

Report on
Human-Centered UX/UI Design: The Impact of Anthropological Methods on User
Experience and Interface Research and Design

By
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Student ID: 23117004

An internship report submitted to the School of Humanities and Social Sciences in
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Social Sciences in
Anthropology under the Department of Economics and Social Sciences

Economics and Social Sciences (ESS)
Brac University
December 2024

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The internship report being submitted is an original work of mine while completing a degree at the BRAC University.
2. The report in no way contains materials that have been published previously, or has been worked on by someone other than myself.
3. This report does not contain any material which has been accepted or submitted for any other degree at a university or another institution.
4. All main sources of information and help have been acknowledged.

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Arnab Fouzder

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Dr. Moiyen Zalal Chowdhury

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Letter of Transmittal

Dr. Moiyeen Zalat Chowdhury

Assistant Professor

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Subject: Submission of Internship Report for the completion of “ANT402 – Internship” as registered in the semester of Summer, 2024.

Dear Sir,

I am hereby submitting the anthropological internship report required for the completion of my Bachelor of Social Sciences in Anthropology degree. Within this report, the outcome of my employment at Wonderif Studio Pvt. Ltd. has been showcased. Wonderif is a branding and design studio based in Dhaka, Bangladesh, where I have completed my internship in the position of Intern, UX/UI Researcher and Designer. This report includes research on the relevant topic as per the specific proposal that has been approved.

I hope that this anthropological report will be up to the standards of the prescribed academic standards.

Sincerely yours,

Arnab Fouzder

Student ID: 23117004

Department of Economics and Social Sciences (ESS)

BRAC University

Date: December ____, 2024

Approval

The internship report titled “Human-Centered UX/UI Design: The Impact of Anthropological Methods on User Experience and Interface Research and Design” submitted by Arnab Fouzder of Summer 2024, has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelors of Social Sciences in Anthropology on 1st December, 2024.

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Non-Disclosure Agreement

This agreement is made and entered into by and between Wonderif Studio Pvt. Ltd. and the undersigned student at Brac University. Therefore,

1. The employee understands and agrees that the confidential information constitutes trade secrets of the employer and the employer has taken all reasonable precautions to protect the confidentiality of such information.
2. The employee agrees not to share said confidential information for the benefit of any person other than the employer.
3. The employee agrees to not showcase work-in-progress project work until completion and the work has been published.
4. All agreements shall be governed by the laws of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Signature of the Employee
Arnab Fouzder

Signature of the Employer
Mohammed Faisal Omar
MD, Creative Director

Date

Date

Abstract

This paper studies anthropological integration into UX/UI research and design, as a part of an internship experience at Wonderif Studio Pvt. Ltd., a company highly focused on brand experiences and design in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This paper aimed to investigate how anthropological methods can facilitate a user-centered design approach. Using methods like participant observation, thick description, and cultural relativism, the internship showed how culture nuances user behavior and design in a social system. Such work encompassed website redesigns and product rebranding, where anthropological insights added value to User Experience (UX) and User Interface (UI) by facilitating a greater understanding of users needs and contexts. Anthropology in UX/UI works showcase how anthropology adds value to the field by enabling a richer understanding of users' behaviors, cultural backgrounds and empathetic engagements with design methodologies thus allowing for more inclusive and appropriate design solutions. These results emphasize one of the main takeaways to anthropology in producing inclusive and culturally relevant design solutions, as well as providing skills in design toolsets and collaboration. This report advocates for a paradigm shift that integrates anthropology into UX/UI design, emphasizing the need for context-sensitive and human-centered digital products.

Keywords

Anthropology in Design, User Experience (UX), User Interface (UI), Human-Centered Design, Cross-Cultural Design, Digital Literacy

Dedication

I dedicate this research to Tahsina Rahman Auhona, who has been my co-pilot throughout my personal and academic life, and to Sadid bhaiya, who has been mentoring me about design, leading me to choose this path.

I would like to thank Turzo Nicholas Mondol sir, who believed in me enough to suggest Anthropology as a major that I can pursue during my academic soul searching. Last but not least, I would like to thank my parents for supporting me and making my life easier to the best of their capability.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my assigned supervisor, Dr. Moiyeen Zalal Chowdhury, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics and Social Sciences (ESS) under the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, BRAC University, for his guidance in the preparation of this report. I would also like to thank Zareef Tazwar Karim sir, for giving me the first push that led to this whole idea as well. Anthropology and User Experience designing is still a very new area in Bangladesh that is being explored, and I thank Zareef sir for bringing up this idea and I thank Moiyeen sir for believing in me enough to guide me in the right direction in preparing this report.

I thank Auhona, my father and my mother, for being a part of this journey as well. While my father and mother played a huge role as they helped me financially and supported me to the best of their abilities and by understanding my choice for switching from Computer Sciences to Anthropology as a major, the biggest key player here is Auhona. She has been with me through all my struggles, and god knows if I have been there for her to the best of my capabilities. But, the journey that led up to writing this paper would have never been possible without her.

It goes without saying that I deeply appreciate my time in the anthropology department at BRAC University, especially because of people like Ridita, Hironyo, Anadi and Mashaekh. My two years speedrun would have not been so smooth without these people as they were the yin to my yang personality, only exclusive to this department.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my colleagues at Wonderif Studio Pvt. Ltd. for their continued support and guidance in the workplace to help me learn and grow as an individual in the professional sector. Their help was essential in the completion of this report. Special thanks to Mr. Faisal Omar, for being my mentor in terms of giving the career related clarity that I required.

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Chapter 1: Overview of Internship

1.1 Intern Information

Name: Arnab Fouzder

ID: 23117004

Program: Bachelor of Social Sciences

Major/Concentration: Anthropology

1.2 Internship Information

1.2.1 Company & Company Supervisor's Information:

- Designation: Intern, User Experience (UX)/User Interaction(UI) Researcher and Designer
- Employment Period: 3 months (June 1, 2024 - August 30, 2024)
- Company name: Wonderif Studio Pvt. Ltd.
- Department: Creative
- Address: 84, Arambagh, Dhaka 1000
- Name: Mohammad Faisal Omar
- Position: Managing Director, Creative Director

1.2.2 Job Responsibilities

Job Description:

In a branding studio, a UX/UI researcher and designer plays a pivotal role in shaping the digital aspects of a brand's identity while ensuring user-centered experiences. Their responsibilities are split into two primary functions: research (UX) and design (UI).

Job Responsibilities:

- User Research & Insights.
- Usability Testing.
- Persona Development¹ & User Journeys.
- Collaboration with Design Teams.

¹ Creating detailed user profiles to represent target audiences and guide design decisions.

- Wireframing² & Prototyping³ (UX Design Elements).
- Visual Design & Brand Alignment.
- Interaction Design.
- Prototyping & Collaborations.
- Accessibility⁴ & Inclusivity.
- Design Validation & Iteration.
- Workshops & Ideation Sessions.
- Client Communication.
- Brand Storytelling through UX/UI.
- Collaborate with cross-functional teams for branding goals.
- Adhere to ethical standards and guidelines in design.

1.3 Internship Outcomes

1.3.1 Student's Contribution to the Company

While I have been with Wonderif Studio for my internship, I was extensively involved in several design projects (Website redesign for Sharif Metal, Rebranding CELSIUS Energy Drink and Luxeon Hotel Project).

UX research — also known as User Experience research, is all about gaining insights into the way a person interacts with a product, site or service. The researchers observe actual users to understand their requirements, what they like or do not like and how they interact with the design. It enables design professionals to create more efficient, simple and pleasurable experiences for users. It can involve conducting interviews, surveys, watching behavior, or testing prototypes measuring what works and what does not (more on UX methods).

² Creating simple, low-fidelity layouts to outline the structure and functionality of a design.

³ Creation of interactive, high-fidelity models that simulate the look and feel of the final product for testing and feedback.

⁴ Ensures that digital products are usable by people with diverse abilities, including those with visual, auditory, cognitive, or motor impairments.

Wireframes are the rough sketches of websites or apps before one actually builds it. It is a wireframe that provides the basic ecosystem of screens for all digital media, as in where buttons and images and text will go, without regard to colors or fonts or actual design. This is an easy way to plan and arrange thoughts so that everything stands exactly where it belongs, but in a manner in which it can be used easily. It serves as a layout of the end design.

I worked with UX research, wireframing and ideation to help guide my designs into user-centered topical directions that aligned with the internal design culture of this company. Being able to drive through the elaborate design processes, with an anthropologist's eyes was something that shed light on behaviors and cultural insights in user interaction way beyond typical tech or design sectors. One example is how I helped to strengthen Wonderif Studio in developing new SEO⁵ methodologies by analyzing the cultural or social behaviors of its target audience.

⁵ Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the practice of optimizing websites and content to improve their visibility and ranking on search engine results pages, driving organic traffic.

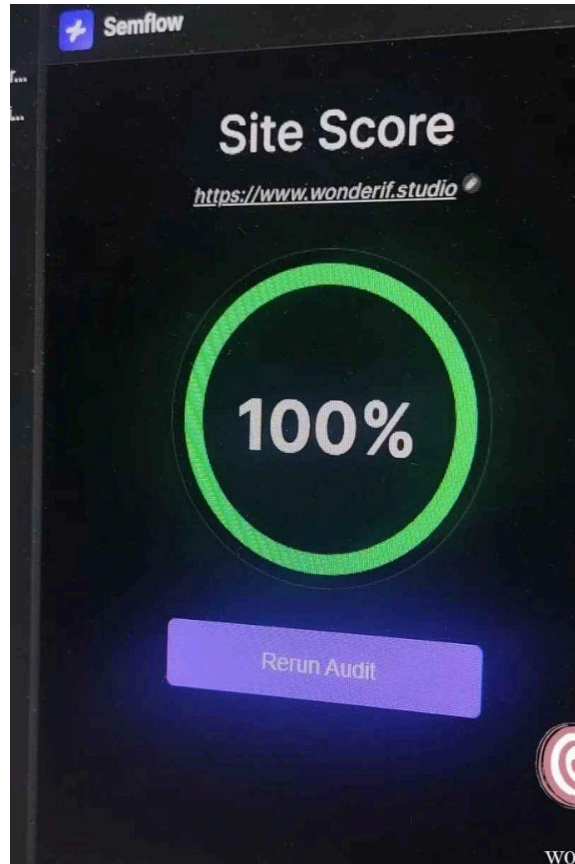


Fig: 1 Understanding SEO scores through Wonderif Studio's Website

And lastly, working in a shared office meant that I was learning the culture and community in an atmosphere with multiple companies. Drawing parallels with anthropological approaches, I was able to contribute valuable reflexivity-based thick descriptions of workplace culture, team dynamics as well as the broader socio-economic determinants and their consequences for work attitudes.

1.3.2 Benefits to the Student

The internship was a growth-inspiring experience for personal as well professional conditioning. I had to go through the basics of UX/UI design, standards for Design that are set by design schools and I had to learn the tools that every UX/UI designer needed such as Figma, Miro, and Adobe Illustrator. This has enhanced my ability to translate research into tangible design solutions, right from stakeholder feedback all the way through to user testing in practice. I also learned how to work in a creative, non-linear workplace and was able to compare between

professional discipline and creative freedom.

From an anthropological perspective, I refined my ability to apply thick description and reflexivity to understand workplace cultures, gender dynamics, and socio-economic influences in a tech-driven environment. This experience deepened my understanding of how corporate culture can vary significantly across different socio-economic and generational groups. It was an eye-opener to see how certain privileges, such as generational wealth, shaped work attitudes and behaviors within the team.

1.3.3 Problems/Difficulties (faced during the internship period)

Adapting to the flexible work environment was a significant challenge for me. The blurred lines between professional and personal interactions, coupled with a lack of clear boundaries around work discipline, often led to distractions and reduced productivity. It took time to adjust to this, especially coming from an academic background where schedules and discipline were more structured.

Another difficulty arose from the socio-economic disparities within the workplace. Observing the contrast between colleagues who were financially privileged and others who struggled with work-life balance brought personal discomfort. This disparity sometimes led to a lack of accountability and commitment, contributing to what I perceived as a culture of "quiet quitting"⁶ among some colleagues.

Political instability and infrastructural challenges, such as internet blackouts, further hindered work. The nationwide internet outage, for instance, led to significant delays in project delivery and created a tense working atmosphere.

1.3.4 Recommendations (to the company on future internships)

In my case, I would suggest for Wonderif Studio to understand that there should be a clearer line between social and work interactions. The company's informal and flexible environment fuels creativity, but perhaps instituting a few professional guidelines regarding when and how work hours will be could improve the focus of the team without inhibiting creative development. In addition, I think the company could utilize more formal procedures to mentor and guide interns.

⁶ Refers to an employee doing only the minimum required tasks of their job without going above and beyond, often as a response to burnout or dissatisfaction with workplace culture.

As much as we appreciate flexibility, it would be nice to have clear guidance so that the intern is aligned with what the company wants them to do when executing their tasks. There was nothing wrong with how Wonderif Studio approaches this, but when taking into account productivity with respect to time, this could be a solution. The last idea that Wonderif Studio should reflect on, is how the socio-economic diversity of a team can affect its overall productivity. In addition, the company can keep productivity stable in times of political or infrastructural disruption by providing backup plans.

Overall, this internship was a learning experience. Wonderif Studio can improve the supportive and production quality talent environment for future interns through fine-tuned discipline, mentorship & socio-economical inclusivity.

Chapter 2: Organization Context

2.1 Overview of the Company

2.1.1 History and Mission of the Company

Wonderif Studio was founded with the goal of partnering with ambitious businesses to create exceptional brand experiences. Wonderif is a design-oriented organization that was established with the aim of magnifying brand experiences. The guiding philosophy of the organization emphasizes the significance of design in aiding inspiration and enhancing positive relationships. The company quickly established itself as a key player in the design industry by empowering business owners to dream big and invest in their visions by captivating the audiences through their approach that focuses deeply on the desires of the customers and an exploratory mindset. Wonderif is particularly focused on branding and identity design, using customer-centric processes to create brands that resonate with audiences. Over time, the company has worked with a wide range of clients, including established firms like Sharif Metal and innovative initiatives such as Uddami Ami⁷, consistently delivering cutting-edge visual and digital solutions. Aligned with the firm's encircling goal of nurturing innovation, significance and progress in the areas of design and branding, the institution makes sure to be dedicated to delivering experiences that are not only pleasant but also remarkable.

Wonderif Studio was launched to collaborate with forward-thinking businesses on bespoke brand experiences. Wonderif is a design-centric Branding Studio focused on amplifying Brand Experiences. This company is built on the principle that design plays a vital role in facilitating inspiration and promoting healthy relationships. With the passage of time, Wonderif Studio has had a diverse experience partnering with both established companies like Sharif Metal to innovative initiatives such as Uddami Ami all together in order to deliver top-notch visual solutions for every single project. In line with the company's orbiting aim to cultivate meaningful, innovative output in design and branding; it ensures itself to be committed by providing not just delightful experiences but memorable ones as well.

⁷ An initiative by BRAC Business School, is an educational program aimed to empower women in their entrepreneurship journey.

Mission

Wonderif Studio is on a mission to develop the future gold standard in brand experience design; building some of the most magnetic and influential brands to enter into circulation. This vision is anchored by their ambition not only to match the industry standards but to overhaul them and deliver global benchmarks for brand experiences. These values: Creativity, Compassion, Curiosity, Growth and Meaningful Work are the core of Wonderif Studio.

Vision

The Vision of Wonderif Studio is all about creating and nurturing fabulous brands that resonate with their audiences. This is achieved by using design processes which are customer-centric, that not only meet but exceed client expectations. Wonderif positions all projects carried out in order to deliver the vision of clients before respective target markets.

2.1.2 UX/UI Department Overview

Wonderif Studio's UX/UI Department is responsible for providing proper assistance to users in order for them to not only feel easy while using a service but emotionally connected as well — basically defining it as their brand. The department ensures the delivery of frictionless design solutions, bringing it all together with seamless human-centered designs that build brand views and generate engagement on various digital avenues including but not limited to; websites, apps & marketing campaigns.

Core Responsibilities

1. UX Research & Market Analysis

UX research guides brand design and ensures that the products (and how they are marketed) align with the needs/expectations/beliefs users have. The team combines user research and market analysis to:

- Identify user pain points and needs.
- Create customer journeys that impact both digital and physical brand touchpoints.
- Support brand strategies through qualitative and quantitative data.

- Create feedback loops around usability and emotional reactions through test results, allowing the direction of designs to be informed by data.

2. Humane-Centered Design

The department's ethos is to incorporate the human center as a principle of any design.

The team's goal is to foster:

- How well the experience establishes an emotional connection with its users by means of interaction design, visual storytelling, and brand messaging.
- Inclusive and accessible experiences focused on universal design principles to accommodate different ages and abilities.
- Digital product user interfaces which allow for seamless and natural navigation around the tool.
- Empathy-driven design which entails solving user pain points by being aware of them and connecting brand values to mission-driven decisions.

