflection and feedback. I plan to deepen my understanding of user needs and improve my ability to solve practical problems through more design projects.