

Identifying "Target Cultures" - To What Extent Is That Possible?

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ABSTRACT

This panel aims to discuss existing approaches for identifying and defining target cultures during the design process from the perspective of non US people who might be the receivers instead of the makers of the products.

Keywords

Cultural diversity, target audience, usability, culture, internationalization, localization, and design.

OVERVIEW

Identifying the target audience is a very important step in the design process. However, current techniques used for this purpose rely on targeting culturally homogeneous audiences without considering multicultural audiences and multileveled cultural identity. In keeping with the conference theme of "anyone. anywhere," we examine what happens when a product or a service must work for broader audiences, who may differ from one another in terms not only of language and geography, but also in terms of culture and lifeways.

Although the panelist agree about the need to find ways to deal with cultural diversity and to define target cultures they all differ on their approaches on how to do it.

Considering these issues and with the specific purpose of finding concrete strategies for targeting users and identifying their specific cultural requirements, we propose to discuss the following questions:

-Assuming that cultural identity is multileveled –e.g. a user can share an Indian, English, and European identity at the same time-, how can designers and researchers identify and deal with these levels?

-What are the appropriate criteria –e.g. language, religion, country- for grouping people into target cultures?

-What are the appropriate criteria for identifying dimensions –e.g. global, regional, national, etc.- along which cultures may vary?

-Is the identification of these dimensions an effective way of characterizing audiences and deciding when and how many localized versions are needed?

-What are the appropriate criteria for detecting multicultural targets?

-When targeting directly a culturally heterogeneous audience, how can designers deal with diversity?

-Moreover, how can we move from 'dealing with diversity' to 'embracing diversity'?

-How can we make turn accommodations to support culturally-heterogeneous audiences into product strengths that benefit all audiences?

RELEVANCE TO CHI 2001

HCI has always been concerned with issues of diversity.

There have been a series of CHI presentations on cultural diversity in interface design [5, 6] and on international audiences [3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11]. These themes are particularly important for systems and services that are intended for use by "anyone. anywhere."

PANEL INTENDED AUDIENCE

Academics, scientists, researchers and practitioners from the following disciplines: interaction design, interface design, information architecture, marketing, social and cultural studies, cognitive psychology, human factors, business administration, internationalization.

PANEL FORMAT

A formal debate, with 10 minutes for an introductory position statement by each panelist a 20 minute period for rebuttals and 30 minutes for interaction with the audience.

POSITION STATEMENTS

Paula Bourges-Waldegg (Organizer)

The existence of multicultural locales and shared-systems presuppose the integration of culturally different users, not their diversification into "target cultures". Thus, we need to discuss how designers can identify multicultural groups of users that share common needs, interests and/or objectives, as well as strategies to communicate with these audiences.

Guy Boy

The claim that I will defend during the panel session focuses on the fact that human-centered development (HCD) is not straightforward and transposable from one culture to another. There are objective, cognitive, and collective issues that direct the way HCD is being implemented.

Daniel Lafrenière

Cultural factors can interact in many ways that might be difficult to observe and qualify/quantify. Retrieving large amounts of cultural information does not guarantee a good design, and following existing guidelines may not be sufficient to help designers deal with cultural factors. The idea here is to come with a "good-enough" definition of all the forces involved in a culture and to provide generic design solutions that minimize misunderstanding of any kind.

Manfred Tscheligi

Making systems usable globally remains a global problem, which can be only approached by extensive global viewpoints. International usability engineering requires intensive international cooperation and networking. International research projects should be set up to intensify knowledge in this area. This is valid for qualitative as well as methodological issues. Tools (e.g. based on the world

wide web) should also be developed to make international usability engineering more cost effective.

Raquel O. Prates

In my view, designers must not only learn about the culture to be able to propose a culturally compatible solution to the users' problems, but also to be able to communicate to users that solution, the expected audience and which and how the cultural aspects are being considered.

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