3. Multifaceted Design Execution

The department goes beyond regular web & app design as it integrates UX principles with a wide range of deliverables such as

- Websites: Creating all-encompassing, brand-focused web sites with a design-first and functionality-driven approach to ensure that the site keeps its core identity while offering tremendous useability.
- Apps: Building mobile and desktop apps which are giving excellent user satisfaction by providing basic UI elements and seamless flows, for a better sale value.
- Content Design: Concentrating on the content (copy and visual) for apps that not just informs but really speaks to users in how they see information — ensuring every piece aligns with brand messaging from marketing and user intent.

4. Ad Campaign Target Setting

The department also delivers the output of its research to a page that displays an effective ad campaign strategy in coordination with our marketing team.

- Capture target user personas and segments determined by analyzing behavior data, as well as primary research.
- Create user-based ad visuals that showcase the brand as a separate identity to attract distinct audiences.
- Create goals for user interaction, return visits and brand retention which are measurable in terms of campaign performance.
- Iterate over visuals, copies, user flows via A/B testing to improve ad performance.

Collaborative Ecosystem

Within such a system, the UX/UI Department is surrounded by a host of other teams that contribute to unified branding and user experience. Working closely with the Marketing and Creative Teams to ensure visual identity across all digital touchpoints mirrors the global brand strategy. This partnership now allows a cohesive branding experience across everything from ads to social media, keeping designs user friendly and interesting. The UX/UI team also collaborates closely with the creative visualizers to pair brand identity with product functionality and create a continuous user experience throughout the touch points. This approach is a collaboration that makes sure the design and functionality support brand intentions as well as user needs.

It also works closely with the Data Analytics team and monitors how digital products and campaigns are performing. Working closely together, they watch how people behave and what Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)⁸ shift affecting and shaping design decisions based on real use cases. The data integration makes it possible to iterate and optimize UIs, so that brand & business goals are aligned with user satisfaction as well as engagement metrics.

Tools & Methodologies

The department works with a lightweight design toolkit that they use to create and refine brand experiences. Figma for interface Design, Wireframing and Collaboration is used for its combination of flexibility, sophistication and real-time collaboration with other team members, which is almost unmatched when it comes to designing complex projects as part of a team based design process. Adobe Illustrator is used to create beautiful vector graphics, logos and other

⁸ A measurable value used to evaluate the success of an individual, team, or organization in achieving specific objectives.

branded visual assets. Google Analytics is heavily used for measuring the impact of design decisions to understand how users are interacting from everything between user engagement till conversions (*Conversion rates measure how effectively your online platform encourages users to take action, whether that is making a purchase, subscribing to a newsletter, or filling out a contact form*) and other key metrics in order that different designs can be incorporated on top with real-world usage data.

The department conducts research and testing using a range of methodologies to make sure these user needs are the basis for what we do. User interviews and surveys facilitate collecting first-hand experience, which gives an understanding of how the user is feeling when interacting with the website. These are ways to provide the team with insight into pain points and preferences that will help guide the larger direction for their design. Another key tool is A/B testing⁹ platforms to test different design variations in digital interfaces (or ad creatives) and gauge what performs best with users. This methodical, data-driven process allows the department to iteratively improve both user experience as well more generally market effectiveness of the brand.

2.2 Company Culture and Structure

Wonderif Studio has a very unique cultural style, the way it keeps creativity in its core. The company is based within a coworking location, surrounded by other startups and companies which creates an environment that inspires innovation using all available tools. This kind of configuration entreats informal employee interactions especially during common coffee breaks and social events. Whilst this is very much a relaxed workspace, it can often make discipline and focus slightly harder to curb, leading to inefficiencies at times of time management.

⁹ A method of comparing two versions of a design, product, or feature to determine which performs better based on user interactions and metrics

A core value of the company would be their focus on giving a lot creative freedom. Employees are also told to experiment with new ideas, and advised that it is all right if they make mistakes as long as there are no real-world consequences. This raises a question of whether this flexibility that ensures to have options for the individual in experimenting and growing are not counter-intuitive but rather about questions of accountability or more so about the cost of wasting time due to lack focus.

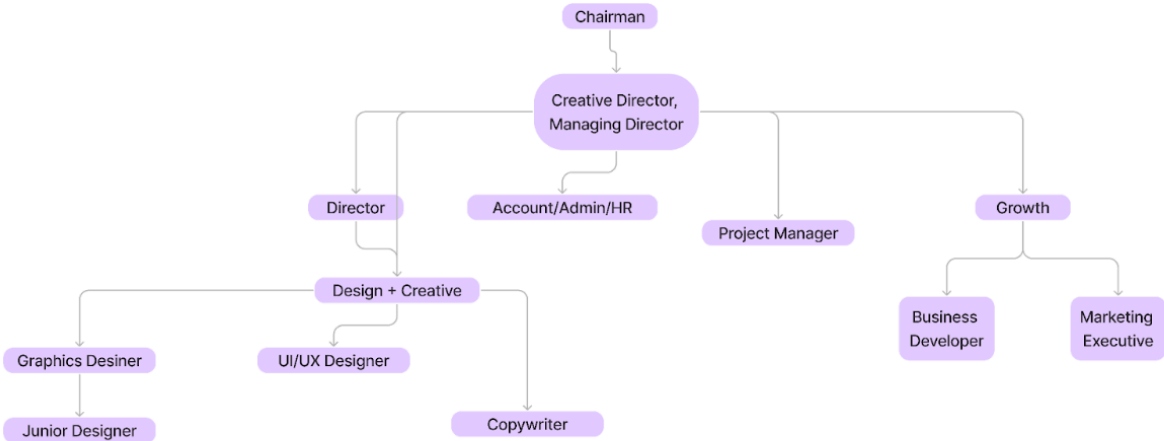


Fig: 2 Company Structure

For all intents and purposes, the environment is very casual but with a massive dependence on leadership to keep things genuine and legitimate. The team has very high regards for Mr. Faisal Omar, the creative director who essentially sets a work-culture standard and makes sure things get delivered. A lot of the team relies on his direction, and other external factors such as political instability or infrastructural issues have negative impacts in terms of productivity when he is not available. This signals a culture of intensive internal surveillance and self-regulation by association with the presence of the leader, which relates to Foucault's Panopticon¹⁰.

¹⁰ A system where individuals regulate their behavior because they feel constantly observed, even if surveillance is not active.

2.2.1 Leadership Style

The leadership style of Wonderif Studio is an empathic and collaborative one. The creative director, Mr. Faisal Omar is known for handling challenges with empathy and understanding. Even in stressful situations, he tends to remain on the side of compassion rather than giving his employees a harsh remark. This leadership style aids in the continuous turnover of a desirable work environment where employees feel secure, even if tensions do boil over due to tight deadlines or project setbacks.

Mr. Faisal Omar also represents a big problem: an over-reliance on top-down leadership. The key decisions are too centralized, and the team depends on him to direct projects and take important decisions. At times, this can be seen as frustrating when the top of the leadership is missing (as seen during the student blockades that happened in July 2024).

2.2.2 HR Practices

The HR practices at Wonderif Studios follows an informal and adjustable culture apparent from the bottom up. In fact, interns go through the exact same onboarding process as full-time employees so that they can be up and running with a team in no time. The flexibility of work timing can sometimes affect the general day-to-day discipline as employees come in late and stay back till way at night considering their personal schedules. This moving around is great for people in creative roles but may be quite challenging to those who prefer the structure of being sat at a fixed desk all day.

2.3 UX/UI Design Practices at Wonderif Studio

Wonderif Studio follows a user centric approach to build robust UX/UI with data driven methodologies. It means crafting well-functioning user experiences that truly connect with users, enabling simple and natural navigation across platforms. The team balances qualitative insights with quantitative data to make intentional design decisions that are user centric, but also in-line with brand goals. One of the key principles is User-Centered Design (UCD). Wonderif's emphasizes on identifying user pain points, mapping customer journeys and understanding the target audience behavior. This informs the design process and helps to create emotionally connected, functional experiences. They focus mainly on inclusive, and universal design that

caters to people of different demographics and abilities and their empathy-driven approach to design speaks directly to the principles of user-centered design and content.

Wonderif Studio is heavily involved in iterative design and testing, such as A/B tests and usability testing is done and then presented to validate design choices, ensuring that each is designed for engagement, simplicity of use and emotional response. It is clear in projects such as the Sharif Metal website redesign that this method was repeated during design, when designs changed back and forth to be at par with both user choice and brand.

Collaboration is another persistent theme within the studio's design practice between teams. The UX/UI department collaborates closely with Marketing, Creative and Product Development teams to ensure a consistent brand experience at all touchpoints. This also includes syncing with the Data Analytics team to record user actions in order to inform design decisions using data. What this ensures is that the design does not only look good but it is also aligned with business and user objectives.

Finally, using design as a tool that drives the workflow at Wonderif Studio makes designs for the new web faster. Figma, for example, allows teams to collaborate in real-time and iterate quickly while Adobe Illustrator lets designers make visual assets their top-notch. Google Analytics — For user engagement and conversion rates tracking, to help the team make data-backed decisions about design. It all lends itself to an integrated method that enables designs to be perpetually improved for the benefit of users, and thus business.

2.4 Recommendations

Even though I love the creative freedom in Wonderif Studio, I think there is room for more accountability and that this can be done without causing any blockades or provocations. More regular and structured project timelines could have provided the structure necessary to keep everyone in line with what needs doing. A milestone is when you firmly agree to get something completed at a certain level, and it will vary from project-to-project what the actual milestones are — but some form of indicator is necessary that tells that everything is still working, otherwise there would be no point in being flexible. This would allow the team to be creative whilst making sure that they get things done. For many of the major choices, my observations lean toward appealing to Mr. Faisal Omar — he is after all the creative director. This is a double-edged sword for the company because while his empathetic leadership style has gotten

him where he is, it presents potential risk at times. To that end, I would suggest delegating the leadership of certain aspects to other members of the team, such as training key individuals in the team to make decisions when he is away.

As good as experiential, hands-on learning is always helpful and in most of the cases there could be introduction to some structure behind training for new employees or interns. More than a simple round of formal onboarding sessions that slowly introduce new designers to tools like Figma or Adobe Illustrator, it would be better for those entering this field to feel confident and proud the minute they jump in. The flexible work hours and the informal office culture are two things that give Wonderif its own charm, but occasionally make self-discipline difficult to maintain. I think they need to be better at boundaries for informal chats, particularly when important projects are on the line. This would enable the team to take advantage of a creative, collaborative space and increase productivity overall.

The company already uses Google Analytics to measure user engagement, but I see an opportunity in bridging this data more deeply into the design process. Regular review cycles can be conducted in user behavior data and performance metrics across departments to give a clear picture on how each design decision was grounded by concrete insights. Further collaboration between the UX/UI team can have nuanced this process even more, as it would help validate user-friendly designs to be optimized from a business perspective too.

Chapter 3: Anthropological Insights Applied in UX/UI Design

3.1 Role of Anthropology in Design Research

Anthropology plays a crucial role in design research by offering deep insights into human behavior, culture, and social interactions, which are essential for creating user-centered products and experiences. The application of anthropological methods, such as ethnography and participant observation, helps researchers and designers understand the context in which users interact with products, systems, and services as these methods allow for a holistic approach to design, while ensuring that solutions are not only functional but also meaningful and culturally relevant to the people they are designed for.

3.1.1 Application of ethnography, participant observation, and other anthropological methods

At its core is ethnography, the intensive observational fieldwork on which anthropology was founded. Ethnography in design research reveals users' unarticulated needs based on their behavior patterns, rituals and culture. From this method researchers are able to infer how users actually use products in the real world (as opposed to what they say about their usage from surveys/interviews). It can be dug deeper into the user experience and identify those small pain points, workarounds or emotional connections merely by immersing oneself in their lives.

Another important anthropological method is participant observation in which a researcher enters the community or group of study and participates actively. This method is used for design research as it helps the designer to actually face problems, frustrations and excitements that users may face. When researchers participate in the same activities as users, it helps them to have a more empathetic look at what their experience feels like and helps to develop designs that make intuitive sense from a humane perspective. For instance, participant observation can lead to insights such as whether their employees are successful at navigating the physical and digital spaces of work based on actual stalking behavior, how they collaborate with colleagues or where do all barriers come from. In return, these insights will enable well-crafted and fully informed office technologies to be developed with respect to real worker behavior.

Anthropological methods are highly useful as they provide insights into the culture in which products and services will be used. Culture affects how people see and interact with design — the colors they consider significant, symbols that even carry special status for them down to

social conventions. Using tools such as in-depth interviews, or focus groups anthropologists can identify cultural motivations and framework of values to help understand what shapes consumption preferences. If we design a mobile app for say, the Middle East region, then we can see why it is important as well to consider the cultural background of the people belonging from that place; importance of colors/icons/gestures are important when designing the app, and when giving it personality. Traditional market research is very quantitative but with anthropology, this gives a more holistic understanding of users. An anthropological outlook on human beings regarding (socio)economic environment and all other aspects of life, such as familial associations or community relations provides such a holistic perspective that enables designers to propose solutions that can solve problems while adapting social and cultural context of users. For example, if we design healthcare products or services — understanding the broader social network of a user might help us to learn how decisions on health access are taken at any given time within families or communities. Such insight could inspire designs which enabled better communication between patients, caregivers and health professionals.

Co-creation and participatory design is another place where anthropology figures in. These are the methods, where users participate in designing and providing their opinions. Anthropology can add layers of context, culture and socialization to design research that lets us understand users where they live and focus on their cultural contexts, lived experiences and ways in which humans interact. Through the practice of using research methods like ethnography or participant observation, designers can find incredibly rich insights beyond data at surface level – which would lead to a more human-centered, intuitive and culturally relevant product or user experience design. Anthropology makes sure that design solutions are not just good but designed with the people and communities they serve in mind.

3.2 Cultural Relativism and UX/UI

Cultural Relativism is an anthropological principle that says no culture is inherently superior to another, and must be understood based on its own standards. In regards to UX/UI design we can use this principle and acknowledge that the preferences, behaviors & expectations of users are entrenched in culture, hence there is not a single best practice for everyone. When designing for a global audience, cultural relativism guides us not to assume that design standards from one culture will apply globally. For instance, minimalistic designs adopted by Western countries

(especially in Switzerland) may not hold well when it comes to users of SouthEast Asia, Chinese or Japanese high-context cultures that rely heavily on detailed and robust content interface. Swiss design is simple and minimalist to serve the purpose of being helpful or efficient. Conversely, cultures that design for filling the screen with more context since they prefer denser information like in East Asia produce what might be seen as cluttered interfaces to non-indigenous populations.

These are examples of design based cultural relativism. What works in one culture will not work in other cultures or circumstances. Western designs like single screen designs do not want to complicate the user flow, but Chinese and Japanese think differently — more variations on a single-screen is appearing to be true to give reassurance from users as well. Designers who maintain the principle of cultural relativism acknowledge that all these interfaces and design approaches breathe these cultural values into it, therefore instead of one possible judging as superior to others in their culture.

3.2.1 Adapting design for different user demographics and cultural contexts.

The age, gender, level of education and economic status of users will impact the way they interact with technology on a daily basis. Some of the younger users may also prefer something more intuitive, faster interface and older users might need some simpler designs with clear steps navigation due to their levels of digital literacies not being similar. At lower income levels, they may use mobile devices for access to the internet and presumably favor a "mobile first" approach in these settings. In countries such as India or Bangladesh, where low-cost smartphones quickly enabled widespread mobile usage (and a significant percentage of the population effectively skipped desktop altogether), this necessitates the design at the very least to be mobile-first approach with less and information rich interface that can cater both literate & semi-learnt audience. In the context of designing for Banking in India, we come across such users who are more price conscious and believe that content heavy designs can save them time to get information faster. In contrast, Swiss design is all about simplicity and seeks for the ultimate goal of clearness — most probably in a well-educated society with high internet penetration. It has traditionally pushed simplicity and utilitarian UIs to make sure nothing looks overwhelming, an approach that aligns with the value of a high-speed society which is prone towards straightforwardness.

User perception and interaction of design are shaped by the cultural context. Implicit communication, multiple layers of meaning, content-rich interface — these are hallmarks of high-context cultures like Japan, China and India. Users in these regions may appreciate depth and certainty, issuing a high need to see all the information they want upfront so that it can smoothly be navigated. Japanese web design might be perceived as complex, but there is a method to its complexity — it gives users more information than they would expect which reduces uncertainty and instills trust. In the same way, apps like WeChat are super-apps in China that offer a variety of services all within one app. But this messy design is well suited to communities which are known as collectivist societies; cultures that emphasize efficiency and multitasking where users prefer fewer but stronger platforms. On the other hand, low-context cultures (Switzerland or USA) appreciate neat interfaces and clear conversations. In these regions, users often want to find their answers quickly and with a non-invasive navigation style — this format follows functionality for them in addition to expecting all this but slightly more minimalist. To Swiss users, on the other hand, a page based Grid layout¹¹ with neat readability and easy navigation fits well in terms of their preference of orderliness in culture.

Designers also need to be attentive about the way language and literacy come into play in other cultures as well. Since interfaces must adapt to a wide range of typical language preferences and literacy levels across different regions, places like India where many languages are spoken use multiple writing systems. This can manifest in creating icon-heavy, visual first designs that void language barriers while also being accessible. In design, this kind of localization predicated on the culture does not only mean images but also the meanings symbols and colors carry. For instance in the Indian subcontinent, white is associated with the clothing that is wrapped around the dead, whereas it implies purity or single-mindedness in other western countries. The colors, icons and other choice of design element must be implemented by the designers in a way that suits the locals' cultural context so it will not be mistaken for something else. A vital element to consider is that designs must be adjustable with regards to accessibility, because different cultures represent inconsistent access to technology, certain groups (those with disabilities, in particular) experience distinctive difficulties utilizing digital products. Especially for China and

¹¹ A system where individuals regulate their behavior because they feel constantly observed, even if surveillance is not active.

India, with the majority of internet traffic originating from mobile phones; having a design that is accessible even on smaller screen sizes has become mandatory. This could mean this is done in such a way that fonts are readable, buttons big enough to tap and the navigation is easy for all users, both physical and cognitive. In contrast, in a country such as Japan—rich with technological sophistication and digital literacy—an interface that offers more complicated data sets can be necessary while still providing security and control. This level of inclusive design is more than just catering to the handicapped. It also enables designing for the entire range of technologically literate and those from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. To give an example, users in lower-income areas with less data or slower internet use lightweight but convenient apps that can easily load without too much resources, and this would be more desirable for places with similar demography.

Designers must change the way they work to fit within cultural norms and values. For instance, the respect for hierarchy and formality in some cultures may necessitate a more structured conservative design whereas other lower context or monochronic value systems primarily disregarding authority might prefer to be enthralled by bold experimental designs. Designs that encourage community will likely resonate more in collectivist cultures like China, while individualistic United States users may love designs that offer a level of autonomy or customization.

3.2.2 Research Design and Data Collection

Research design and data collection are key steps in UX/UI to learn about the user's needs, behavior and preferences when designing for a different cultural context. To provide a complete and accurate dataset to inform design decisions that result in a final product truly relatable for our users. The research methodologies must be customized to these diverse user segments for the field as well, taking into consideration cultural norms and technological usage behaviors of each segment.

The USE Scorecard

Date:
 Product Name: *Sharif Metal* Evaluator Name: *Tarvir*
 Feature/Functionality: *Stire locator* Version Name/Number: *V1*

Usable (Context: Harmonize with user's contexts of use)

The feature adapts to user goals in the intended contexts of use.	
The feature sustains the stress of the setting.	
The feature syncs with the user's VAK limitations (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic).	
The user will be able to operate the feature in varying attention deficit or alerted states.	
Total	

Satisfying (Error: Prevent, cushion and reverse user errors)

The feature prevents users from making errors whenever possible.	
The feature provides a cushion when a potentially serious error is about to be made.	
Icons and visual elements (hard/soft keys) require no interpretation past a few seconds.	
The user is able to easily reverse or continue their task without any problem-solving.	
Total	

Easy (Interaction: Build intuitiveness by removing understanding)

The feature requires no interpretation—it will offer an affordance for use.	
The user can easily find what to do next.	
The feature requires no understanding, knowledge or any prior background or information.	
The user can perform tasks successfully without help, training or discovery time.	
Total	

Fig: 3 Scorecard for Data collection provided by Wonderif Studio

Research design is the part of cross-cultural UX/UI that allows one to conduct a study consistent with all cultural, social and economic aspects which are factors in user experiences. This includes choosing the right research methods to help researchers uncover insights from different types of users. Research design for a culturally diverse study depends upon both quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure that the users are completely understood.

Key Considerations:

- **Cultural Sensitivity:** The results of the research should be such as to apply for a culturally accepted social norm or value. For instance, in high-context cultures such as Japan and China (with a preference for implicit communication style or with more complex users) where detail is important, the questions should center around how users comprehend dense interfaces or processes. However, in examples of low-context cultures such as Switzerland, there is an emphasis on being clear, direct and concise.
- **Target Demographics:** A study must be designed specifically based on who the user is that you are going to test your designs with such as age, gender and literacy levels, among others in addition to socioeconomic background. For example, webpages or apps have been designed in India, taking into account the diversity of people from different socio-economic backgrounds, that is, level of technological sophistication and literacy levels etc.
- **Mobile vs. Desktop Preferences:** Mobile first design is very important because these days, many countries like India and China have already surpassed desktop technology. Data collection should be centered around understanding user needs and their interactions with mobile apps in a digitally-driven digital economy, the problems they face during that experience, and what solution works for them.

For culturally specific UX/UI design, several approaches have registered relevant data. These involve both ethnographic and traditional UX/UI research methods like user interviews, surveys, usability tests and A/B testing. The methods and approaches chosen should balance the cultural depth of understanding required versus what informs actionable design data.

A. Ethnography and Participant Observation

It is especially relevant to the study of users in natural settings where other methods fall short. It is a way of seeing how users engage with technology in their own cultural and social surroundings, delivering deep insights into invisible actions, desires and difficulties. A closer look at India might tell us things like the fact that users from

different regions navigate an app differently, how they prioritize tasks and which visual cues work best due to a massive regional diversity. In the same way, participant observation exposes researchers to consuming the artifact in an end-user-like manner. User Research could show us in a Chinese super app such as WeChat how people naturally multitask within one platform to manage payments, messaging and social media all at once with everything under interfaces. This allows a more in-depth insight into the user experience of such an interpersonally complex, culturally rich environment.

B. User Interviews and Focus Groups

Users' thoughts, feelings and even cultural expectations are known through interviews to focus groups. These means enable users in different cross-cultural contexts to communicate on how their culture affects the way they may interact with digital products. For example, knowing that trust and reassurance is vital to consumers in Japan, it can be asked why they insist on seeing every single option available even if it seems like an over-cluttered mess of a webpage. In contrast, in the efficiency and simplicity-driven Switzerland, one might have focus group discussions around how removal of visual elements lessen a design's overall usability.

C. Surveys and Questionnaires

Surveys are effective for gathering quantitative data from a broad area of users with differing cultural perspectives. Whereas well-defined surveys can uncover trends in user tastes and behavior such as the level of complexity of an interface or how they navigate an app. On the other hand, languages may not always have a direct translation and cultural norms in surveys need to be adapted so that questions are understood as intended. In case of multiple languages, such as multilingual regions like the Indian Subcontinent, a survey should also be available in different language options based on the contextual (Users' linguistic background) requirements. Questions must be asked culturally specifically as users in different cultures may understand the question differently.

D. Usability Testing

It is functioning and on the go since usability testing helps UX/UI design researchers to view in real-time how a user interacts with a product. Cross-cultural usability testing is where the test scenarios should be modified to reflect users' technological environment and their values. In China, this would include testing how well mobile apps adapt to the super app business model where users are starting to expect more functionality through a single service. Testing would also observe the navigational journey of users to different features and where the user faces problems in managing multiple tasks within one app. Usability tests in Japan, for instance, could be how users respond to web pages rich in information and what type of information is sufficient for them to feel at ease.

E. A/B Testing and Iterative Feedback

A/B Testing design choices and learning which elements from different cultures work well with people helps with design. Researching two or more versions of a new design is often enlightening to target market preferences when it comes to visual style, navigation, or even structuring content. In India for example, an A/B on a minimalist layout vs content-heavy design will be done to check which variant is more user-engaging and along with that easy-to-comprehend too. More focused, such as, testing if simple navigation works better than structured, layered navigation structure in Switzerland can act as a good comparison when testing so that feedback upon it can help to understand the design choices better based on data.

Once data has been collected, the next step is to transform and apply it in the design process. This involves applying the lessons learned from ethnographic studies, usability tests and A/B testing in order to design culturally appropriate & human-centered products. For instance if a study in India were to say with evidence that users want text heavy information, then one can ensure key details are put forward rather than behind layers of navigation. When the research says that Japanese users like complex and detailed interfaces, they are created to deliver a ton of information while still making it super clear. And one of the most crucial steps before making culturally adaptable UX/UI design is doing research and collecting data. Through a variety of methods and tools such

as ethnography, usability testing etc., researchers can gain in-depth understanding about how different cultural environments and user demographics affect the way people interact with digital products. The result is that the ultimate design will not only be usable, but also cross-culturally substantial and available allowing it to provide a natural end user experience for users around the world.

3.2.3 Limitations and Challenges of Cross-Cultural UX/UI Research

Different cultural backgrounds and user demographics demand the UX/UI design approach to be adaptable, despite some challenges. The culture complexity across regions is one of the main restrictions. Cultures are diverse and factoring in an entire county where one might speak different languages, have varied socio-economic backgrounds, or even regional tastes can be greatly different. For instance in India, a design which works well for urban places, may not work as it is in rural areas henceforth rendering no 'one size fits all' solution to the problem. If too many generalizing interpretations are made about culture, it can also exclude other user groups creating lots of headaches in the design process. The second most difficult factor is the technology access and infrastructure that varies across regions. Affordably priced smartphones with restricted internet access are the norm in emerging economies, making it clear that most designers will need to embrace a mobile-first (or exclusive) approach. It also limits the interactivity and up-to-date interfaces that can be provided, effectively reducing much of what is possible to show. On the other hand, in more advanced areas where there is a very clear internet infrastructure system for users to enjoy — whether it be social relationships or watching films and even working with colleagues — design choices will still have their relative adjudications or decisions determined by user expectation.

All are compounded when a language barrier or literacy barriers, especially in regions where multiple languages are spoken. However, perhaps some translations may not be adequate — for languages like Hindi or Chinese, and with the culture that comes embedded in language giving way to misreads. Even icons which have universal appeal need to be designed with caution in mind as their interpretation would never be the same among different areas (illiteracy is another parameter that varies). This poses a significant issue with ensuring that interfaces are clear and culturally resonant. One of the biggest problems is how we balance cultural sensitivity with

usability. High-context cultures, such as Japan may benefit from a detail-rich higher information design. For global products, it is a never-ending struggle to find the balance between usability and taking into account cultural norms without severely impacting user experience. Another problem is cross-cultural testing and feedback. Due to cultural reasons users can be hesitant in giving negative feedback, and hence affect the results of usability tests. As such, it becomes difficult to come to general and accurate conclusions for each region which can often be misinterpreted as a misunderstanding of the user base. It can be challenging to localize designs properly without being able to perform large-scale testing across various markets, which takes a lot of resources and budget as well.

Inherently, the global standardization versus localization struggle remains. While global brands need to pay a great deal of attention to maintaining a consistent identity across markets, they must also take local nuances into account in the design process. This approach, while validating for some populations better than others in a more local sense can result in inconsistency across global products by creating redundancy which inflates the overall cost and complicates design intent. Not only are cultural contexts continuously changing, but when one is combined with such trends the spontaneous changes would force designers to be all-time on their toes and hence updating designs which can prove more costly. However, these limitations do not take away from the fact that designing for Cultural Sensitivity is a key element to building universal user-centered products. But that approach requires careful research and testing in addition to adaptability towards the needs of different groups.

3.2 Case Studies from the Internship

Throughout my internship at Wonderif Studio, I was involved in several key projects where I could apply anthropological insights to UX/UI design. By integrating concepts from anthropology, such as cultural relativism, participant observation, and ethnographic methods, I gained deeper insights into user behavior and preferences, allowing us to create more user-centered designs. The following case studies, based on the monthly reports and diaries from the internship, highlight how anthropological insights were practically applied to enhance user experiences.

3.2.1 Sharif Metal Website Redesign: Understanding Socio-Economic Influences on UX

I have had the pleasure to work on multiple projects, one of which was redesigning the Sharif Metal website in order for it to be simpler, easier and more practical. I undertook this project as a piece of work of anthropology, utilizing anthropological methods and user interviews to acquire insight into users who are mostly individuals from middle class and above.

Many of the users I observed during this project had satisfactory digital literacy which impacted heavily how they were able to use websites. However, they regularly got lost in the abstract navigation because to them it was too many clicks. This goes well with anthropological theories on cognitive load. There is another observation regarding socio-economic pressures, wherein those from less privileged communities might not have the resources for high end equipment and training thus making them more receptive to a more simplistic, intuitive interface. To further reinforce this, we simplified our site navigation by reducing steps to the information people wanted — product info and options for service. We also made use of big buttons and easy-to-understand labels to enhance user experience. The design changes that were made, came from understanding the site better within its socio-economic context so not only should it look nice but be practical for those who are meant to use it.

This followed the principles, if rather severely in this case, of cultural relativism, where we should design according to what these users needed (rather than designing something that looked good but was not very useful) instead of just following western logics.

To wrap up the whole process and outcome, here is a structured overview of the “Sharif Metal Website Redesign” case study:

- **Project Goal:** The goal was to establish a cohesive, mobile-first website that was simplistic enough for users of all levels of digital literacy — most from middle and lower socio-economic groups.

- **Anthropological Insights:**
 - Using ethnographic methods such as participant observation and user testing, it became clear that multi-layered navigation was a struggle for users, and they often could not find necessary information about the product.
 - Based on observations, there was a clear preference for larger buttons and as few steps in the navigation path as possible, with many users accessing this website via mobile.

- **Design Implementation:**
 - Decreased the steps taken to navigate through core information therefore simplifying the website.
 - Enhanced accessibility by using larger, clearly labeled buttons for key actions.

- **Outcome:**
 - Analytics indicated a massive improvement in bounce rates¹² on the homepage particularly among mobile viewers and time on-site thus consistently meaning, usability with engagement had improved.

¹² The percentage of visitors who leave a website after viewing only one page, indicating their lack of engagement or interest.

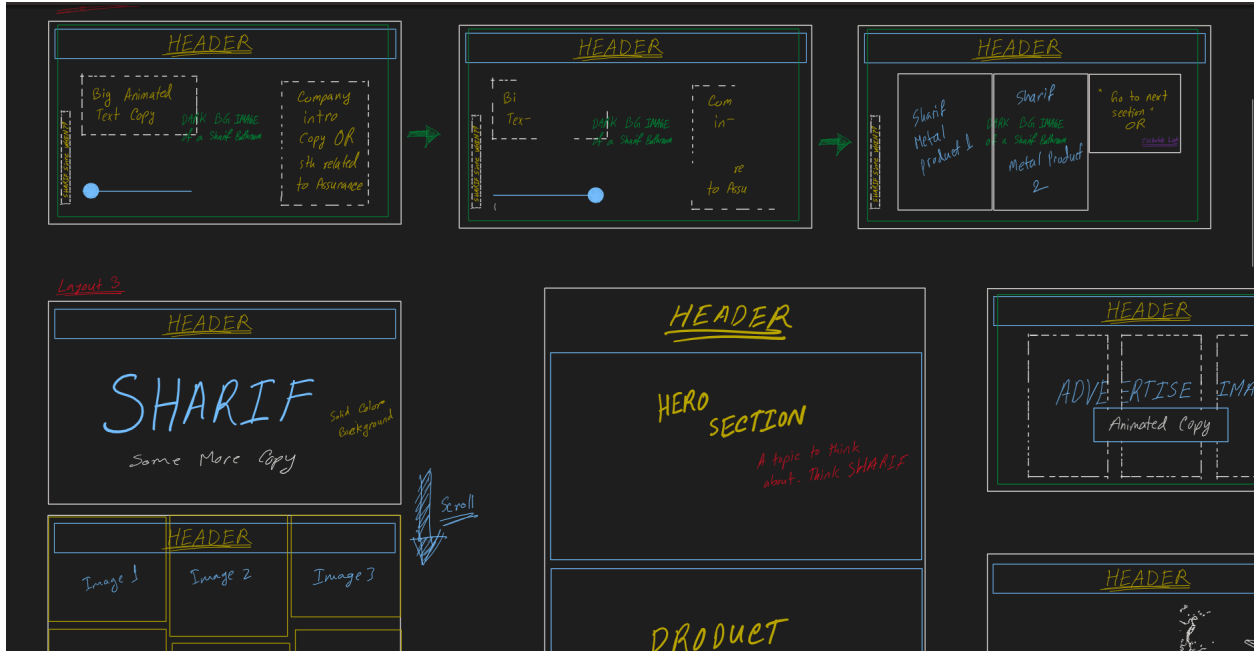


Fig: 4 Sharif Metal Website Wireframe

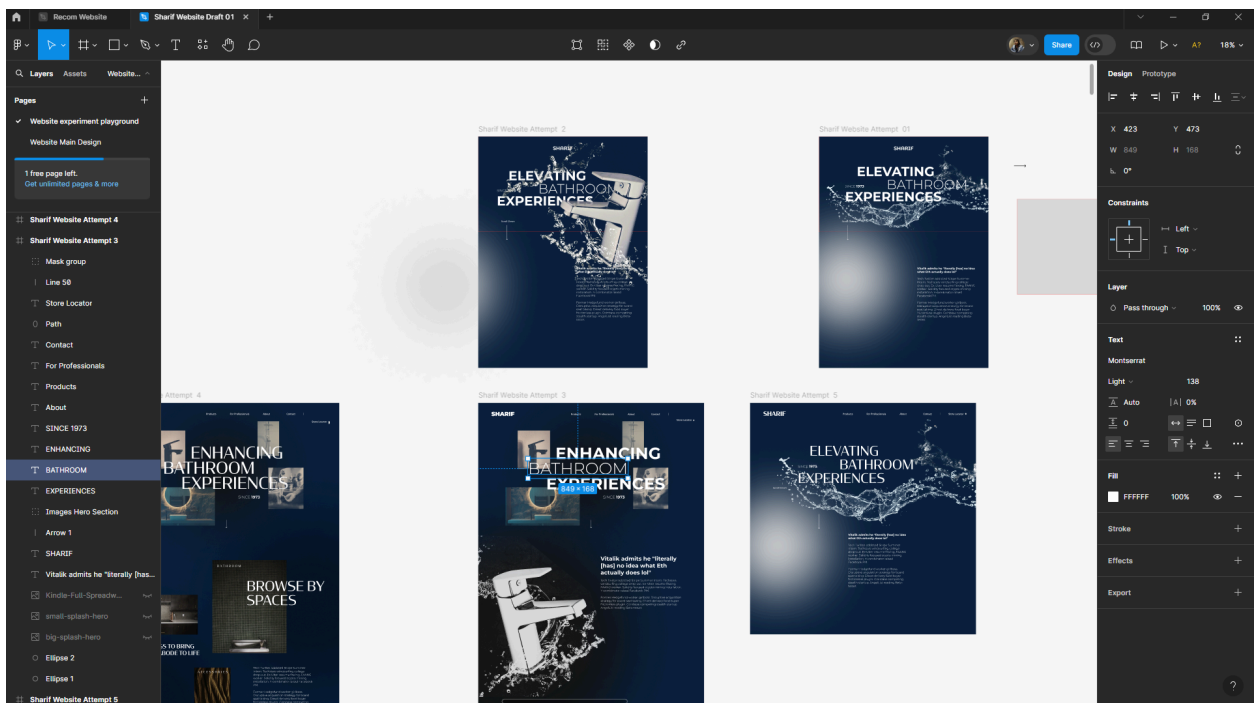


Fig: 5 Sharif Metal Website UI Design Iterations

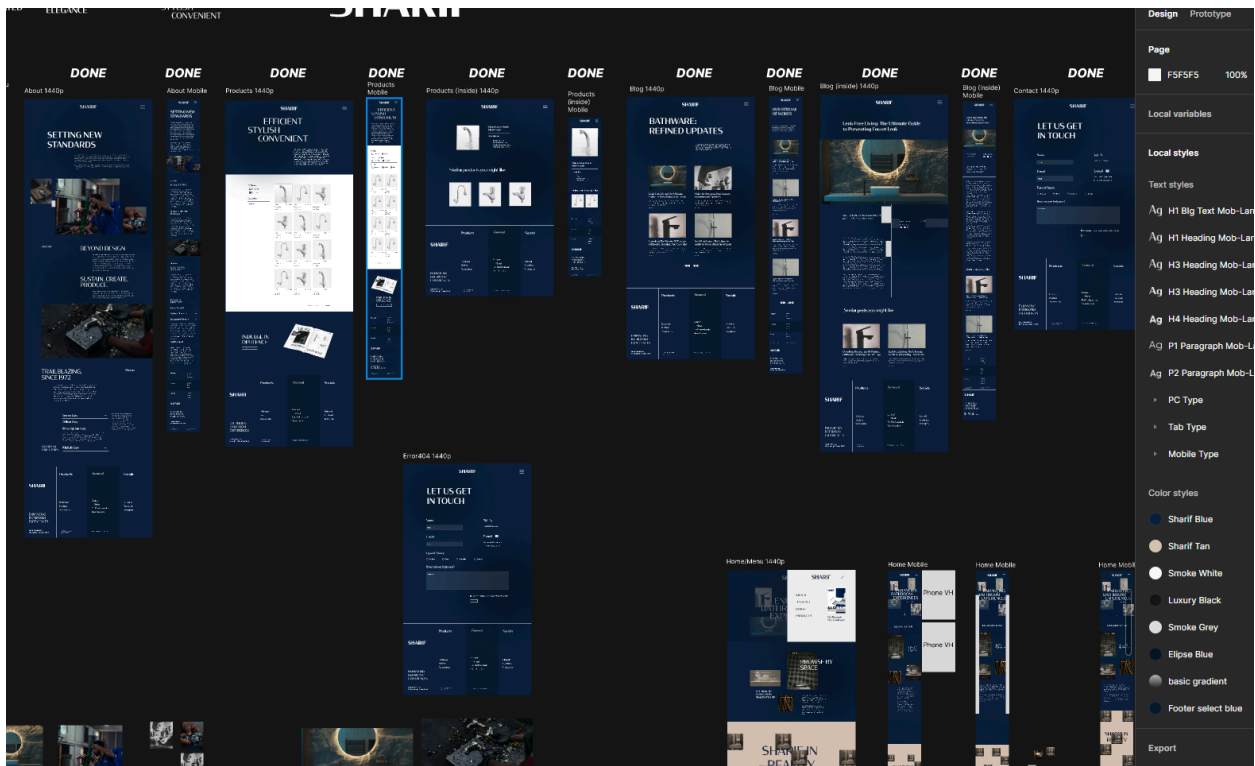


Fig: 6 Sharif Metal Website Final UI Design



Fig: 7 Sharif Metal Website Menu UX Change

3.2.2 CELSIUS Energy Drink Branding: Applying Ethnographic Methods to Understand Youth Culture

One of the other major projects was redesigning CELSIUS Energy Drink. This project was about understanding the youth culture and consumer behavior to keep the product relevant among younger people who prioritize fitness, health & active lifestyles.

I investigated the practices and values of everyday life in this cohort using ethnographic methods that paid particular attention to how energy drinks were weaved into their daily routines. This included informal user interviewing, and the analysis of health, energy & branding through their social media interactions. Which brings us to the cultural context here — bold, vibrant visuals were preferred by younger consumers, and thus viewed as garish and intimidating, while clean minimalism was associated with health-conscious products. They also prized sustainability and authenticity — factors that influenced their purchase tendencies.

Findings from this ethnography were used to rebrand CELSIUS with a modern, minimalistic look that incorporated vibrant colors as cues for energy and activity. The sustainability messages in the design itself further aligns its brand with that of their target audience. This is how anthropological insights were used to shape brands which could connect more deeply with the cultural values of its user demographic.

To wrap up the whole process and outcome, here is a structured overview of the “CELSIUS Energy Drink Branding” case study:

- **Project Goal:** To revamp the product packaging to attract urban, health-oriented, fitness-inclined youth.
- **Anthropological Insights:**
 - Through ethnographic interviews we discovered that younger users linked minimalism to authenticity and trustworthiness.
 - Vibrant colors represented an active lifestyle and thus they were used to make the product look energetic.

- **Design Implementation:**
 - Led to the creation of a simple but bold energy driven packaging design.
 - Incorporated sustainability messages into branding with the target audience values in mind.

- **Outcome:**
 - Focus group test subjects described the new design as "modern," "clean" and "trustworthy." Expected advantages are in terms of increased attractiveness in the market and brand reinforcement towards user preferences.

3.3.3 Luxeon Hotel Website Revamp: High-Context vs. Low-Context Communication

Another major project with a consumer anthropology perspective was the designing of the Luxeon Hotel Website and App. This project was aimed at the high-end international traveler and for many, they were coming from a cultural context where people communicate in more indirect ways and information is very nuanced. At first I researched the phenomenon via interviews of frequent travelers from high-context cultures (East Asian countries) as well as low-context cultures (Western European countries). The way high-context and low-context users tried to obtain information differed largely. While the former were much more demanding in detailed, visually rich introduction scenes with already built-in contemporary contexts into their web experiences upfront; the later were for minimalist designs speaking a clear message of immediate booking optioning.

This insight informed our decision to create the Luxeon Hotel website with two pathways; a content filled homepage for users wanting or inclined towards in-depth discovery of facilities and services, and another targeting quick booking from time-deficient users. This satisfied the high and low context cultural preferences, but it demonstrated an ethnocentric approach that was not culturally relative at all.

This project showed the use of cultural adaptability in UX/UI design. By understanding that users of various cultural backgrounds process information differently from one another, we were able to make a single design that is designed inclusively and accessible for many different users.

To wrap up the whole process and outcome, here is a structured overview of the “Luxeon Hotel Website Revamp” case study:

- **Project Goal:** Building a luxury travel platform to serve multiple cultures and ways of communicating across the globe.

- **Anthropological Insights:**
 - Cross-cultural studies revealed differences in user preferences
 - Users were more likely to choose content that was colorful, complex and elaborate for the East Asian (high-context culture) users.
 - Low-context cultures, such as the Westerners, preferred simple designs and direct navigation.

- **Design Implementation:**
 - Created dual user pathways
 - A content-rich alternative, featuring in-depth descriptions of hotel services for high-context customers.
 - Minimalistic version only for low-context users who focus on quick bookings.

- **Outcome:**
 - This new design approach aims to offer a delightful user experience by accommodating regional differences, and the result is supposed to increase conversion rates due to respective tailored experiences for these users.

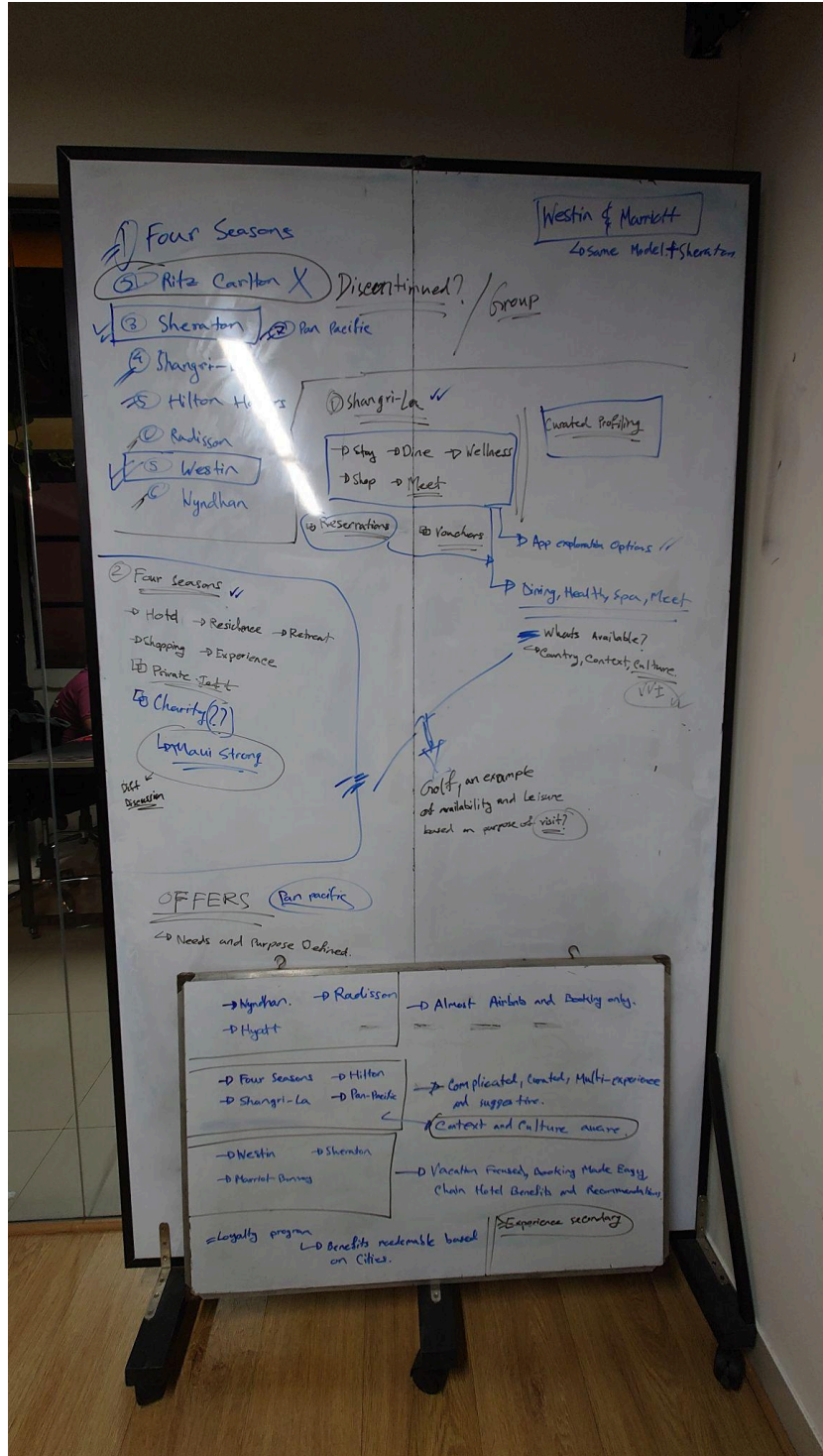


Fig: 8 Luxeon Web Research

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Process

4.1 Overview of Anthropological Methods

Drawing on some of the classic anthropological methodologies including: ethnography, participant observation and thick description, this study delved into user interaction, workplace culture and design practice. These methods were selected for their potential to provide deeper understanding of nuanced human behavior, cultural contexts, and social dynamics that combine into a foundation for the kind of user-centered and culturally relevant UX/UI design this project aims to achieve.

4.1.1 Application of Methods During the Internship

1. Ethnography

- **Overview:** Ethnography is an immersive approach where one observes and interacts with a community or social setting to identify cultural norms, practices, behaviors, etc.
- **Application:** During the internship, ethnographic observations were conducted both at the workplace and in user interaction contexts. For example, field notes and diaries were used to document team dynamics at Wonderif Studio and user behaviors in the context of project designs.

Ethnographic observations were made of the workplace and in context with users during the internship, such as field notes and diaries, in which the team dynamics of Wonderif Studio were recorded, while experiences of users toward the design of the project were documented.

- **Insights and Impact:** These insights informed design decisions by pointing out cultural preference, such as users prefer simplicity in mobile on the Sharif Metal project, or vibrant and minimal aesthetics for CELSIUS Energy Drink branding.

2. Participant Observation

- **Overview:** In this approach, the researcher immerses themselves in the group that is being studied to experience firsthand – their life – and empathize with their needs.
- **Application:** Participant observation was used to understand both workplace dynamics and end-user interaction with prototypes. As an example, involvement in team brainstorms gives off a sense of how teams work together to tackle user pain points.
- **Insights and Impact:** By observing team members, we noticed that many of them often brought their socio-economic background into the design processes based on how they individually solved problems. As it was revealed through participant observation in the Sharif Metal website project that users are feeling very frustrated with multi-step navigation, interface adjustments were made to ensure a streamlined approach.

3. Thick Description

- **Overview:** Thick description provides detailed, context-rich accounts of observed phenomena offering deeper meanings for user behaviors and cultural patterns.
- **Application:** The thick descriptions were applied to users' interactions with digital products and ethnographic accounts and descriptions of how people of various demographics moved through interfaces and responded to particular design elements.
- **Insights and Impact:** For instance, during the Luxeon Hotel project, thick descriptions revealed that high-context communication was critical among East Asian users. Consequently, content pathways with rich visual cues were incorporated to satisfy these mobile-use populations.

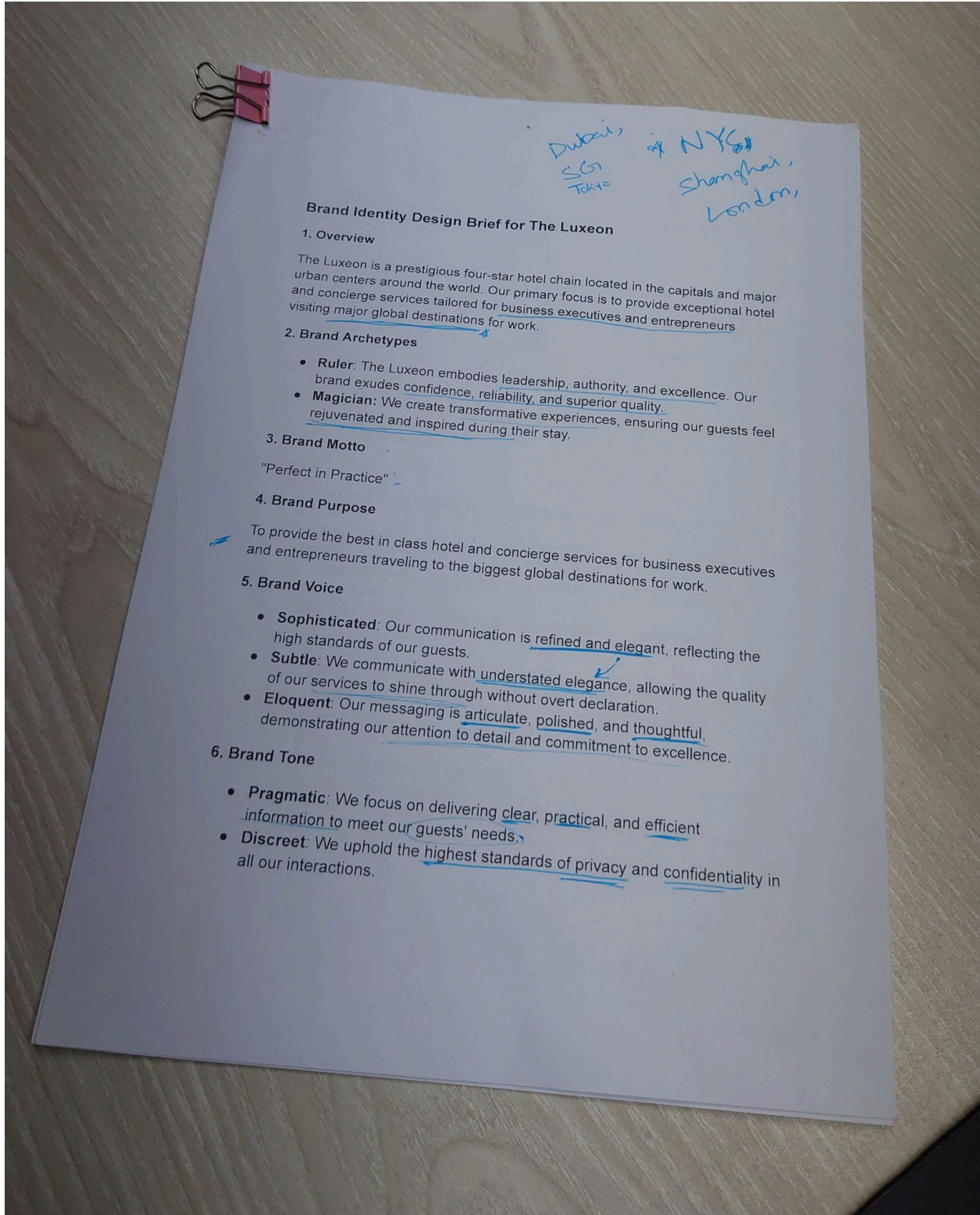


Fig: 9 Luxeon UX Research Output as Brief

4.1.2 Application to Design Decisions

1. Sharif Metal Website Redesign

- **Insights Gained:** Ethnographic and participant observation methods showed that less clicks to product info is preferred by users. Additionally, highlighted & larger button sizes are preferable (easy tap), etc.
- **Design Adjustments:** Users needed to accomplish core tasks in fewer clicks; therefore, changes were made to simplify the navigation hierarchy and two large buttons with clear labels were added for those not as digitally literate.

2. CELSIUS Energy Drink Branding

- **Insights Gained:** Thick descriptions with informal interviews revealed that younger users connected bright and simple design with health and vibrancy, and valued sustainability in brands.
- **Design Adjustments:** With these preferences in mind, the product also underwent a rebranding to a cleaner layout and simple but assertive graphics with messaging around sustainability.

3. Luxeon Hotel Website Revamp

- **Insights Gained:** Cross-cultural ethnography marked diverse preferences for East Asian versus Western users, with sign-in experiences skewing towards detail-oriented content-rich designs and streamlined minimalist layouts, respectively.
- **Design Adjustments:** Two styles were developed—a graphical option and its visual in-depth version for high-context users and a simple direct booking track for low-context Users.

4.1.3 Examples of Specific Insights and Design Changes

1. **Navigation Preferences:** It was observed from the feedback on Sharif Metal, that too many navigation steps annoys its users. Based on that feedback, the design team announced a “one-click-to-info” feature.

2. **Visual Preferences:** Users of CELSIUS energy drink were more favorable to modern, minimalistic designs. As a result, cluttered visuals were being eliminated and replaced with more slim and vibrant features.
3. **Cultural Sensitivity:** Luxeon Hotel discovered that high-context users value visual assurance as the highest form of trust and thus, opted to present detailed imagery upfront.

4.2 Ethnographic Methods

My internship at Wonderif Studio involved using ethnographic research to develop richer understandings of how people interact with technology, cultural contexts surrounding such interactions and organizational elements. At the heart of ethnographic research is an observational approach playing out over extended periods and within contexts, which provides valuable insight into how user experiences are shaped by cultural and social factors.

4.2.1 Cultural Contextualization through Thick Description

In the context of ethnography, we discovered this through thick description in which nuanced observations are recorded to lend depth to behaviors and interactions. In the course of my internship, I kept extensive field notes as diaries on similar lines and cataloged what sort of impacts cultural or social contexts had in different design projects leading to diverse user preferences. I found that users have different website expectations and use websites according to their cultural background. The case of Luxeon Hotel website users, for instance, is one such example in terms of user behaviors between high-context cultures such as Japan and China or low-context ones like Switzerland. For Japanese and Chinese users, the story was different as participants there tended to choose interfaces that contained more up-front information about what would or could occur once they clicked through — sometimes seeming to seek reassurance by reading verbose pages. Japanese people approach web design in a way in which it is normal to display information in a complex but complete manner so that users are less uncertain. These learnings were directly applied in the Luxeon Hotel's app research, where it was decided to offer dual pathways trying to fulfill both users that preferred simplicity and wanted a high level of information.

4.2.2 Ethnographic Interviews and Informal Conversations

Informal interviews, which are part of ethnographic research, helped gather qualitative data on the users perspective. I also had conversations with the stakeholders, people in my office and some end users throughout the internship to have a clear idea of what they are expecting from me and how their culture can play an integral part in using digital media more often. One great application of these interviews was the rebranding for CELSIUS Energy Drink, in which we could ascertain that young adults were looking for minimalistic designs, a paradigm consistent with the global trend seen from Swiss design.

Swiss web design trends are usually minimalist, embodying simplicity and functionality at its best. The interviews with CELSIUS users reinforced that minimalism equates to trust and authenticity— primary branding attributes for the brand repositioning. With this feedback, collected using ethnographic methods — we were able to use the research data to create design that is heavily focused on user experience, that also looked clean and modern while appealing heavily towards the target audience.

4.2.3 Cross-Cultural Comparison of User Behavior

Ethnographic research is centered on the ability to contrast and compare across cultures to see how similar tasks are approached by users from different cultural frameworks. For example, in India many users want content-rich design that provides necessary information upfront. Swiss design is the opposite of that – simple and clear, not a visual indulgence. In the case of China, there was a preference for super apps (which combine multiple functions into one), to enable usage of different types at the same time with seamless multitasking. On the other hand, in Japan, user preferences converged with a fun desire for detailed and layered interfaces that provided information intensely to reduce uncertainty. With these cross-cultural findings, it provided me with an understanding that design preferences are rooted with culture and inspired the creation of flexible designs where different expectations could be accommodated.

4.2.4 Reflexive Analysis of Internal Studio Dynamics via Participant Observation

Reflective analysis was another important ethnographic method that I used during my internship. This required some looking inwards at how the internal dynamics of Wonderif Studio worked, and one observation was that the socio-economic backgrounds of the team members directly

influenced their work style and productivity — or lack thereof. I observed how the gaps in economic advantage played a role in approaches to deadlines, creativity and teamwork. This is not necessarily unlike the collectivist, communal worker attitudes you can find in many Chinese workplaces (including overseas)—people often put their group first and personal expression a distant second.

4.3 User Personas and Behavioral Insights

The creation of user personas and analysis of behavioral insights were prominent parts in the research methodology. These insights revealed the different motivations, frustrations and behaviors of many user groups to help us design interfaces suited best for them. Based on this study and the diaries and monthly reports, I worked through user personas.

User personas are a helpful tool to design for the specific wants and habits of diversified population segments. Through work such as designing the Sharif Metal website and researching for Luxeon Hotel's app, I created elaborate user profiles by tracking their habits across various groups depending on my findings from discovery sessions or in-depth interviews.

I created user personas for Sharif Metal, which I felt represented most of their audience, who had moderate digital literacy. Most of these users used cheap smartphones to access the internet and went for more usability than modernity. Most websites designed in India are now crafted to present the user with a single page, rich with content first interface and allow individual components of that to be served independent from subsequent stages. This persona regarding India is not Sharif Metal specific but even more so it represents broader culturally-specific needs for the Indian Subcontinent Web users, especially those in areas where technology is not as high on stack.

Whereas, for the Luxeon Hotel project I created user personas on one hand being highly digitally literate with frequent travelers and they come from regions such as Switzerland in which use of simplicity and efficiency are highly considered by users when it comes to digital experience. Swiss, as a persona were users that desired simple layouts making information easy to find corresponding generally with the Swiss modern design concept for clean basic elements & simple navigation. The Japanese, however, are familiar with not so simple layouts. These differences in persona informed our design for the Luxeon Hotel app, which honed in on

differences in user paths — so that users could book rooms or check out hotel amenities with relatively few or detailed interactions, depending on from which region the app is being operated from. Knowing that the persona behind this target segment scale is well into lean thinking also allowed us to resist over-engineering solutions and focusing on a streamlined, intuitive user experience by presenting clear structure in line with the users' expectations.

In Japan, users had an affinity for designs that provided a lot of upfront information — likely reflecting high-context communication where implicit signals and all the details are important to reassure the user. An important consideration was that, when targeting Japanese travelers with lightning-fast websites or apps like Luxeon Hotel (providing the detailed description of each amenities, room types and services), they are more detail-oriented so everything has got-to be 'straight in your face'. This one was discovered through the insight that Japanese users loved layered, content-rich designs because it gave them a greater feeling of control compared to purely aesthetic ones.

These data help to create mental boxes with user personas; whereas, behavioral insights showed us how much cultural context can influence the way in which users interact with digital interfaces. This helps us specifically design the way users were already culturally inclined or conditioned and how they used websites, apps.

My fieldwork on the Sharif Metal website redesign allowed me to discover that many of these users were from urban, middle class or more rural areas with the internet and interacted online mostly via mobile devices. Their behavioral patterns and mannerisms as to how they react to websites containing information was crucial in customizing the Sharif Metal website for a mobile-first, price-sensitive Bangladeshi market. This group had requirements for websites to be data efficient and load fast, delivering core product information upfront without any bells or whistles as per the user persona. The overall mindset behind this persona was based on what most of the Indian sub-continent web designing turned into — economical, and accessible to a varying level of digital literacy.

User personas and behavioral insights were key to the research methodology I practiced during my internship at Wonderif Studio. Looking more deeply into the cultural contexts of users by demographics allowed me to create customized designs that directly addressed each demographic subtype and its behavior. Provisioning for low-digital literacy capabilities of the

users, catering to high-context communication requirements or designing heavy feature expectations, all these design problems were addressed by integrating user personas and behavioral insights inculcated on field studies.

4.4 Data Collection and Analysis

As part of the research method adopted in designing for the Sharif Metal website redesign, I was able to learn key components that guided my design solution by collecting and analyzing data during my internship at Wonderif Studio. It included collecting both qualitative and quantitative data from different interactions within the website as well, using analytics tools (in this case Google Analytics) to track user demographics behavior and help improve slowly based on that. One thing to note is that, unlike the Sharif Metal project for which in-depth data analysis techniques (Google Analytics) were key to continuously improving or iterating design outputs and practices; such methods were not as widely used across other projects during my internship. This was mainly due to my leader taking me in a different direction, making Sharif Metal the main project focus, but less time and resource on data analysis for CELSIUS Energy Drink rebranding or Luxeon Hotel app. These projects were valuable, but without the focus on ongoing data capture and analysis which had spurred iterative design improvements in Sharif Metal. This constrained my ability to use a similar level of data-driven refinement across as many projects.

4.4.1 Data Collection Methods

The most important part of my redesign project for Sharif Metal website was the data collection based on two ways;

- A. User testing and observation: qualitative insights
- B. Quantitative data — Web analytics

Together, these methods gave us an insight into the users' explicit needs and real behavior on the website.

I spent quite a long time conducting user testing over the early stages of the redesign process, observing the target users' reactions and behaviors based on the prototypes to collect rich qualitative data about the navigation-related issues faced by users on this site. Most users had a hard time navigating through the three layers of links, and got annoyed when asked to click for

more product information. Mobile users in particular reflected this trend, showcasing the mobile-first phenomenon that is so common among Bangladesh and India-based audiences and a reality where many often skip desktop usage entirely. Fieldnotes were used to record observations about occurrence, pain points and preferences.

In addition to watching their behavior qualitatively, I tracked some quantitative data on user behavior using Google Analytics on the beta-testing¹³ website. Google Analytics tracked in real time how people move through the site: what their bounce and session duration were, which sites brought them there. These metrics were very useful in locating the pages on which users had problems or dropped off. For example, if the analytics data shows that a high number of users are leaving after visiting the homepage, then there can be an issue with either how the homepage is laid out or navigational options. With such a high bounce rate for mobile users, it became apparent that the user interface had to be overhauled a bit and make it responsive.

4.4.2 Data Analysis: Iterative Changes and Improvements

User-testing and Google Analytics were used to gather data on how people actually interact with the website, which was then meticulously analyzed to lead iterative improvements of the site. Using qualitative insights from user observations and combining with the quantitative data provided by analytics tools, we were able to determine which areas of the website needed work on a mass level.

User testing provided qualitative data that gave us an understanding of users' mental models and how they thought the website would function. Repeated Themes – During observation sessions, an analysis of user behavior was made which again and again displayed the following themes.

- Navigation Problems: Users always complained about difficulty of navigating the site by categories or specifically named products.
- A clear preference for big buttons: In nearly every session users explicitly expressed strong desire to click a very loud and visible button that would take them where they wanted in one step, rather than having to perform multiple clicks.

¹³ Process of releasing a product or software to a limited group of users outside the development team to identify bugs, gather feedback, and make improvements before the official launch.

With this analytics and qualitative data, the designs were iterated over navigation paths, product categorisation as well as call-to-action buttons on the home page. These modifications are in tune with a low-digital-literacy, and first-time-on-mobile user base.

Google Analytics data provide us an overview to check the impact of suggestion, which is very less shown by analytics in real time. Overall bounce rate on the homepage dropped dramatically, even more so for mobile users suggesting that some of the changes to layout and navigation were successful in making it easier to use. We noticed that users were spending more time on the website than they used to which meant either our call to action lower down became better or users now spend more time exploring the site before leaving. Deeper investigation of the data reflected an uptick¹⁴ in mobile traffic — they were making it easier for people on-the-go to be able to access their redesigned site. This especially was an important metric as most of the target audience in Bangladesh who accessed the internet via mobile. As a result, it was possible to continuously improve the website according to how people actually used it working with a flexible design strategy and data found in Google Analytics.

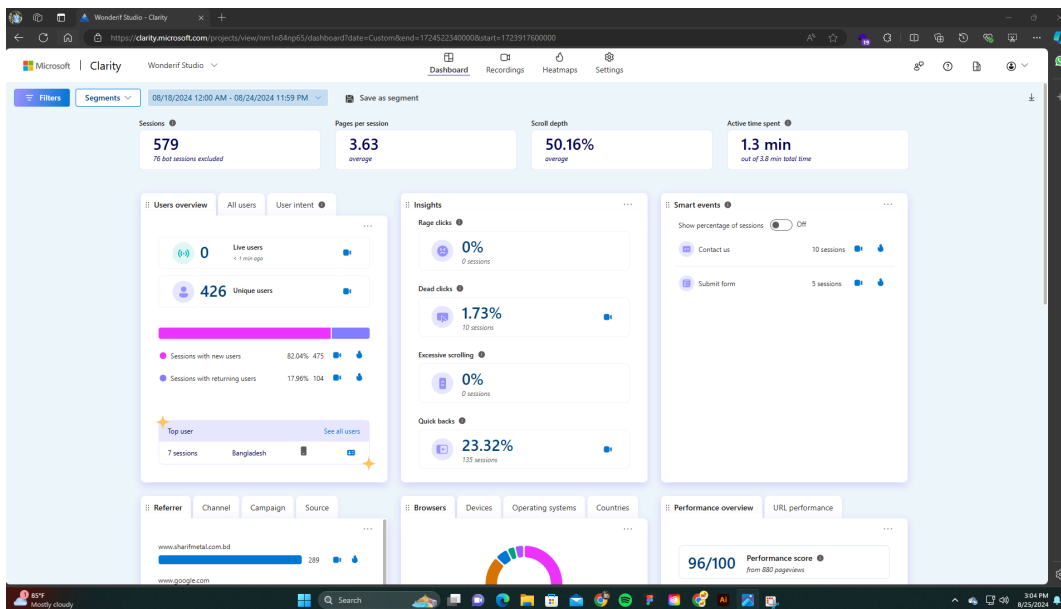


Fig: 10 Sharif Metal Website Analytics

¹⁴ An uptick refers to a small increase or improvement in a particular metric, such as sales, performance, or activity.

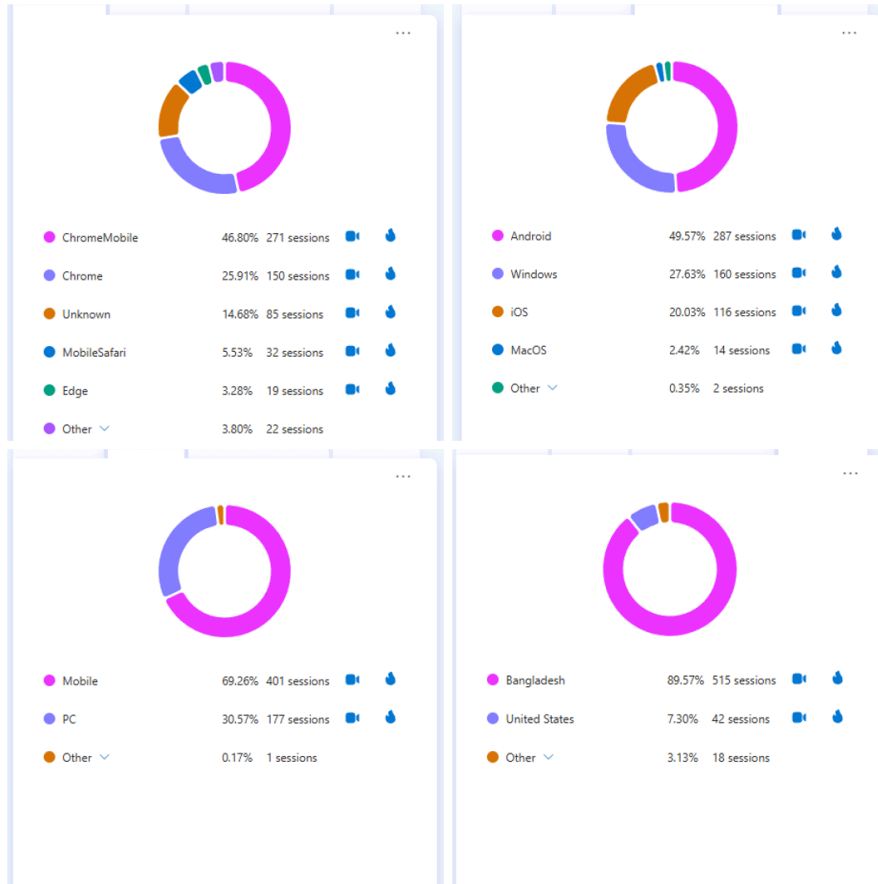


Fig: 11 Sharif Metal Website Mobile and Country based analytics

Chapter 5: Key Findings and Analysis

5.1 Cultural Factors Impacting UX/UI Design

The design of user experience interfaces is greatly affected by cultural factors, influencing how users see and use digital products. The design of user experiences that are culturally relevant involves an understanding of how users communicate, what cognitive burdens they take on doing so in the context-specific scenarios, as well as knowing their aesthetics preferences, technology uses not only trust considerations but also cultural values. It is important to study these cultural characteristics, as they will allow for the definition of user experiences that are intuitive and relevant regardless of the diverse audience.

5.1.1 Communication Styles and Information Presentation

Different cultures communicate amongst themselves in different ways — and that leads to them expecting information being presented on digital interfaces differently. Japan and China are high-context cultures, which use subtle forms of implicit communication. They are more comfortable with detailed, layered interfaces and tend to read about every aspect of what they do upfront. Like, the Japanese web design generally is complicated due to the high content amount and assurance of information designed in a single page. Super apps in Chinese design like WeChat are all-in-one platforms that cram many features into one interface and because of this they play to a culture where people prefer densely packed multitasking humans. High-context cultures value more detailed ways of speaking versus low-context ones like Switzerland and many Western countries to which directness is key. Users in these regions, having been exposed to less elaborate methods during the early internet period are more accustomed to simple and sophisticated navigation. Swiss design, for instance, is rooted in concepts of efficiency and clarity; its minimalist roots are concerned with making interface as intuitive to use.

The way users treat the cognitive load — that is, how much mental effort it takes to find their way around a website or app (depending on cultural factors as well). The users from India and Bangladesh are likely to prefer rich content, as this is how the internet works here in a mobile-first landscape. Public services websites or bank sites have a lot of content on the homepage because it should be used by the user who is directly landing on the site and he may

not be interested in internet navigation techniques. In some cases, the design must consider low-digital literacy (especially for older adults) so it should have clearer and more accessible information. On the opposite side of that spectrum, western users require a low cognitive load user experience tendency of design focusing on simplicity in functionality. In this context the users do like simple interfaces and that make less steps while conducting tasks, in addition to navigability being faster or even direct.

5.1.2 Cultural Values, Color Symbolism and Aesthetic Preferences

Mediated by the cultural values, such as collectivism and individualism, inform how users anticipate that online interaction should proceed. For a collectivist culture, such as in China where the user experience and interaction design is more focusing on group participation and shared value streams. Apps come with social integration features that make it easier for users to interact, communicate and work together on the same platform. This is reflected in the likes of WeChat which allows users to shop, communicate, and make payments all under one roof creating a sense of community and interconnectedness. UX/UI designs in individualist cultures, like in the West for example, are centered on personal experiences. They expect everything to be easily customizable with little or no input from others at all. Emphasis is placed on tailored experience — equating to personalization features that increases the user's capability of his/her controls.

Colors feature general symbolic meaning, which is often culturally determined as it relates to human feelings, but individual attitudes towards colors are largely defined by cultural context aesthetically. Colors are usually religiously used in the west as the holy color and everyone knows them to symbolize joy, but one has less idea what colors like red, blue or green can mean. In another example, white can mean peace in one culture but death for the next. These meanings are carefully thought through by designers, and they have to make sure that their design resonates with the cultural values of its users (also adding a deeper level of meaning). Japanese design aesthetics often reflect a balance of traditional and contemporary influences, with colors and elements invoking both Japanese symbolism that dates back centuries as well as the newest trends in current markets. For example, with a color scheme that includes muted colors and enough white space around media rich content sections imparts depth without losing the cultural

connection which can happen through over-styling. Derived from the “International Typographic Style” (also known as Swiss Design), this design language employs neutral colors, simple typefaces and clean lines center-positioned to clarity and legibility instead of ornamental styles. This speaks to culture values of accuracy, order and very limited use of color in order not to interfere with focus.

5.1.3 Technological Access, Trust and Security Concerns

The technology at their disposal as well as the most common devices used in an area would also influence a region's UI design. Since a lot of online users access the internet mostly via mobile in regions like India, Bangladesh and Pakistan and among several others, designing for mobile-first UX/UI becomes crucial. This involves designing for small screens, with big buttons to touch and easy navigation between sections — as well as seeing how you can reduce text input where possible. Form is often prioritized over function, in order to ensure that English-speaking users can access the information even with rudimentary tech skills and slow internet connections. In China, users have much larger expectations from their mobile experiences, even though design is still predominantly in a similar vein of “mobile first”. Apps are packed with multiple functionalities, doing several tasks from one location like messaging apps to payment & E-commerce activity within an app itself. This mirrors the super app trend as people have put a premium on versatility and overall convenience. In the case of Switzerland, most still do desktop-first, but more are doing mobile optimization. Switzerland users are accustomed to minimalistic and slick interfaces across the desktop platform, which need to be transferred onto mobile with a nice and seamless transition. That focus is often on efficiency and practicality, no matter the platform.

Trust is crucial in design, and it especially matters when our users are from a culture where they have to first trust you before taking any action like buying anything or giving their personal info. In Japan, the interface has much to do with reassurance and certainty, which are key before a user will agree upon something. Japanese sites frequently show breaking up the information with several layers of content to walk a user through in much more detail itself and help them feel comfortable enough proceeding further. Transparency and Visibility will create trust in South East Asia, as experienced from my conversations with stakeholders. Many government websites

and financial institutions have a lot of information in-front to reinforce security and legitimacy. For less digitally literate users, seeing everything on the homepage evoked a feeling of credibility — if it was shown to them they must not have missed anything important. Minimalism and clarity plays a role in building trust with western design. The users want transparent, clean and well-organized designs where it is easy to move around without getting lost. Transparent privacy policies, information on data protection and understandable navigation ensure that users who value efficiency as well as security trust the solution.

5.2 Challenges and Resolutions

Throughout the study, several challenges have emerged while working on various UX/UI design projects at Wonderif Studio and drawing insights from various design practices. These challenges span the areas of data collection, cultural adaptation, technological access, and design processes, as outlined below:

A. Cultural Diversity and Complexity:

Perhaps the biggest obstacles are that there is no one culture. But culture is not homogenous and even within a country language, customs, where especially user expectations can vary widely. Since this is so complicated, it becomes harder and more arduous to design for all subgroups within a culture. Take the Indian subcontinent for instance, with its multitude of linguistic and regional differences as well as socio-economic compartments. Because the latter prefers flat, tech-friendly users to those with low-digital literacy, voting on a mobile-first website can be tricky when their expectations and interaction patterns often differ greatly. In Japan, the user needs excruciating detail and safety nets provided through content-rich layering of interfaces. This can be in direct contradiction with the global standards of usability attempting to streamline that branch. Super apps — where people want a single platform to deliver lots of capabilities tightly integrated into one monolithic applicationwork in China, but the same design approach doesn't work as well elsewhere since it's based on what reflects local expectations for applications that are usable with ease.

The challenge of catering to a culturally diverse user base can be handled by implementing a modular design approach for localized customization. Rather than trying

to create a one-size-fits-all solution, designers can develop a grounded design framework with options included. This strategy makes the adjustment of particular components similar to content presentation, navigation style or language and so forth for different subset of users possible. This helps the design stay useful and appealing to a broad range of users, while not compromising the basic function of said product.

Localization is one of the most important factors that needs to be considered when it comes to a design, because it defines how well it will resonate with people in any type of culture. By incorporating cultural elements such as colors, icons and content structure to make it more appealing, it will cater for local tastes aesthetically. For regions that are more like India or Bangladesh, visual rich content layouts could be used with vibrant color and detailed visuals. On the other hand, Swiss users' digital experience is characterized by clarity and is very minimalist. Demonstration across regions is another strategy that is vital to user testing. Designers can identify regional differences early by testing with different cultural and geographic backgrounds in the preliminary stage. This aids in the design's on-time modifications to align with every specific target audience before launching the product. This step is not only great for user delight, but it also saves us money on post-launch redesigns.

Contextual inquiry also can be used in research that could get different insights based on regional context. This technique lets the designers see how people use a product in everyday situations, helping to reach all design elements appeal more broadly within different cultures and settings as possible.

B. Mobile-First vs. Desktop-First Design:

Mobile-first or Desktop-first comes in different cultures. In the subcontinent and China, where mobile internet is prevalent, it needs to be optimized for a small screen — more summarized like a medium component with limited width, that is, more focus on Mobile Usability or mobile UX. However in regions such as Switzerland, where desktop use is higher than mobile, users expect the same experience whether they are using a PC or Tablet. In the Indian subcontinent, where we design for mobile-first users, we usually have to cater to very slow media data speeds or low power devices and sometimes even

limited internet access leading us to avoid using high resolution images or a more complex interface. Creating a good experience across desktop and mobile is quite achievable, but can become cumbersome for the user in certain countries like Switzerland where users generally expect similar high design quality on both platforms.

The biggest challenge is that users in the other regions are mobile-first, and for many major product companies who started building internet products, have built it around desktop first. This makes this duality very complicated to solve through design. Responsive design is important because it allows a system to be used by any out of the multitude user base and still see the content clearly. Mobile optimization is important, especially for regions like South East Asia and China where internet usage is mostly through mobile devices. A mobile centric approach should be much lighter, in terms of website architecture to provide seamless loading and smooth performance even on slower networks. Important functions should be kept to ensure that it can allow the design with no complex features and a less time-consuming loading experience on small screens, so users get easy access to other things they do not require such having enough complexity or taking more time in loading. This approach grants product exposure to mobile users in these regions, therefore enabling them to use their products on the move.

Responsive design should be adopted equally in order to serve the best UX on any device. So layouts, images and content are able to react at runtime based on the screen size, translating into a very delightful experience for mobile as well as desktop users. This is especially important in countries such as Switzerland which have demanding users with a high expectation of seamless cross-platform experiences. In addition, the experience must feel continuous and natural between mobile devices and desktops while providing similar functionalities in both environments.

The main thing that needs to be done according to the principles of a mobile-first approach is, above all, to put first those things which are used most often by us on the move. For mobile, anything that is regularly used by your users to access navigation, search or key features should be sought after on the mobile-friendly editions. On the other hand, a desktop should provide a richer experience, with full functionalities including advanced and rich features that users can interact deeply with due to the large

screen size overall. This ensures that the product is usable and functional, no matter the context.

C. Data Collection and Analysis Limitations:

Gathering qualitative and quantitative data is also a challenging process, particularly under different cultural contexts. For example, although Google Analytics was an excellent way to keep track of user behavior on the Sharif Metal website, not all projects could be implemented at that level due to time constraints and because it had a more senior stakeholder focus.

In more than one project, qualitative field notes and anecdotal user feedback formed the bulk of our 'research,' although useful at a high level – they did not give us behavioral insights we could have obtained through Google Analytics. The difficulty was conducting continuous tracking of data for every single change that was made, so it became very challenging to incrementally improve designs on the basis of hard evidence in certain secondary projects. Since projects can not be reviewed based on each of their data in detail, careful and organized data collection is needed to limit the different aspects they should have. This enables a collection of feedback while ensuring that the baseline data quality for design improvements persists regardless of project priority. This guarantees that smaller and less important jobs obtain the insights they need to generate far better outcomes. A foundation within this new approach is the incorporation of purposefully built, automated analytics analyzing tools. This allows them to obtain ongoing user behavior data without having to manually track every single page on all projects by integrating technologies like Microsoft Clarity or Google Analytics. This data can be reviewed at timely intervals to derive quantitative insights leading to iterative improvements. Even things that are getting less love or funding can always be used with this automated data collection to make sure they are not forgotten from the larger development process. Both types of data are quite important and each needs to be balanced. Though aspects like interviews and the process of user observation might be overlooked when a project relies on automated analytics (that helps in tracking each act executed by users), qualitative methods also provide high importance. Although, for a bigger project similar to Sharif Metal, Google Analytics might emerge as the primary

method of gaining insights. However, smaller projects like, CELSIUS Energy Drink would require some scheduled check-in with users in order to gather more personalized feedback. Together with qualitative data, this construct of positive and negative satisfaction gives a much more detailed view on users needs and behaviors making it possible to focus improvements in areas.

D. Technological Access and Literacy:

This is especially true in many geographies such as South East Asia, where users are less tech savvy and they have lower end devices. Users want simple interfaces, so if these users are targeted, the design needs to follow the same guidelines. But modern designs have numerous features that go beyond simplicity. In remote areas, users will have a very reduced level of digital literacy so they need simple interfaces with big buttons to click on and easy navigation. On the other hand, getting too minimalistic can also turn off users who correspondingly come from a digital-native demographic accustomed to technology with some level of contemporary polish. Because without simplifying the use of technology losing its core functionality, it is impossible to combat low digital literacy and limited technological access such as in a country like Bangladesh. Designers need to make digital products as open for a larger audience, more and friendly.

Consequently, one path towards doing this would be to use more simplified user interfaces (UI). The lowtech environment is designed for big buttons and uncomplicated navigation, since users will mainly do these on the touchscreen. We can find those with bordered or emphasized buttons. If designers focus first on clarity and usability the result will be that users confidently engage with technology. The other important strategy is to use the type of progressive disclosure that we often recommend in User Onboarding. Onboarding based on this principle is about hiding complicated stuff first and then giving the user an option to explore more actions. Doing so restricts new users to more important functions that simplify the interface. Yet advanced users can still access its more cutting edge capabilities, ensuring that the product appeals to a wide range of users. This layered approach helps in enforcing some of the differences between varying levels of digital literacy, while still maintaining a feature-complete solution.

E. Adapting Global Design Principles to Local Contexts:

Adapting global design principles to an intricate cultural spectrum is a big challenge in UX/UI designs. For example, design frameworks that are used in Western cultures may work well but when those same principles and components were tested on multiple high context oriented societies like Japan and China; they did not resonate with any of the users there. I often find simple Swiss design, the type that is very minimal and crystal clear in style, quite hard to apply here or even Japan/China where users are always expecting more features/icons/buttons/information on screen. In these areas the minimalist aesthetics can be misleading, giving users wrong perceptions about a lack of depth and information to make their decision.

Cultural research is the building block that is involved with these frameworks as a starting point. Here, we look at how our insight informs design for these different cultures and identifies the unique needs of every individual culture — from preferences to communication styles. For example, the high context communication in Japanese design demands further particulars and content-heavy interfaces may be needed which is conveying a preference for information richness. Swiss design on the other hand in general is more minimal and low-context, allowing for a controlled, moderated experience where information can be presented without necessary consequence or associations to them. Designers can design more effective and attractive interfaces by knowing these cultural particulars. Also, the same product to be developed in different languages (to be more localized) is another thing that we should keep following. For instance, the rich content — often text that presents information in great detail for local users who prefer it upfront on a website (typical of many Southeast Asian websites). The Swiss implementation of the website, on the other hand, may focus around a clean navigation with cost-free access and step-by-step information-levels. This customized method simply means individual versions of the product remain dedicated in meeting its specific target audience's expectation for usability and satisfaction. Lastly, one can improve the overall experience of users depending on adaptive design solutions. Design that adapts to the user's cultural background and behavior works in a range of different cultures. An adaptive design allows a unique experience tailored to individual users, understanding each culture's norms and expectations so that the product will resonate

with them better. Such an approach can only serve to be a bridge between comprehensive global design principles and local practices, creating a more well-rounded digital ecosystem.

F. Balancing Functionality and Aesthetics:

From Southeast Asia to the West, one will find stark differences in cultural expectations on what constitutes an aesthetic and functional design. For instance, much needs to be invested in functionality as opposed to aesthetics under different circumstances; rules of thumb among Bangladeshi users indicate very little interest in visual design where the primary filter only distinguishes over content and information accessibilities. Combining this with the need of clients for modern looking websites can be quite difficult to balance. The Swiss have a difficult task where form and function is concerned, demanding that even minimalist designs must provide all the functionality they devise. In order to make the compromises between functionality and aesthetic without being bound by cultural differences, a design strategy utilizing user-centered-design (UCD) is crucial. The design process should not be a choice between function and form but instead, aesthetics must work in conjunction with functionality from the start to provide users an experience that is visually attractive while also serving its purpose.

User-Centered Design is one of the basic strategies for this. It allows designers to create solutions that solve problems but also have an emotional connection with the person experiencing it. Involving the users in every stage of design enables creating such designs where beauty will meet usability. Another approach consists of modular design elements. Elements — that can make interfaces good looking while also functional. For instance in a market like India where function precedes form, designers can employ clean visual hierarchies with vibrant color schemes. Through this method, the rest of user experience is improved but core functionality that users actually need and use daily remains perfectly sound in a visually pleasing design moment. Equally important for establishing a resonant experience, it is mandatory to provide local users with designs that are designed on the basis of cultural aesthetics. Each design choice, whether it is in color, image or type should be culturally underpinned by a national expectation and preference. As one

example, Japanese have a high expectation of harmonized decorativeness and modern functionality in web design, meaning integration of traditional cultural design features is required for the visual depth and intensity. The human-like layer ensures greater user involvement due to cultural sensitivity and subsequently helps the design gain more trust from users by creating recognition.

G. Time Constraints and Prioritization:

A big issue was due to the little time I had for conducting a more thorough analysis of data in all projects. While other projects like CELSIUS Energy Drink and Luxeon Hotel did not take advantage of the same data-driven iteration, as most energy was spent on development with Sharif Metal being a core part of focus for the internship. Time limitations led to less extensive follow-ups related to the use of behavioral insights and test-and-learn iterations for particular projects. This in turn meant that some of the design choices were made based on initial assumptions or qualitative feedback and not necessarily validated quantitative data.

To tackle these time constraints and prioritization issues in the design process, the creative team will need to adopt a more structured project management approach ensuring greater clarity in allocation of resources, that is, the time spent. It allows the teams to tackle complex design projects without losing sight of all other important initiatives.

One efficient way is the Agile method. Dividing the design process into smaller, iterative sprints allows teams to remain focused on feedback and continuous improvement. This iterative process ensures that lower-priority projects receive the same level of evaluation as more urgent ones. Moreover, the use of project management tools can speed up projects too. By using these tools, time gets allocated optimally to several projects so that data analysis and follow-up improvements are handed out correctly. Project management tools organize tasks and due dates visually, this way everyone communicates better within the team — which minimizes bottlenecks and misunderstandings of priorities or definitions. It is also very important to distribute tasks and responsibility within the team. Delegating tasks to empower team members means each project has a lead designer who

knows what needs data collection and analysis. While some of this ownership can be self-determined even for lower priority projects, it is critical to drive accountability and ensure that there are real owners over every initiative. Responsibilities need to be distributed in a manner that delivers consistency of workflow and which allows the insights gained through automation testing practices to illuminate accordingly, affecting continuous improvement.

5.3 Designing for Diverse Users

Through the practice of inclusive design borrowed from anthropology and UX/UI, we can create products that have extensive applications. Given that UX/UI design gains from anthropological practices, it is necessary to know about cultural relativism. Design, be it minimalist for Swiss users or multi-layer content heavy layout, design & cultural background helps in alignment with the target audience. This is so that the users can feel accommodated and not tolerant. Mobile-first, immediate access to information in a content-heavy rich design tried to resolve digital literacy problems with solutions like those required across India or Bangladesh, compared to layered design suited for high-context communication preferred by Japanese users. Designers can leverage anthropological insights to perform ethnographic research and through participant observation, for example, in order to study how users behave with technology within their cultural environments. Any design can be customized, at almost any level—with everything from the language used to describe or offer various aspects of user interface data—on an individual basis.

It is very important to take out any obstacles in accessibility. This would bring distinctively all user requirements built in from the very beginning as opposed to an afterthought. The purpose of design for all is to offer solutions to people with physical, sensory and cognitive disabilities; as well as users from different socioeconomic levels. By using ethnography to capture a sense of how people use and want to interact with these digital products, as well as literacy testing, usability monitoring or iterative feedback loops throughout the design process so it can be more responsive and less rigid in order to make sure that they cover the full range of help mechanisms necessary for those who will have varying levels of independent access at different stages. This eases the navigation for users with disabilities, thanks to assistive technologies and features like

large buttons or voice interaction, and it also helps those who have lower tech literacy through simplified interfaces.

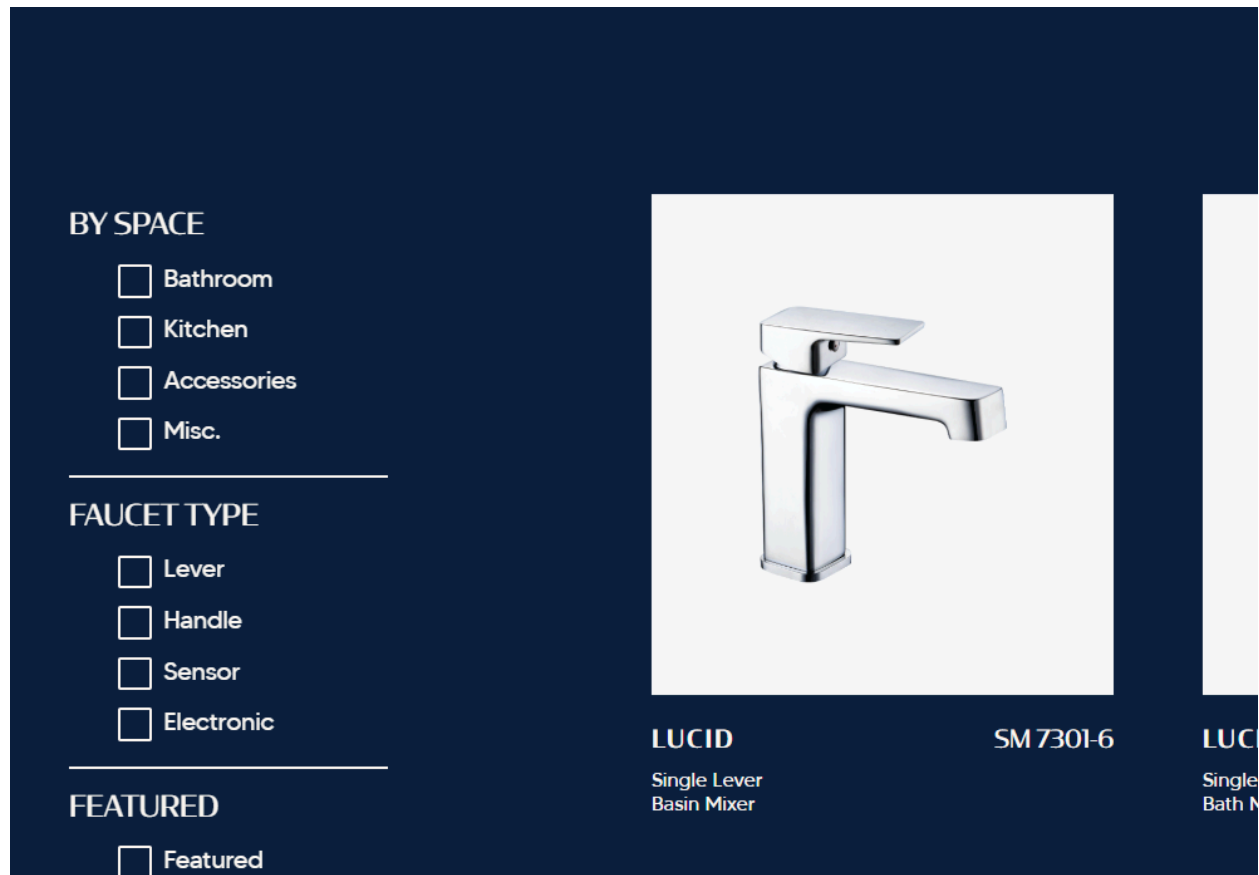


Fig: 12 Product page before taking into account of Accessibility issue

SEARCH


e.g Single Lever

BY SPACE

- Bathroom
- Kitchen
- Accessories
- Misc.

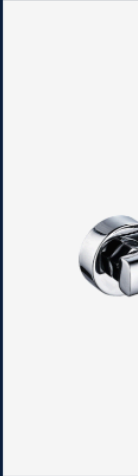
FAUCET TYPE

- Lever
- Handle
- Sensor
- Electronic



LUCID
Single Lever
Basin Mixer

SM7301-6



LUCID
Single Lever
Bath Mixer

Fig: 13 Product page after fixing Accessibility issue

Chapter 6: Reflections on the Anthropological Contribution

6.1 Value of Anthropology in UX/UI Design

Beyond a field of study for the curious and scholarly, Anthropological teachings have much to offer in understanding how best to create humane design as UX/UI designers; providing methods such as ethnography (semi-participant & participant observation), cultural relativism. Design toolkits also help designers to explore not only how their users interact with technology, but why they behave in certain ways and the history behind this context; going beyond cultural practices.

User experience (UX)/user interface (UI) design is inherently centered on being human, and user ethnography — or the study of users in their everyday environment. Ethnographic research allows anthropologists to dive into the contexts where users live and work, collecting in-depth qualitative evidence of how emotional or cultural dynamics drive user experience. A level of rigor beyond just good user testing, which looks at the social values, rituals and daily habits that affect how people actually use interfaces in real life. Serving people in Southeast Asia where the main access to the internet is from mobile-first, designing for them requires knowledge of how they operate. Anthropology, here, provides a way for UX designers to avoid leading questions and design intervention in the field work collaboration — one example being with respect to simplifying navigation features & providing cultural affinity aesthetics. Cultural relativism, an essential concept in the discipline of anthropology—cultural practices and norms are best understood when considered relative to their cultural context. In the digital world of user experience (UX) and interface design, this principle refers to making incisive designs that are culturally sensitive or acceptable for a local market. In Japanese web design, for example, users often opt to use intricate ways of information-rich layouts which appeal through details. In contrast, Swiss users like simple clean designs that basically just make sure everything is efficient. Anthropological insight alerts designers to the reality that what works in one cultural context may not work elsewhere, fostering more adaptable and site-specific design responses rather than universal templates of efficacy.

Similarly, anthropological research such as Sarah Pink's sensory ethnography stresses more the role of senses and emotions in UX/UI. When users interact with an interface they feel in one way

or another, the design decisions affect that feeling of "How challenging is it to Learn?" One should be thinking in terms of the whole structure when designing any physical object, and this human experience extends to our mobile devices — from tactile feedback to visual stimuli that evoke an emotional response. By incorporating emotional and sensory aspects of user experiences in the interface, a designer's job is to ensure it looks more immersive as well. Taking a user-focused rather than brand-driven, empathetic Class-Act approach connects users to the digital products they are using and turns them into emotionally engaged customers who become loyal to the product. Anthropology, drawing on Foucault's theories of power (Foucault, 1980), makes explicit the power dynamics at work within digital interfaces. Interfaces are designed to steer users towards actions (be it purchases or subscriptions) while using data-driven insights that predict what consumers will do. Anthropology teaches UX/UI designers to consider who they are, as a thinker and planner and user of design at the same time that enables or controls their users. The more crucial viewpoint is assisting designers to create ethical user-empowering designs that respect the complete self-control of users rather than playing a collection game with them.

Understanding the workplace culture and user interactions would allow me to see the nuance behind pain points that could be addressed through design. During the Sharif Metal project, mobile users were noticed to favor simplified navigation which led to larger target buttons that can easily be clicked. By capturing precise user actions, I was able to see trends not visible from quantitative data. For the CELSIUS Energy Drink rebranding project, cultural insights about consumer values illustrated a preference for minimalism that aligned both with pickups and marketing towards authenticity and sustainability. This principle guided me in modifying designs based on the cultural expectations of different types of users. An example of effective multi-directional dual coding comes from the design for the Luxeon Hotel website, which had a dual path integrated into its UI to make it work in high-context and low-context modes.

Anthropology focuses on the users by utilizing ethnographic methods and promoting reflexive analysis, which thus can reinforce a more inclusive design approach enabling designers to empathize better with their clientele — those who have imperfections in at least some area of life (which is pretty much all of us), or are from other social statuses or just possess various stages of

digital literacy. This provides the opportunity for marginalized voices to be reflected in design, and makes designed problems more accessible. In other words, anthropology has a role in UX writing based on the way it gives your product knowledge and understanding of users depth. It allows for designers to empathize in a more culturally sensitive and inclusive way, while designing interfaces that adapt according to how real users enter the world. This serves as a reminder that anthropology ensures digital products do more than just work; bringing human meaning, social values and emotional engagement into the user experience, creating meaningful designs.

6.2 Personal and Professional Growth

Anthropology in UX/UI Design has played a significant role for my personal and professional growth. It has helped me understand human behavior more effectively and also to connect with users across different cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds. What it has taught me in turn is to value the different forms people interact with technology and makes you more willing towards cultural relativism while appreciating international user nuances.

Undoubtedly, one of the most striking stages of personal growth has been getting in touch with my cultural side. This has led to me having a very human-first approach, which I am confident, has been molded by the discipline in Anthropology — understanding culture from the inside. This way I learned to talk without the influence of my own culture spectacles and with true users respecting their particular settings or necessities has helped me grow to be more adaptable, inclusive and designing products that are not just functional but also deep rooted into the world of my diverse types of users. By exploring the multisensory and emotional dimensions of design, as argued by Sarah Pink, I have grown to appreciate more deeply how people interact with digital interfaces. I have since changed my design approach, and try to look now at how users feel too; the sensory feedback which gets elicited from them visually or non-visually that shapes their overall interaction. So this latest project has me thinking much more about the design work we do in terms of crafting meaningful and useful engagement experiences.

Academically, anthropology has made me a more critical thinker. Theories from Foucault and Habermas pushed me to challenge the power dynamics of digital environments. More aware of

how design can be an instrument for control, or something that empowers users — this awareness has led me to a more reflexive understanding of my position as someone who designs. Engaging in reflexive note-taking has enabled me to challenge my own assumptions and biases. The anthropological concept of reflexivity has enabled me to look into how my background influences the way I identify and construct design problems. That self reflection has been instrumental in making my work more inclusive — considering writing for users with less digital literacy, or impairments. The one other thing that I see in this list, is my professional progression to focus on ethical design. Embracing Foucault in understanding how digital interfaces surveil and control us and what maintains has made me look into ethical data collection and analytics in a different light, such as deeply respecting users' data, using it responsibly & designs that encourage their decision instead of trying to manipulate them. It has also made me more aware of the role I play as a professional whose work is consumed directly by users, showing me that UX/UI design goes beyond aesthetics and functionality to become about creating systemic fairness and transparency.

And lastly, anthropology has benefited my usability research skills. Paper prototyping, designing usability tests and doing ethnographic studies (with lots of contextual inquiries and observations) have improved my research skills to get deep insights rather than staying on the surface. With this insight, I am much more open to doing emotional and social context user testing, which has given me a better framework for solving design problems. Through cross-cultural user testing, I learned to anticipate differences in mental models and interaction styles between different regions.

6.3 Reflections on Collaboration Between Design and Anthropology

The combination between design and anthropology is what makes the process successful in creating genuine user-centered experiences. While I am generally a believer that the more complementary perspectives and methodologies one can incorporate when designing, there is also something about design — with its practicality combined with a problem-solving mode of thought. Such synergy brings more than functionality to design — and in fact better reflects human behavior, social dynamics, and cultural diversity.

Since my projects were strongly influenced by theories from Foucault, Habermas and Bourdieu in order to understand not only their enabling aspects but also how society is shaping users actions and suffice them accordingly. Foucault's ideas on power and surveillance resonated with me personally at how I believe digital interfaces could subtly control user behavior. And using these takeaways, I have endeavored to design for positive self-worth over coercive persuasion. For example, throughout my internship rather than just mining user data analytics to inform on how interfaces were prescriptive, I observed as the higher level of granularity was designed and presented. Likewise Habermas's public sphere, the rise of participatory platforms for online public discourse. This made me think about interfaces which evolved as the mediator between technology and humans, where we started reflecting how they can initiate open respectful actual dialogue through labeling conversations and our rights on digital spaces to enable equal participation. This was especially important in community-driven platform projects, where maintaining a level playing field for users is paramount to prevent certain voices from blindness. This enriched my insight into user demographics, with an additional reflection on Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital. I merged his insights into my work when designing for people with different degrees of digital literacies to make it usable by the advanced users as well as those ensuing less cultural capital. So, designers started introducing the new UI elements such as step by step guide and user-friendly icon to connect different kinds of users.

In this context, the integration of ethnographic methods (drawing on participant observation and contextual inquiry) as part of anthropology-design collaboration is a particularly valuable development. Throughout my work, I would do user testing pretty much exclusively as an information gathering exercise designed specifically to understand the real world practices and emotional responses users had towards technology. I could start catering added to real-life user experiences. For instance, on the Sharif Metal website redesign project they informed me their design research data helped them figure out what type of digital literacy approach to take and that the mobile-first needs required diligent distraction-free moments you find with in-home desktop browsing. I then did field research with contextual observation and deep interviews to see which elements of the design worked for them or needed iteration. Google Analytics (post website launch) supported this qualitative understanding, closing the loop between qualitative research and quantitative data. Analytical methods erupted in the design anthropology

collaboration such as those drawing on Google Analytics. These tools provide live data on interaction that can then inform in progress iterations via the anthropological method. For instance, participant observation informed an educated guess at the cognitive burden experienced by Bangladeshi users on mobile interfaces — elusive patterns might otherwise have been hard to discern from analytics data like high bounce rates on certain pages. I contribute during this collaborative design process by facilitating iterative design changes. Ethnographic data gave us fine-grained understanding of how users were behaving in context, while the analytics enabled adjustments based on clean numerical values. This bridge between research and design insight was essential for creating the most impactful (and culturally-relevant) solutions.

Anthropology is thereby situated as an intellectual practice that, wielded alongside design — for example in the context of UX/UI work, it can also deepen theoretical depth and qualitative insights with practical solutions. This strategy-based solution integrates anthropological theory (Foucault, Habermas, Bourdieu) with interdisciplinary methods and ethnography & analytics to create holistic digital experiences. It signals designers to imagine functionalities beyond features and introduce them into the whole experience by considering the social-cultural-emotional factors of users.

This internship has been transformative as an anthropologist who wants to get into UX/UI design. I came to understand that knowing the culture can drive better assumptions of intuitive, delightful interfaces and developed an appreciation for collaborative creativity. These experiences have opened doors for human-centered design and given me the tools needed to pave a path between anthropology and design throughout my career.

Chapter 7: Recommendations for Future Applications

7.1 Incorporating Anthropology into Business-Oriented UX/UI

Another significant contribution that Anthropology offers to business oriented UX/UI design is the ability to understand users' cultural, social and emotional characteristics. This human-centric methodology extends outside a traditional business model and can offer benefits in product development, marketing tactics and customer relations. Older business models often categorize based on demographics such as age, gender or income. Yet anthropology classifies behavior patterns, cultural contexts and socioeconomic backgrounds into far more nuanced categories. For example, if a business employs strategies like ethnographic research or participant observation to find the real faces behind these lost conversions, you can build a deeper user persona that allows for even more specific product targeting and personalization. The powerful role anthropology plays in getting at unarticulated user needs and emotional drivers of how a user interacts should not be underestimated when designing digital experiences that truly resonate on an intellectual level. This can be seen in the example of businesses looking to grow and reach markets such as India, using anthropological insights into how these people understand what mobile-first behavior means culturally. Here, socio-economic conditions perpetuate a desire for streamlined interfaces that promote immediate exposure to the critical content. This is in sharp contrast to a market like Switzerland, where users might have expected more minimalistic and pure style. These insights underscore the relevance of cultural specificity within market segmentation and demonstrate how anthropology can guide more nuanced design strategies tailored to different user mindsets.

Secondly, the fusion of anthropology in UX/UI design allows a product to become universally adaptable across global markets as it considers cultural nuances and regional behaviors. In a world where businesses push for global scalability, anthropological approach pivots on the opposite requirement: stable localized adaptation to reach a critical group of users without losing brand resonance. This research advances a design strategy for creating interfaces that highlight these behaviors, specifically through the lens of anthropological theories like Michel Foucault's analysis on power dynamics, effectively putting some of his ideas into play in user interface creation, wherever privacy issues are paramount. Ethical design can help companies to better fit

their products into local values and cultural context but at the same time have global applications.

In fact, anthropological UX/UI design approaches helping to understand business needs as those of the users through empathetic and contextual research in use pave a way for businesses like never before. Ethnography design sprint puts the user perspective at its heart and allows business to create customer-centered digital products that mostly satisfy emotional, social and functional needs of users. It is particularly applicable to business-to-consumer (B2C) models where emotional engagement plays a big role in keeping users loyal and happy over time. If a business is designing an app for young professionals in China, it can use anthropological insights to build "super apps" that bundle productivity, shopping and social networking features into a single platform— catering to the multitasking behavior of this demographic.

By applying Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital to UX/UI design, there are prospects where businesses are making digital products available even for the less digitally literate users. Instead of targeting advanced users, companies can design for those who have low levels of cultural capital — older adults and people in underserved communities. This could look like streamlining the navigation tree, offering clean directions or incorporating assistive technology to close the virtual-door between digital divides. In doing so, companies increase their market size and signal that they create inclusive designs with a social conscience. In business-oriented UX/UI, inviting ethnographic methodologies into the domain performs double duty by awakening reflections upon power abuses underlying interface-building and reinforcing ethical behaviors. Businesses are motivated to design fair and transparent systems, refraining from practices of predatory manipulative design. — Anthropological Perspective in fields like this that are driven by data, surveillance and user tracking has become more of a norm — but mainly because it is easier to intertwine code neutrality. The examination of power and surveillance that exists in some Foucault literatures can guide how businesses navigate building user trust by being transparent voluntarily, rather than whether they are subject to stringent regulation about data collection practices.

7.2 Strategies for Cross-Cultural Design

To create digital products which are not only inclusive, but also work well for users from different cultures is the main focus of cross-cultural design. Since interfaces for everyone throughout the world, translate not only functional requirements but also cultural, social and emotional factors. Therefore, being able to interpret cultural norms, values and behaviors are crucial for designing efficiently. This requires ethnographic research methods like participant observation and contextual inquiries. In this sense, designers, through these methods, are to be exposed to and made aware of a lot more invisible cultural nuances that play into design preferences. Ethnographic research, in an instance such as designing a health care app for rural users can help finding out the crucial insights pertaining to technological limitations (maybe certain devices have low resolution compared to normal phones), common illnesses in that area and how their socio-economic background influences them with respect to usage. This helps designers craft a testimony that is both technologically viable and more intuitive to the localities of their users. Ethnography in this situation ensures that digital products are not only functional but also culturally appropriate which enhances the effectiveness and satisfaction of users.

A basic definition of localization is that extraction will be some form of relevant digital interface to cater for certain linguistic or cultural requirements or feature perception desired by the end user. Localization not just translating your content but also performing changes on how the product is structured, its tone and even imagery to suit cultural preferences. An example is seen in e-commerce platforms which are localizing their content by adapting currency formats, units of measurements and product descriptions to the user's location. By culturalizing a social network, the platform becomes even more relevant for users and therefore trustable, ensuring that this generalization is as seamless as possible. Localization appears in the form of future promotions, and changes based on regional holidays or festive seasons as well as promoting different featured events that can materially change buying behavior. Factoring in these cultural and temporal differences allow one to enhance user engagement with incredibly optimized designs for each of the markets. Another critical factor in cross-cultural design is to consider different technological access levels between various regions. Different users also have access to different kinds of devices: some use high-end smartphones with fast network connectivity, while others may own less-functional phones or older handsets that keep up poorly but are good for voice and text. In

this case, adaptive or responsive design is key to making the product work as it should and not compromise the user experience in different devices. For example, the process that went behind developing Facebook Lite— a lighter version of its original app aimed at low-bandwidth internet markets. By designing this way, local technical requirements are met, while ensuring common functionality — a shared and optimized UX across regions.

The role of using visuals — colors, icons and/or symbols in cross-cultural designs is important since these elements hold different meanings in various cultures and not understanding it can lead to misunderstanding or sometimes, offense. In some cultures red means good luck and happiness, while in other countries it may also signify danger or caution. The fact that such differences exist and are so substantial that it makes semiotics (the study of signs) an indispensable field in cross cultural design. Through understanding the symbolic meaning of these visual elements in different cultural contexts, designers must ensure that any misinterpretation due to differences can be avoided and this would guarantee an efficient way for communication with their audience.

Aside from visual cues, there are cultural considerations when it comes to how users perceive information and move through digital spaces. Some users may want linear, step-by-step navigation patterns that walk them through a certain task . On the other hand, users belonging to certain cultures may prefer explorative and non-linear interactions, which offer a more flexible approach that allows for individual discovery. Designers need to meet these differences halfway by creating fluid information architectures that can support different preferences on the user end. But a travel booking site, for instance, might provide guided pathways to help users who want more structured/video instruction processes and simply browsing paths, with options that open up multiple categories before deciding. It has its flexibility to make the platform fit the diverse nature of cognitive styles and user preference as a whole that provides for an enriched experience, or specifically speaking- in this case, addressing part of how it serves globally.

In cross-cultural design, this is extremely important in that extensive user testing needs to be conducted on a variety of cultural contexts. This lets designers prove their hypotheses and that the product is appealing to real users around the world. User feedback from different cultural

angles could mean hearing about unexpected problems years in advance of the product release, enabling refinement. In addition, it is essential to create loops of iteration with user input through continuously collecting feedback even after the product has been launched. This ensures the design is not bound to culturally specific environments but will continue appropriating over dynamically changing cultural contexts and technological environments. On the other hand, an anthropological perspective on cross-cultural design stresses empathy. For a product to not just be functional but emotionally important, designers need detailed insights into the emotional and social contexts of their users. Empathy-Driven Design implies the opposite — that is, no group of users feel ignored or alien when using a service. This includes catering to the different kinds of disabilities that can be encountered in a user base, multilingual support or any cultural sensitivity aspect appearing on all facets of an interface.

7.3 Long-Term Integration of Anthropological Research into UX/UI at Wonderif Studio

Integrating anthropology into UX/UI at Wonderif Studio in the long run will develop more human-centered, culturally adaptive design practices that lead to higher user satisfaction and business impact. Over time, Wonderif Studio embeds ethnographic research as a consistent part of UX/UI development, ensuring that all future design projects are informed by deep user insights, cultural understanding, and changing needs. Ethnographic research may also include regular user immersions – sessions where designers interact with different user groups to gain qualitative insights that would later shape design iterations. In the long term, cultural relativism practice would also allow Wonderif Studio to design products for the global market more effectively. Anthropology allows creating culturally adapted interfaces not just by translating texts, but also by adjusting visual design, interaction patterns, and informational architecture according to the needs of the cultural bases. Anthropological research would also allow Wonderif Studio to go beyond demographic segmentation and create more holistic user personas. Such work would ensure more targeted, empathic solutions over time. In the long run, reflexivity – a key anthropological concept – also encourages the company’s designers to reflect on their own biases in the design process. Integrating reflexivity would help Wonderif Studio keep design teams self-aware, periodically reflecting on how their own background skews their design choices, which, over time, would create a more adaptive culture. Applying Foucault’s theory of

power, Wonderif Studio can also integrate ethics in UX/UI by creating transparent, user-supporting systems. In the long run, Wonderif Studio can make sure data collected is transparent and ethical and the interfaces do not manipulate but informed consent. Encouraging synergy between the designers, data analysts, and anthropologists would allow for a joint approach where ethnographic research shapes data analytics, which allows for not only creating more informed design solutions, but also better-informed improvements.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Internship at Wonderif Studio, which was a transformative experience, gave me an opportunity to dive in that intersection between anthropology and UX/UI research and design that has potentially significant exploration. These two fields combined showed that we rely on the knowledge gained from anthropology to make better design decisions, especially in relation with human behavior and cultural context or social interactions. My Internship applied anthropological methodologies, namely ethnography, cultural relativism and thick description to deepen our understanding on how diverse user needs can be met with nuanced digital interfaces while being culturally sensitive.

This internship allowed for the seamless incorporation of anthropology at its fundamental core — knowing all human functioning is context-bound regarding culture, society and economy as related to UX/UI practices. An ethnographic exercise uncovered user behaviors traditional design approaches may gloss over. In addition, the methods of ethnography and participant observation with reflexive analysis played a crucial role in ultimately uncovering data that informed user-centered design solutions. For example, ethnographic findings noted that users of Sharif Metal had satisfactory digital literacy and users wanted simple clear paths to minimal navigation during the redesign. Through watching how these users used the website, I was able to scale down and make it more accessible. It is a hallmark of anthropology to center the perspectives and needs of users too often marginalized in market-driven design processes. Like all disciplines, the emphasis on cultural relativism that is core to anthropology was useful in framing design for different user demographics. This was especially important knowledge to have, such as when working on the research of the Luxeon Hotel app, where users from high-context cultures, like Japan and China, found content-rich interfaces appealing due to their preference for detail in user experience. Users from high-context cultures such as East Asia reported they love the sense of environment when interacting with many objects and will get bored or disoriented otherwise. This knowledge enabled a large risk to transform into a double-pathway design, and tapped different cultural expectations — thus making the solution more globally-applicable.

A key part of the internship involved the practical application of anthropological methods within the UX/UI design process:

- **Ethnography and Participant Observation:** These methods were important for providing qualitative user behaviors insights. For the CELSIUS Energy Drink branding project I did informal interviewing and observed people using digital assets and social platforms. This enabled us to build a brand which appealed to youth between the ages of 16 to 30 years, who give high importance to fitness, lifestyle and aesthetics. This ethnographic approach guaranteed the designs were not only aesthetically on point, but that they also spoke culture to the brand's target audience.
- **Cultural Relativism:** This was an elemental concept in anthropology which helped me understand why various cultures had diverse design preferences. Whether it is in high context cultures which require more detailed interfaces to provide reassurance, or perhaps low-context cultures where users are much clearer about efficiency and minimalism. Adhering to this principle during the Luxeon Hotel app research has allowed us to preserve yet adapt its design and functionality so that they cater for international travelers, providing a user experience which works across cultural boundaries.

During my internship, Anthropology played a significant role in UX UI research, supporting not just technical design solutions. Its approach encouraged a more holistic view on the users, entailing their experiences in real life interaction with cultural backgrounds and emotional states. As part of the CELSIUS rebranding project, anthropological work revealed that certain visual aesthetics were associated with health and sustainability in the mind of young adults — an audience group for which these values are paramount. That insight is what allowed the design team to actually end up creating a brand that resonated with those values and would have much more of an impact in terms of not just visually, but through better alignment with its user because it truly spoke their language. It was also an enormous opportunity for growth, both personally and professionally. This is how I was able to close the gap between theoretical knowledge and applied skills, through UX/UI design projects, practiced with anthropological methods. Design Tools such as Figma, Adobe Illustrator and Miro were essentials that powered my workflow. Field work via ethnographic research applications expanded the canvas from user content

analysis into usable design strategies. Spending time in a creative and dynamic studio environment made me realize the importance of having that delicate balance between creative freedom & professional discipline which is such an important learning curve when managing other projects.

The way that this job mixed anthropology into the realm of UX/UI design made it clear to me why cross-cultural, social, psychological and emotional implications must be considered in all stages of a designing process. When targeting a global audience with digital products and services, inclusivity in design has never been more important. Anthropology gives us the toolkit to understand users — not just what they are doing, but how their cultural background or life course is affecting these interactions with technology. Today, when the market is globalized like never before; this capability to adapt design processes can complement widely different cultural preferences. This can be seen with projects like the Luxeon Hotel app research, where countless mistakes are made in targeting solutions for high-context versus low context cultures. Its reliance on cultural relativism ensures that the environment stays user-centered and culturally sensitive, in turn, increasing better engagement of users which drive more satisfaction towards it.

But most importantly, this internship experience at Wonderif Studio highlighted how anthropology could substantially contribute to UX/UI research and design. The combination of ethnographic methods, follow-up cultural analysis and reflexivity enabled me to pay close attention to the experiences informing our design work. This experience has also communicated the importance of holistic design approach in UX/UI, where anthropology proved to be a key player for integrating user behavior and needs with possible design solutions, which is quite crucial when target products are not only well-performing, but also emotionally engaging. In the end, my internship offered proof of concept for how partaking in anthropology and UX/UI design can reinforce one another; where anthropology equips us with a lens to understand users' cultural contexts, while designing offers the affordance needed to translate those insights into tangible user-centric solutions. All that I have learned in this internship will live on and grow into future work for both areas — design solutions should continue to be technologically sound but also interact with the user group, deeply intertwined within their communities.

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